THESIS MANUAL

SUNY Upstate Medical University
College of Nursing
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THESIS CHECKLIST

The steps for completing a thesis are somewhat individual. Speak with your thesis advisor to decide your individual thesis plan.

I. Exploring the thesis option
   A. Discuss ideas with faculty
   B. Begin to read literature pertaining to your topic and note gaps in the literature and possible studies to replicate in the literature

II. Developing a Plan
   A. Choose a thesis advisor
   B. In consultation with your advisor, choose a committee,
      1. 3 members: 2 from CON (this includes advisor) and one from outside the CON.
      2. The outside person can be but doesn’t have to be outside the discipline of nursing.
   C. Complete Thesis Committee Form – obtain all signatures early in the process
   D. Download the thesis manual from the CON website
   E. Work with your advisor/committee to formulate your research questions and plan and to formulate a tentative time line for completing your thesis.
   F. Devise a data analysis plan with help of your committee.
   G. Assess the accessibility to the target population.
   H. If using an existing tool permission must be obtained early on from the tool developer. Be aware this may take months.
   I. Complete the CITI course (Requirement for all Upstate students)

III. Preliminary Writing – Discuss with your committee the best order to proceed with the next steps.
   Whichever order you use you MUST continue to consult with your advisor/committee.
   A. Complete and submit the IRB proposal.
   B. Complete your first 3 chapters of your thesis.
   C. Complete course work NURS: 632 Biostatistics for the DNP

IV. Finish the research process
   A. At this point, you will have your research question, review of the literature (except for certain qualitative studies) and methods. These were included in the first 3 chapters.
   B. Finish data collection and analysis
   C. Write up data collection and analysis, discussion, and conclusions
   D. State limitations of the study, potential future research of the topic, and implications in nursing practice.

V. Processing the approved thesis
   A. The content of your thesis must be approved by your committee before you set a date for your defense
   B. Be aware of the date you will need to complete your thesis in order to graduate that semester.
   C. Set a date for your oral defense. The entire committee must be present at your defense
   D. Final copies – 3 must be given to the Dean (2 for the library and 1 for the CON). These copies will be bound by the CON. The cost of binding of additional copies will be your responsibility. As a courtesy, it is expected that you will provide each Thesis Advisory Committee member with a bound or unbound copy.
   E. For every semester you are working on your thesis, you must take at least 1 thesis credit. In addition, you must take 1 thesis credit the semester that you graduate. You must have at least 6 thesis credits. If you have not finished your thesis after taking the 6 thesis credits, you may then take NURS 705 Continuing Advisement credits.
INTRODUCTION

Preparation of a research thesis is one of the options for completion of the Master of Science degree program in the College of Nursing. This manual is intended to assist you in the preparation of your Master’s thesis. It addresses the following aspects:

1. expectations of the student choosing to do a thesis.
2. format of the thesis.
3. outline of qualitative and quantitative methodological approaches to the thesis.
4. procedures to be followed for completing the thesis.
5. advice intended to help the student to avoid common problems in completing the thesis.

Any variation to the requirements and/or procedures described in this manual must be requested in writing to the Thesis Advisor. Any and all waivers must be approved by the Dean of the College of Nursing.

Purpose and Objectives of the Thesis

The main purpose of the Master’s thesis is to provide a unique opportunity for you to achieve a clearer understanding of a specific aspect of nursing practice, to validate best practice through the use of evidence, or to improve patient outcomes by combining existing skills and knowledge with the use of the research process. The thesis is an independent study guided by a committee comprised of faculty and other experts in the field of study. The topic of the thesis is determined by you and should be related to your clinical track in the program.

Preparing a Master’s thesis allows you to:

1. apply research principles learned through course work;
2. transition from research consumer to research participant;
3. contribute to your specific field of study; and
4. satisfy requirements for completion of the Master’s degree.

**THESIS GUIDELINES**

**Step 1: Selecting the Thesis Option**

_The primary responsibility for the thesis rests with you, the student._ Deciding to choose the thesis option should begin by engaging in discussion with your colleagues or with any faculty member. This exploration needs to start early in your program because it will take time to put the research proposal together, collect the data, and write the thesis. For most students this process can take three or more semesters.

**Proposed Timeline for Thesis for Full-Time Students**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>First Semester</th>
<th>Identify thesis option</th>
<th>Choose Thesis Advisor and Thesis Advisory Committee</th>
<th>Identify thesis questions</th>
<th>Begin review of literature</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Second Semester/NURS 616: Advanced Nursing Research</td>
<td>Begin writing proposal</td>
<td>Successfully complete Consolidated IRB Training Initiative (CITI)</td>
<td>Begin Institutional Review Board IRB process</td>
<td>Complete Chapters I &amp; II</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Summer Year I</td>
<td>Draft of Chapter III &amp; Chapter IV</td>
<td>Obtain IRB approval</td>
<td>Revise initial drafts of Chapters I &amp; II</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Third Semester/ NURS 632 Biostatistics for the DNP</td>
<td>Collect data</td>
<td>Complete data collection</td>
<td>Conduct data analysis</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fourth Semester</td>
<td>Complete draft of thesis</td>
<td>Review <em>Guidelines for Students</em></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Step 2: Selecting the Research Topic

It is never too early to begin to think about a research topic. Early identification of a topic related to an area of interest will allow you to select course readings and projects to serve as a starting point for exploration. The thesis topic chosen should be one that is of intense personal interest to you, for you will be reading and discussing this topic throughout the remainder of the program. It should be so important to you that you will be able to maintain your enthusiasm about the topic over the entire thesis period.

At the Master’s level, replication of studies is encouraged. You should read other studies done in the area of your interest as a starting point for topic selection. Discussion with faculty and colleagues who have similar teaching and/or research interests may help to facilitate the identification, development, and/or clarification of the focus for the thesis. Discussion of researchable questions and problems with fellow students, co-workers, and preceptors may also help to delimit the problem.

Step 3: Selecting the Thesis Advisor

You should choose a Thesis Advisor as early as possible, once you have made the decision to pursue the thesis option. The Thesis Advisor must be a full-time, part-time, or adjunct faculty member in the College of Nursing who holds a doctoral degree. As Chair of the Thesis Advisory Committee, your Thesis Advisor bears the primary responsibility for supporting you.

*Guidelines for Students Conducting a Thesis Project* is a checklist designed for students to use prior to handing in their final thesis draft and to prepare for the oral examination.
through all major aspects of the thesis. The Thesis Advisor may serve as the content and/or methods expert. The Advisor is also the individual you list on the registration (add/drop) form for NURS 700. When the advisor is selected, begin to complete the Thesis Committee Form (Appendix B).

**Step 4: Selecting the Thesis Advisory Committee**

You will select your Thesis Advisory Committee in consultation with your Thesis Advisor (Chair). The Thesis Advisory Committee must include at least three members, one of whom is your Advisor, and consider the composition of your committee. A second member may be a faculty member from the College of Nursing, and the third member must be outside the faculty of the College of Nursing. The third member may be from another college on campus, an individual with an Upstate Medical University clinical or adjunct appointment, or a person from another institution who is master’s or doctorally prepared. This third member may be a nurse or may belong to another discipline. Committee members should be chosen because they are content experts in the field of study or process experts in the chosen research methods(s).

The student is responsible for obtaining the signatures of each committee member on the Thesis Committee Form early on (see Appendix B). Signatures indicate agreement to serve on the Thesis Advisory Committee as well as clarify the capacity to which each member will serve. The Thesis Committee Form is then submitted to the Thesis Advisor who obtains the Dean’s approval for the composition of the committee. Any changes to the Committee membership that may occur during the thesis process must be made on the same form and resubmitted for approval. These forms are available on the CON website when you download the Thesis Manual.
Step 5: Developing and Refining the Research Outline

It is primarily through discussions with advisors and colleagues and through the review of the literature and student experiences with clinical problems that the research approach (quantitative or qualitative) and questions to be studied are identified. Additionally, the review of the literature can be helpful to determine the most appropriate conceptual/theoretical framework(s) and research design. You are encouraged to replicate a study, or initiate a pilot study, that is of interest to you. In addition, you may choose to do a secondary analysis of existing data. Discuss the type of study to be done with your Thesis Advisor and Thesis Advisory Committee before actually choosing the study to be conducted. You should also review available instruments that may be used in the study and that are most likely to demonstrate reliability and validity with your study sample.

Research novices generally underestimate the time that it will take to conduct research. You should work on a timeline very early in planning your study. Your Advisor and Advisory Committee will assist you in keeping to the agreed upon timeframe; however, it is primarily your responsibility. To facilitate timely completion of the research, design a study that is feasible, that provides access to an adequate number of subjects that are available to you, and that provides ease of data collection and analysis. Try to avoid projects that present difficulties in obtaining human subjects research approval and/or in acquiring administrative approval for use of a setting or a population. Securing approval for studies involving an invasive procedure may prove to be more difficult than for those which do not. The Advanced Nursing Research (NURS 616) course provides guidance in the development and refinement of the research outline.
Step 6: Preparing the Thesis Outline

For quantitative studies, the thesis outline should follow quantitative steps research process. Your proposal should include:

- a complete draft of Chapters I & II

For further discussion, see pp. 6-7. Since qualitative research consists of different designs, check with your advisor.

Step 7: Submitting the Thesis Proposal

Upon completion of NURS 616, complete and submit a draft of the thesis proposal to your Thesis Advisor, and distribute the proposal to the other members of the Thesis Advisory Committee for their review and comment. The thesis committee will meet, either in person or electronically, to discuss acceptance or revisions needed. The proposal should be ready for submission to the Institutional Review Board (IRB) as soon as the Advisory Committee members have given their feedback and corrections have been made by you in accordance with their suggestions.

Step 8: Obtaining Administrative and Human Rights Approval

Any research involving human subjects requires approval from the IRB of the SUNY Upstate Medical University (see Appendix (C). More detailed information about the IRB policies and guidelines at SUNY Upstate Medical University is available at the Research Compliance website http://www.upstate.edu/researchadmin/compliance/index.php Be certain to download the latest IRB application form. Some sections to review at the website include:

1. Complete CITI
2. Upstate IRB Guidelines and Policies
3. Guidelines and Policies on Research Subjects’ Rights to Privacy (HIPAA)

5. De-identification Form

6. Template for HIPAA Required Section

7. Sample consent for Adults and/or Minor subject

8. Requirement for notifying the IRB of adverse events

If your study is conducted at another institution or multiple institutions and involves human subjects, you are responsible for securing the necessary forms and information about the review timetable and procedures from the institution(s).

Your Thesis Advisor will assist you in assembling the needed information to be submitted for review and approval. Remember that some human subject review boards may require two months or more to review the proposal and process the request.

The IRB application includes an explanation of safeguards that will be used to protect the subjects in the study. You will be expected to describe the procedures that are designed to protect confidentiality, minimize potential risks, obtain informed consent, handle raw data, limit access to the data, define the population, and explain any special selection criteria to be used. If your study sample includes vulnerable populations (such as prisoners, children, or the mentally disabled), you will have to clearly designate to the IRB how informed consent will be obtained. The student should discuss with their faculty Thesis Advisor where written consent forms, institutional approvals, and questionnaires or instruments and data will be maintained.

**Step 9: Conducting the Thesis**

**A. Working with the Thesis Advisory Committee**
If you are planning to graduate within a year following approval of the proposal, you will need to allow for extensive blocks of “working time” during the year and be ready to begin data collection on the first day of the two remaining semesters. A total of at least 6 thesis credits, NURS 700, are required for program completion. If you have not completed the writing and oral defense after registering for 6 thesis credits, then you must register for 1 credit of NURS 705 in the subsequent semesters until graduation requirements are successfully met. Campus policy states that the student must be registered when receiving thesis guidance, and also must be registered in the semester or summer session of graduation.

You are responsible for developing a tentative timetable outlining completion of each phase of the thesis and reviewing this with the Committee members. Members should be given at least 14 days to provide feedback on submitted work, since each time they will be critiquing a substantial amount of material. You should attach the previous draft containing members’ comments with each subsequent draft of the material. This practice saves time for the members and, thus, expedites the review process. The thesis drafts should be typed, double-spaced, and dated. In addition to developing the plan, submitting materials to Committee members, and receiving, their responses, you are responsible for scheduling Thesis Committee meetings in collaboration with the Thesis Advisor.

B. Thesis Proposal Approval

The Thesis Advisory Committee members are responsible for approving the proposal of the thesis prior to submission to the IRB. All members of the committee must be present at the oral exam, either in person or electronically, or the exam will be rescheduled. Once the proposal is approved, begin the IRB process immediately.

C. Thesis Content Approval
The Thesis Advisory Committee members are responsible for approving the content of the written thesis prior to the oral examination. Once content is approved, a final copy of the thesis is submitted to each member of your Thesis Advisory Committee 10 days prior to the oral examination. After content approval, the Chair and other Committee members are not expected to initiate substantive modification of the thesis.

C. Grading

Each semester the student will receive an “I” until the final defense, after which all of the “I’s” will be converted to “S”. If a student is unable to complete the entire thesis process, the thesis advisor will appraise the progress the student has made. If the student has completed significant satisfactory work (IRB approval, completion of chapters 1-3), three credits may be awarded at the discretion of the thesis committee.

D. The Oral Examination

All members of the committee must be present at the oral exam, either in person or electronically, or the exam will be rescheduled. The role of the Chair of the Thesis Advisory Committee is to be an active participant, along with the other members, and to conduct the oral examination. You are expected to present the most important findings of the study, answer questions from the examiners to establish the credibility and significance of the thesis, and defend the methods, findings, and conclusions. Interested individuals may attend the oral examination with prior consent from you and the Chair of the Thesis Advisory Committee. Visitors should be told that they will be allowed to attend as observers only. The Chair has the prerogative to entertain questions and/or comments from visitors. The voting is closed, however, with only the Committee members participating in the final decision. All members of the Thesis Advisory Committee, including the Chair, are entitled to one vote each. The vote is by ballot or
roll call at the discretion of the Chair. To reach a decision, more than one half of the committee members present must approve the motion. In the case of a split decision, when the Committee is made up of an even number of members, then the Committee must negotiate until a majority consensus is reached. The examining committee may vote to take one of the following actions:

1. Approve
2. Approve with recommendations for additional specified actions
3. Disapprove with recommendations for additional specified actions to correct identified deficiencies
4. Disapprove

Upon completion of the oral examination, the student will be asked to complete the “Student Evaluation of Thesis Process” form (see Appendix D). Members of the Thesis Committee will complete the “Faculty Evaluation of Thesis Project” form (see Appendix E).

**Step 10: Processing the Approved Thesis**

Following successful completion of the oral examination, the signatory page of the thesis is signed by the members of the Thesis Advisory Committee (see Appendix G). Once signed, the signatory page becomes the first page of the completed thesis. The student must bring three signatory pages for signing at the oral defense. The signatory page must be submitted to the Dean of the College of Nursing no later than two weeks prior to the expected date of graduation. Three unbound copies must be submitted to the Dean of the College of Nursing (1 for the library, 1 for the student, and 1 for the CON). The library will bind the three copies. All copies for binding should be submitted at one time to the CON. The cost of binding of additional copies will be your responsibility. As a courtesy, it is expected that you will provide each Thesis
Advisory Committee member with a bound or unbound copy. See Technical Requirements, page 25+
THESIS FORMAT FOR QUANTITATIVE RESEARCH

The thesis is to be presented in a systematic and scholarly fashion. The following section describes the chapter titles and headings to be used in a quantitative study. Examples are given to clarify intent. Consult your Thesis Advisor for specific clarification.

CHAPTER I

Introduction

An introduction should lead directly and logically into the problem statement. It should provide a short overview which places the reader squarely in the middle of the current research and theory in the field. This section is significant and describes the importance of the study; it explains the “why” of the study. Your introduction should convey enough excitement about your study to thoroughly engage the reader.

Statement of the Problem

The statement of the nursing research problem should be clear, concise, and define the discrepancy between what “is” and what “could” or “should be”. A well-formulated problem statement, written in the declarative form, provides direction for the remainder of the research process. The reader should have no difficulty in understanding why the topic is being studied.

Statement of Purpose

The purpose of the study should flow directly from your research problem statement and explicitly state why the study is being conducted. A summary of the reasons for undertaking the study should include a justification and rationale for the study, evidence of the need for the investigation, and a description of the relevance and significance of the study to nursing. The purpose explains the researcher’s major motivation for undertaking the study.
Background of the Problem

A background review serves to delineate the exact nature, incidence, and historical aspects of the research problem under consideration and needs to be cited. This review forms a logical basis for the research question(s) or hypothesis(es) to follow.

Research Question(s)

The research question(s) under investigation should flow directly from the problem statement and should use the PICOT format. The research question under investigation should be stated clearly, written in interrogative form, and should suggest a realistic course of action based on the state of the science, the available resources, and the time frame.

Hypotheses

A statement of hypothesis is not necessary if the thesis is a descriptive study but is required if the study is quasi-experimental or experimental. There may be one or more hypotheses depending on the complexity of the problem under investigation. A statement of hypothesis must reflect the expected relationship between the variables being studied. If multiple variables are being studied, a simple hypothesis should be formulated for each predicted relationship between the variables. Avoid complex hypothesis. Null hypotheses are acceptable and preferred.

Population and Sample

The population of interest, target population, and sample must be briefly identified clearly and be designated by specific criteria such as age, gender, illness state, and other relevant defining characteristics. A complex description of the sample selection process is included in Chapter 3 of the thesis.
Assumptions

Each research study is based on assumptions. The purpose of identifying assumptions is for the researcher to be aware of bias that may influence the study. Assumptions are statements of the researcher’s universally held beliefs that are recognized to be true, or are taken for granted, but have not necessarily been scientifically demonstrated. Assumptions are embedded in thinking and behavior and are not intended to be tested in the thesis research. Uncovering those assumptions requires introspection. The recognition of assumptions by the student is a strength and not a weakness. These assumptions should be stated explicitly. All assumptions influence the development of the research process.

CHAPTER II

Literature Review

The primary purpose for reviewing relevant literature is to gain a broad background or understanding of the information that is available related to the research problem of interest. Before beginning a research study, the student must determine what knowledge exists on the topic of the study. Literature review should summarize pertinent works, current research findings, the theoretically/conceptual framework for the study, and research tools and instruments used to measure the variables. A review of the literature should pertain to each of the variables as well as the study population and problem under investigation. Through the literature search, the student must identify a theoretical/conceptual framework which will provide the basis or underlying foundation for the study.

An adequate literature review should go beyond a simple paraphrasing of what previous authors have found. In other words, it should synthesize findings. One purpose of the literature review is to establish what is known and what is not known in the study area, thus expanding the
existing knowledge by conducting either an original or replication study. The literature review should give the reader a synopsis of work completed to date in the area of interest and a rationale for the specific procedures employed in the present study.

The literature review should include a discussion of the theoretical framework to be used in the study. It does not have to be a nursing theory. The review should also include empirical work that has been done concerning a specific research problem, the current knowledge of the problem, and a summary or identification of further research needed. Since major breakthroughs or discoveries of new information in a field are always related to previous works, the literature review should be continued during the course of the study until data analysis is complete.

CHAPTER III

Methods

Methods must be so clearly described that any other investigator would be able to duplicate the study. In this chapter, the student must describe theoretical definitions of primary variables that are consistent with the study framework. In addition, the student must finalize the research question(s) or hypothesis(es), operationalize the research variable, and develop a method for collecting data that is useful and appropriate. This process is presented in sufficient detail to allow replication of the study based on the information provided. The chapter should be written in the past tense, even though the student may be writing the chapter prior to or simultaneously with conducting the study.

Research Design

The student should identify the type of study conducted such as descriptive (exploratory, case study, correlational, comparative), quasi-experimental, or experimental. In addition, the design of the study needs to be clearly described.
Setting

Where the study took place needs to be concisely and completely specified. Individual institutions or locations should not be identified by name, but should be described by size, region or the country, and other relevant characteristics.

Sample

This section has 4 components: the process for sample selection; the method for determining sample size; a description of the sample, which includes inclusion and exclusion criteria; and the process for obtaining consent. When describing the sample, the student must clearly identify the population being studied as well as the methods for selecting the sample from that population. A description of power analysis conducted is required for quasi-experimental and experimental studies, however such analysis is not often expected for descriptive studies. Inclusion and exclusion criteria and rationale for their use must be explained in detail. The process of obtaining consent for the protection of human or animal rights, including IRB and Committee for the Humane Use of Animals (CHUA) approval, if necessary, must be clearly addressed.

Instrumentation

This section includes operational definitions of all study variables and a detailed description of the instruments/tools used to conduct the investigation. Each variable under investigation must be operationally defined in a clear and concise manner, which assigns meaning to the variables and describes the activities required to measure it. If measurement instruments/tools have been developed for the purpose of the study, the procedure(s) for development and psychometric (reliability and validity) testing must be included. If the instruments/tools used have already been established, their reliability and validity, their
theoretical consistency with the study, and ways in which these measurement devices have been used must be clearly documented. The procedures for testing reliability and validity of tools with this sample also must be included.

Data Collection Procedures

This section includes the type of data collections, e.g., chart review or survey, a statement of the time span over which this investigation took place, who collected the data, the procedures used to assign participants, and the experimental interventions and manipulations, if any, that were employed. The procedure should be sufficiently detailed to allow for replication of the study.

Limitations

The student should openly acknowledge any known study limitations (restrictions or weaknesses) that may affect study results and decrease the generalizability of the findings. In nearly every nursing research study there are variables over which the researcher either has no control or chooses not to exercise control. Limitations of the study should be identified, to the extent possible prior to data collection. It is recognized that other limitations may occur while the study is in progress.

CHAPTER IV

Data Analysis and Findings

This chapter should begin with a restatement of the problem investigated. Discussion of statistical analysis should include descriptive and any inferential statistics used and the assumptions underlying the statistical methods.
The major consideration is to organize material so the points made are stated clearly and concisely. **It is important to avoid confusion between the actual findings and the interpretation of findings (Chapter 5).** Combine the presentation and interpretation of each finding under separate sub-headings to facilitate presentation and readability. One method for organizing results is to present:

1) descriptive statistics of the sample, including response rate and characteristics of non-respondents.

2) a discussion of how sample attributes, which could be confounding variables, do and do not impact on the research question(s) or hypothesis(es).

3) a discussion of psychometric testing of instruments to include results of statistical procedures and a comparison of these results with those in the literature.

4) a report of the results of statistics answering each research question or testing each hypothesis under separate sub-headings.

The use of tables, figures, and graphs are appropriate ways to demonstrate the various categories of data. These devices, however, only have meaning to the extent to which they have been explained in the body of the text and have been placed within the text where they have the most relevance.

A table or graph should, however, “stand by itself” so that a knowledgeable reader can interpret the information presented without having to consult the text. Quantitative data included in tables and graphs should be arranged to facilitate interpretation. Explanatory notes should be used to explain and clarify possible ambiguities. The relationship between variables depicted in tables should be described first, followed by a statement of the level of statistical significance.
Another important aspect of this chapter is to present and interpret the findings of the study which bear directly on the major substantive problem(s) or issues under investigation. Results should specifically support or refute each research question or hypothesis.

CHAPTER V
Discussion and Conclusions

This final chapter should summarize the highlights of the preceding chapters. It should include:

- an assessment of the extent to which the purpose of the study was achieved,
- a comparison of the findings to those of other studies,
- an identification of the limitations of the study,
- the extent to which generalizations are possible,
- the conclusions that can be drawn,
- the implications for clinical practice,
- the significance of the findings to nursing health care practice, and education
- the recommendations for future research.

Implications for Nursing Practice

Consider the areas of nursing practice for which the findings of the study could be useful or applicable. Speculations should be made about how professional practice potentially could be enhanced, modified, and/or affected by these findings. Do not speculate beyond what is appropriate given the strength of your study design and any limitations. The student must consider the impact of the study on specific areas of nursing. Discussion of implications provides an opportunity to be creative, but not to the extent that conclusions are unsupported by the findings. It may be necessary to reassess the opinions held prior to conducting the study, to
change or modify those opinions as appropriate considering the weight of new evidence gained, or to justify upholding opinions in light of apparently contradictory findings.
THESIS FORMAT FOR QUALITATIVE RESEARCH

The thesis is to be presented in a systematic and scholarly fashion. Because qualitative research encompasses many research traditions, no one sequence of chapter titles or content fits all of them. It is imperative that you include on your Thesis Advisory Committee someone who has expertise in the research tradition you will be using to guide your study and who can help you decide how to sequence the writing of your thesis.

Thesis format and sequencing issues to be addressed with your Committee include, but are not limited to, the following:

- How to sequence the thesis chapters to present your study most clearly and with a flow that is understandable to the reader unfamiliar with the research tradition being used.

- Should the sequence of thesis chapters mirror the sequence of steps in your research process? (e.g., in some traditions, such as grounded theory, literature review is conducted after data collection and constant comparative analysis has been done).

- Would use of the first-person be more appropriate for writing the thesis than the commonly required third-person?

- Should the thesis include a chapter or section describing the research tradition in some detail?

- Should all iterations of data analysis be included as appendices of the thesis, as long as the data remain confidential?

One example of how a qualitative thesis might be sequenced using the phenomenology tradition is:
CHAPTER I

Introduction

Description & Relevance of the Social Process Selected

Statement of the Problem

Background of the Problem – preliminary literature review

Statement of the Purpose

Description of Subjects

Research Question(s)

CHAPTER II

Research Tradition

Description

Bracketing.

Assumptions

Justification

CHAPTER III

Methods

Methods for Conducting the Study

Procedure for Data Collection

Decision Rules for Themes

Method(s) for Assessing Confirmability

Method(s) for Assessing Protection of Human Rights
CHAPTER IV
Findings

CHAPTER V
Literature Review

Review of the Literature

Concept Modification & Integration

CHAPTER VI
Discussion and Conclusions

Discussion of Primary Phenomenon

Significance to Nursing/Health Care Practice

Recommendation for Future Research

Another example of how a qualitative thesis using the *grounded theory* tradition might be sequenced is:

CHAPTER I
Introduction

Description & Relevance of the Social Process Selected

Statement of the Problem

Background of the Problem

Statement of the Purpose

Description of Subjects

Research Question(s)
CHAPTER II
Research Tradition

Description
Assumptions
Justification

CHAPTER III
Methods

Methods for Conducting the Study

Procedure for Data Collection & Constant Comparative Analysis

Decision Rules for Coding

Category Development.

Category Saturation.

Concept Development.

Additional Categories.

Category Reduction.

Category Linkages.

Method(s) for Assessing Confirmability

Method(s) for Assessing Protection of Human Rights

CHAPTER IV
Literature Review And Findings

Review of the Literature

Emergence of Core Variables and the Core Process

Concept Modification & Integration
CHAPTER V.

Discussion and Conclusions

Discussion of Primary Phenomenon/Core Process

Significance to Nursing/Health Care Practice

Recommendation for Future Research

The sequence above is only one example that could be used for research in the grounded theory tradition. This sequence would be inappropriate for other traditions, such as phenomenological, ethnographic, or historical research. As noted earlier, you need to find someone with expertise in the research tradition you plan to use.
DISSEMINATION OF RESULTS

Communication of findings of the study is an essential final step in conducting research and completing the thesis. This is especially true if there has been an investment of human subject resources. It is an expectation that the research conducted for the thesis will be submitted for publication in a recognized journal and/or for oral poster presentation at a professional conference or health-related event.

Special permission from principal investigators is required for dissemination of thesis findings/results, if the research study was connected with or derived from and on-going project or an extension of another study. Under these circumstances, you and your Thesis Advisor should jointly discuss the issue at the beginning of the thesis project to clarify the responsibilities and options available for collaborative agreement between those parties concerned.

When publication/presentation of the thesis work is undertaken collaboratively between you and one of more of your Thesis Committee members, the complexity of authorship credit and the order of that credit require careful consideration. Authorship assignment and order need to be carefully, thoughtfully, and ethically considered before and during the scholarship process. Your thesis Advisor will guide you in appropriately assigning authorship according to the most recent guidelines.

TECHNICAL REQUIREMENTS

One of the policies of the College of Nursing requires master’s candidates to use the most recent edition of Publication Manual of the American Psychological Association in the production of the thesis. Since the American Psychological Association (APA) guidelines were specifically designed to assist authors to prepare papers for submission for publication in the
APA Journal, the following guidelines are intended to supplement and clarify the APA style guidelines.

**Paper Quality**

High quality watermarked paper should be used. Any materials, such as questionnaires or drawings, may be photocopied using a high quality copier so the duplicate resembles the original. All additional copies should be on high quality copy paper.

**Sequence of Sections**

Order the materials as follows:

- Title Page (see Appendix H for a sample of a title page)
- Signatory Page
- Acknowledgements
- Abstract
- Table Contents
- List of tables, figures and graphs
- Chapters
- References
- Bibliography
- Appendices
  (See Appendix G for sample of how to sequence sections of your thesis).

**Pagination/Numbers**

DO NOT USE A RUNNING HEAD. The Title page is counted as the first page, but is not numbered. Lower case Roman numerals are used to identify all pages prior to Chapter 1 and are placed three-quarters of an inch from the bottom edge and centered between the margins. Arabic numerals are used beginning with the first page of Chapter 1 and are continuous throughout the last page of the document including the appendix materials. The number is placed three-quarters of an inch from the top margin, and one and one-quarter inch from the right edge.
All chapter numbers should be typed in the upper case Roman numerals to distinguish them from other numbers, for example CHAPTER III. Appendices should be designated by capital letters, for example Appendix A, B, C, etc.

**Chapter Headings/Subheadings**

Follow the latest APA format.

**Copyright**

Permission is required for the reproduction of any copyrighted material which exceeds the limits allowed by the federal copyright law. Letters of permission should be placed in the appendix. When appropriate permission to reproduce materials has been secured, it is acceptable for materials such as tables, questionnaires, and illustrations to be reduced to fit within the specified margins. Avoid placing any material sideways into the thesis.

**Table of Contents**

The table of contents identifies all major headings and subheadings by section. Reasonable detail should be provided. (See Appendix G).

**Tables/Figures**

Tables and figures should be placed as close to the text discussion as possible. There are no restrictions on the number of tables/figures that may appear on a given page and tables/figures should be interspersed with text.

Table headings should begin at the left margin above the table using upper and lower case letters. Table headings requiring more than one line should be single-spaced. The tables should be numbered sequentially using Arabic numbers.
Figure headings should begin at the left margin below the figure using all upper and lower case letters. Figure headings requiring more than one line should be single-spaced. Figures should be numbered sequentially using Arabic numbers, e.g. II..

Tables and figures should be numbered separately. A table or a figure should be contained on one page. When it is necessary to continue a table or a figure onto another page, the horizontal line at the bottom of the table or figure should be omitted and the word “continued” typed in the bottom right hand corner of the first page of the table or figure within the specified margins. On the top of the next page where the table or figure continues, “Table X continued” or “Figure X continued” should be typed, followed by a double space above the table or figure.

Appendices

A face sheet must be placed before any materials that are included within an appendix (see example before the appendices contained in this manual).

References

Use your APA manual and see APA guidelines found on the CON website.
# APPENDIX A

## Guidelines for Students Conducting a Thesis Project

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Thesis Committee Selected</th>
<th>✓ when completed</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Thesis Committee Form signed by all</td>
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</table>

### Title

1. Title is well related to content thesis.

### Problem

2. Problem is clearly stated.
3. Hypotheses are clearly stated (not applicable if a qualitative study).
4. Significance of the problem is articulated.
5. Important terms are operationally defined.

### Review of Literature

6. Coverage of the literature is relevant to the problem being investigated.
7. Review of literature includes discussion of theory and empirical data.
8. Findings of related research are synthesized in a coherent manner.
9. Studies are examined critically.
10. Relationship of the problem to previous research is made clear.

### Methods/Procedures

11. Research design is appropriate to inquiry into the stated problem.
12. Weakness of chosen design and methods are acknowledged.
13. Setting, population, and sample are specified.
14. Method of sampling is appropriate for research design.
15. Collection instruments or data gathering methods are described.
16. Collection instruments and data gathering methods are described.
17. Validity and reliability of collection instruments or data gathering methods are established.

### Data Analysis

18. Appropriate methods are selected to analyze data.
19. Methods used in analyzing data are applied correctly.
20. Findings of the analysis are clearly presented.
21. Tables and figures are used effectively.

### Discussion and Conclusions

22. Conclusions are clearly stated.
23. Conclusions are substantiated by evidence presented.
24. Conclusion address the problem or topic of study.
25. Generalizations are confined to the population from which the sample was drawn.
26. Limitations of the study are stated.
27. Future directions for the research area are discussed.
28. Potential implications for nursing practice are clearly defined.

Defense date set
Completed thesis to CON

5/05
Appendix B

Thesis Committee Form
Appendix B
Thesis Committee Form

SUNY Upstate Medical University
College of Nursing

THESIS COMMITTEE
MASTER OF SCIENCE DEGREE

Date of Master’s Program Entry___________________________

Student’s Name_________________________________________

Thesis Working Title_____________________________________

_______________________________________________________________________

Thesis Committee:

Name (Please Print) Date Signature

_________________________________ _______________ ___________________
Thesis Advisor

_________________________________ _______________ ___________________
First Committee Member

_________________________________ _______________ ___________________
Second Committee Member

Approved:

_________________________________ ____________________________
Dean, College of Nursing Date

Change in Committee Membership:

Reason for change_________________________________________

Member deleted___________________________ Date__________________

Member added____________________________ Date__________________

Approved_______________________________ Date__________________

Dean, College of Nursing
Appendix C

Institutional Review Board for the Protection of Human Subjects

Check SUNY Upstate Medical University IRB website for latest forms.
http://www.upstate.edu/researchadmin/compliance/

Also Research Education and Training Requirements Research Education and Training is offered through Blackboard and CITI (Collaborative Institutional Training Initiative)
http://www.upstate.edu/researchadmin/document/research_training_requirements.pdf
Appendix D

Student Evaluation of Thesis Process
Appendix D
SUNY Upstate Medical University
College of Nursing
Student Evaluation of Thesis Process

Student Name_______________________________ Date________________________

For each criterion, use the following rating scale:
   1 = Unacceptable   3 = Good
   2 = Poor           4 = Excellent
   NA = Not Applicable

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Rating</th>
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<th>3</th>
<th>4</th>
<th>NA</th>
<th>Comments</th>
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<tr>
<td>1. The thesis manual was clearly written</td>
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<td>2. The thesis manual was a useful resource</td>
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<td>3. The thesis manual showed consistency among its parts</td>
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<td>4. The thesis manual provided complete guidelines for qualitative research</td>
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<td>5. The thesis manual provided complete guidelines for quantitative research</td>
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<td>6. Thesis advisement was available as needed</td>
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<td>7. Committee members communicated expectations clearly</td>
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<td>8. Committee members functioned as a coordinated team</td>
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<td>9. Thesis committee members provided consistent feedback</td>
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<td>10. Time frames for completing thesis were realistic</td>
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<td>11. Advisor facilitated IRB process</td>
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<td>12. Advisor advocated for the student throughout thesis development</td>
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<td>13. Suggestions for revision of thesis were clearly presented</td>
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<td>14. External committee member provided content expertise</td>
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<td>15. Faculty committee member provided process expertise</td>
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<td>16. Faculty committee member provided content expertise</td>
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<td><strong>COURSEWORK FOR THESIS DEVELOPMENT</strong></td>
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<td>17. NURS 624: Scholarship for Advanced Practice</td>
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<td>18. NURS 660: Statistics and Measurement</td>
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<td>19. NURS 616: Advanced Nursing Research</td>
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<td>20. NURS 700 (6 credits): Thesis Advisement</td>
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<td>21. Questions during exam were clearly stated</td>
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<td>22. Ample time was allotted for presentation</td>
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<td>23. Sufficient time was provided for discussion</td>
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<td>24. Questions during the exam were relevant to the topic</td>
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<td>25. A professional atmosphere was maintained throughout the exam</td>
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<td>26. Collegial spirit of inquiry prevailed</td>
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<td><strong>LIBRARY &amp; COMPUTER RESOURCES</strong></td>
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<td>27. Journals and texts were accessible in campus library</td>
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<td>28. Journals and texts were available electronically</td>
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<td>29. Journals and texts were available through interlibrary loan</td>
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<td>30. Personnel in the library were responsive to requests</td>
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<td>31. Campus infrastructure supported electronic communications</td>
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<td>32. College’s computer lab was available for use</td>
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<td>33. Assistance was provided by the college’s computer specialist</td>
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<td>34. College’s computer software was adequate for study analysis</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>SELF EVALUATION OF PARTICIPATION IN THESIS</strong></td>
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<td>35. Independence and self-direction were demonstrated</td>
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<td>36. Constructive feedback was accepted</td>
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<td>37. Assistance was sought when needed</td>
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<td>38. Writing skills demonstrated mastery</td>
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<td>39. Thesis work was completed according to schedule</td>
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Additional Comments:

4/03/nal
Appendix E

Faculty Evaluation of Thesis Project
# Appendix E
## SUNY Upstate Medical University
### College of Nursing
## Faculty Evaluation of Thesis Project

**Student Name___________________________**  
**Faculty Name________________________________**  

**Date____________________________**

For each criterion, use the following rating scale:

- 1 = Unacceptable  
- 2 = Poor  
- 3 = Good  
- 4 = Excellent  
- NA = Not applicable

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<td><strong>FORM AND STYLE OF THESIS</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>1. Thesis is clearly written</td>
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<td>2. Grammar and punctuation are used properly</td>
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<td>3. Report displays an unbiased, impartial, scientific approach</td>
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<td>4. APA format is followed</td>
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<td>5. Thesis Manual guidelines are adhered to consistently</td>
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<td><strong>ORAL EXAMINATION</strong></td>
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<td>6. Complex concepts, ideas, and findings are succinctly presented</td>
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<td>7. Credibility and significance of the thesis are established</td>
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<td>8. Methods, findings, and conclusions of the thesis are summarized</td>
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<td>9. Questions from examiners are answered spontaneously</td>
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<td>10. Responses are direct, logical, thorough, and articulate</td>
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<td>11. Findings are presented without bias</td>
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<td>12. Scope and depth of knowledge on thesis topic is defended with authority</td>
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</table>

**Comments:**

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4/03/nal
Appendix F

Sample Signatory Page
Appendix F
SAMPLE SIGNATORY PAGE

TITLE OF THESIS
BY
NAME OF STUDENT AUTHOR

A Thesis Submitted to the Faculty of the College of Nursing and SUNY Upstate Medical University in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Degree of Master of Science.

Approved on this date:___________________________________

________________________________________Thesis Advisor and Committee Chair
Florence Nightingale, Ed.D., R.N.

________________________________________Thesis Advisor and Committee Member
Clara Barton, M.S., R.N.

________________________________________Thesis Advisor and Committee Member
Louis Pasteur, Ph.D.

________________________________________Thesis Advisor and Committee Member

College of Nursing
State University of New York Upstate Medical University
Syracuse, NY
Appendix G

Sample Table of Contents
APPENDIX G
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Research Question 7

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Appendix H

Sample Title Page
APPENDIX H
Sample Title Page

Title
By
Student Name
Bachelor of Science

A Thesis
Submitted to the Graduate Faculty
Of the
State University of New York
Upstate Medical University
College of Nursing
Syracuse, New York

in partial fulfillment of the requirements

For the degree
Master of Science

Month, Year