GUIDELINES FOR MASTER’S PROJECT OPTIONS:

• MASTER’S THESIS  NURS 69800

• MASTER’S CAPSTONE  NUR59800
  ✓ CLINICAL PROJECT (3 Credits)
  • PORTFOLIO (1 Credit)
The Purpose of Research in the Master’s of Nursing Curriculum

Research and research utilization are integral parts of evidence-based nursing practice. Master’s prepared nurses must understand the importance of evidence-based practice in nursing and be able to facilitate evidence-based nursing care in their own practice. Master’s prepared nurses are frequently expected to help write clinical nursing standards and guidelines for practice settings that reflect current research findings. Many master’s prepared nurses also participate as members of a research team or conduct small research or research utilization projects.

The Purdue University School of Nursing has established a timeframe to assist you in meeting deadlines for your project or thesis. The time frames are located of the SON web page. It is your responsibility to make sure that the time frames are met in order to graduate in a timely manner. A comparison of the requirements is presented on the following pages.

As an advanced practice nurse with a master’s degree, you will be able to:

1. Demonstrate knowledge on the protection of human subjects.
2. Utilize information systems for the storage and retrieval of data/information.
3. Demonstrate how to carry out a project through problem identification, project development, implementation, and evaluation.
4. Demonstrate, in writing and orally, how to present a project using appropriate tables, figures, references, and bibliography.
5. Develop strategies to incorporate research/ best practices into clinical practice.

Masters graduates of the Purdue University School of Nursing build research and evidence-based practice skills through planned coursework and experiences. This knowledge informs advance practice nursing care.

- The first part of your research education involves completion of two required courses: NUR 51000 (Nursing Research) and a Statistics course at the 300 level or above (prerequisite).
The next part of your research education will be selecting one of three options to demonstrate the development of your skills. These include: a 6 credit Master’s Thesis, a 3 credit Capstone Project or a 1 credit Portfolio.

To participate in research projects, you must complete the Collaborative IRB Training Initiative for Investigators and Key Personnel (CITI) at https://www.citiprogram.org/default.asp.

The Difference between a Master’s Thesis and a Master’s Capstone Project

The master’s thesis is an independent research project that includes designing a study and performing the aspects of the research process. The thesis addresses a theory or knowledge gap, and results in clearly defined new knowledge that is original. The thesis may be qualitative, quantitative, or historical in nature. The finished product is written in the official “thesis” format determined by the Graduate School. A thesis generally takes 2 semesters to complete and is registered under NUR 698 (6 credits).

The capstone project is a scholarly process that addresses a theoretically and clinically relevant problem in nursing practice. The project examines the most current evidence and applies it to a clinical situation. The final product of the project is a result of work accomplished throughout the master’s program and will be a manuscript of publishable quality. It is expected that the manuscript will be submitted for publication; however, it is not a requirement to complete your degree that the project be published. Submission for publication is completed after the conclusion of the project, often with additional help from the committee chair or members, who are co-authors.

Please refer to Guidelines for Authorship on the School of Nursing Graduate Programs website for details on authorship for presentations and publications coming from your scholarly work.

**MASTER’S THESIS**

The Process of Writing the Thesis

If you elect the Thesis option, it is your responsibility to follow all the guidelines and use the graduate school approved thesis format. Very specific directions for the Thesis option are located in the Graduate School Policy and Procedures Manual for the thesis. Please refer to this URL for all directions related to completing the thesis option


See additional information and refer to pages 8-13.

**CAPSTONE CLINICAL PROJECT (3 Credits)**
The Master’s Capstone Clinical Project consists of the development of and ultimate submission of a clinical manuscript to a professional peer-reviewed journal. The student identifies a clinical condition which they choose to explore in depth throughout the program. This manuscript will be a culmination of work completed throughout the curriculum. The project may be an integrative review of a clinical concept/clinical condition or a descriptive article defining the best practices of a clinical condition.

There are many different ways to identify a project advisor/committee chair and a topic:

- You may discuss project ideas with your program director and find that this person is willing to work with you on a project arising from your own clinical interests.
- Your program director may recommend that you work with a particular faculty member who shares your interests.
- List of faculty research interests can be found on the School websites [http://www.nursing.purdue.edu/directory/?menu=listtype&type=faculty&departmentnumber=1337](http://www.nursing.purdue.edu/directory/?menu=listtype&type=faculty&departmentnumber=1337)

Students are encouraged to use assignments from courses in the graduate Nursing Core to develop ideas for the project. If you have identified a general interest and possible topic, you can become familiar with the literature in the area, clarify the concept, etc. However, the assignments completed for these courses will need to be modified to meet publication standards.

The following table demonstrates how the capstone project builds throughout the master’s program.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Course</th>
<th>Potential Project Assignment</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>NUR 50000  Theoretical Constructs in Nursing</td>
<td>Identify a conceptual model that would be useful in understanding the chosen condition; review literature related to a concept of interest</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NUR 50200 Pharmacotherapeutics in Primary Care</td>
<td>Identify the pharmacological treatment of the chosen condition</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NUR 50300 Advanced Health Assessment</td>
<td>Identify the appropriate assessment including physical, emotional, and spiritual assessment. Appropriate laboratory assessment and any other assessment parameters to the condition should be identified</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NUR 50500 Sociocultural Influences on Health</td>
<td>Identify the sociocultural aspects of the selected condition</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NUR 50700 Physiologic Concepts for Advanced Nursing Practice</td>
<td>Identify and describe the physiological mechanisms of the identified condition</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NUR 51000 Research and Evidence-Based Nursing Practice</td>
<td>Conduct a review and analyze literature related to the selected condition</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NUR 51100 Health Promotion for Advanced Nursing Practice</td>
<td>Identify appropriate health promotion/ disease prevention aspects related to the selected condition</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NUR 52800/ NUR 53200 Acute Illness (Pediatric and Adult)</td>
<td>Identify treatment options based on clinical evidence or best practices related to the chosen condition if it is an acute problem</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NUR 55200/54300 Chronic Illness (Pediatric and Adult)</td>
<td>Identify treatment options based on clinical evidence or best practices related to the chosen condition if it is a chronic</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Recommendations for formulating a Capstone Project

1. Identify the clinical problem
   - Be specific
   - Make certain that your clinical problem is focused enough to be presented concisely in a manuscript

2. Select a committee to guide your work (see The Master’s Committee below).

3. Submit a brief concept of the project to the committee members prior to the first meeting along with:
   - All relevant course assignments completed to date – provide the version that contains faculty feedback
   - Revised paper(s) where the feedback has been incorporated

4. Identify one or two professional journals for publication
   - Provide author guidelines for each to the committee

5. Outline a time frame that will guide your final project

6. Discuss authorship; who will be included and order of authorship
   It is expected that the student will exhibit leadership qualities by leading the team in the manuscript development process and thus will be first author. For more information on authorship, please see Guidelines for Authorship on the Graduate Program webpage.

7. The lead author will work closely with the committee in the preparation of the final manuscript.

8. The manuscript will not be submitted until the project chair signs the appropriate Manuscript Release Form located on the Graduate Nursing webpage.

MASTER’S CAPSTONE E-PORTFOLIO (1 Credit)

The e-portfolio is an electronic compilation of selected course assignments. Initiated during the first semester of the program, these designated assignments are entered into Typhon each semester of the program. In NUR 59800, one credit is given for e-portfolio, which must be completed by the student and evaluated by the student’s committee members in order for the student to graduate.

The e-portfolio provides documentation of educational progression and achievement of program goals. This is a reflective learning experience where students are applying best practices to their growth and development as an Adult Geriatric Nurse Practitioner (AGNP) or a Pediatric Nursing Practitioner (PNP).
The completed e-portfolio may also be applicable to future employment or entrance into a doctor of nurse practitioner program.

**E-portfolio Submission and Time Frame:** The process of e-portfolio process will be introduced at the graduate nursing students’ orientation, usually conducted at the beginning of the fall semester. This information will be expanded upon and clarified in NUR 503: Advanced Physical Assessment. During NUR 503, the student will be instructed on the use of “Typhon,” an electronic tracking system. With each completed course, the “designated graded assignment” will be loaded into the Typhon portfolio by the student at the end of each semester. (A list of the “designated graded assignments” can be found at the end of this guide and also in Typhon.)

*All components of the e-portfolio must be submitted in order to fulfill this requirement for graduation.* Committee members will evaluate submitted e-portfolio and note any omissions. Final submission is due 1 week prior to the 3rd committee meeting. Refer to the School of Nursing’s graduate website for committee dates and for detailed instructions of required assignment completion, as well as specific information on the e-portfolio option.

**FOR ALL OPTIONS**

**The Masters Committee**

The committee for the thesis/research project consists of three members: the chair and 2 other members. All members of the committee must have Graduate Appointment Status. One committee member may be external to the School of Nursing. You must keep in close working contact with your committee and establish regular meeting times. *Your committee will meet at least twice for formal meetings during the course of the project.* Other interactions are primarily between you and your committee chair.

**Writing a Proposal for Your Master’s Thesis or Capstone Project**

You will learn the components of a research proposal when you take the Nursing Research (NUR 51000) course. You can also consult with the faculty person who may eventually chair your committee as you work through the details of your project. The length of proposals can vary. Students may find they need to rework their proposal several times to achieve clarity, brevity, and completeness.

Proposals must be succinct, direct, and free of jargon. All proposals are written in the future tense. Thus, statements should be stated as, “this proposed study will collect data using...” or Results of this study will be used to ....” Also, the proposal should be written in third person, and it is seldom necessary to refer to oneself in a formal paper. A writing style that does not include a personal identification (“I”, “we”) or a given name (“Jane Doe”) should be used. If absolutely necessary, an appropriate third person term such as “this researcher” should be used. The student should comply with a formal style (e.g, APA, MLA) as appropriate for the target journal, paying attention to appropriate format for tables, headings, citations and references. Many students find that computer programs such as EndNotes, etc. are helpful in moving documents from one citation style to another.
The Initial Committee Meeting
The first, formal meeting is required to approve the topic. The meeting will include the committee chair, the other committee members, and the student. The student is to provide a copy of the proposal to each committee member at least two week prior to the meeting. A date is agreed upon and a one-hour block of time should be reserved. It is the student’s responsibility to see that a room is reserved for the meeting and to communicate to the committee members the date, time, and location for the meeting. The graduate secretary can assist you in reserving a location.

During the meeting, the committee chairperson will begin the meeting by asking you to briefly describe your topic and plan. Be prepared to provide a 5-10 minute presentation. You can expect the committee to discuss the strengths and weaknesses of your proposal, the potential impact of this work, any realistic and feasible changes they think you could make to improve it, and the limitations of what you are doing that cannot be reasonably overcome. They will also discuss any ethical and privacy concerns and the need for appropriate approvals and clearance, including Institutional Review Board (IRB) and/or Health Insurance Portability Accountability Act (HIPAA) approvals. Make sure you bring the Committee Meeting Form located on the School of Nursing web site with you for the committee to complete.

It is your responsibility to keep a record of the committee recommendations. At the end of the meeting, the committee may approve the proposal as it is or with changes. The changes may be minor or they may ask for substantial changes and want to meet again after you make those changes. Sometimes they will agree on fairly extensive changes and have you discuss the changes with the project advisor rather than having a second meeting. You need to make sure that several things are very clear at the end of the meeting:

- Any changes you need to make to the proposed work
- The approval process for the proposal once you have made the changes
- If needed and when you can submit your papers for IRB/HIPAA approval
- When, once IRB/HIPAA approval is obtained, you can begin your study

Statement of Purdue University Policy: Human Subjects and Ethical Considerations:

“To ensure the safe and ethical conduct of research involving human subjects at Purdue University, all Purdue faculty, staff, and students who wish to participate in the conduct of research involving human subjects must be familiar with and understand the underlying ethical principles, federal and state laws and regulations, and policies and procedures that compose Purdue University’s Human Research Participants Protection Program (HRPPP). To document the necessary familiarity and understanding, all Purdue faculty, staff, and students who wish to conduct research involving human subjects must be certified as having completed appropriate formal training and education before an application and protocol in which they are named will be approved or determined exempt by one of Purdue University’s Institutional Review Boards, or one of their designated subcommittees.

This education policy applies to all Purdue University principal investigators, extension educator investigators, and key project personnel, including graduate students, as well as undergraduate students, non-Purdue research personnel, and consultants who interact with subjects who participate in research involving human subjects that is reviewed by a Purdue University Institutional Review Board or one of its
designated subcommittees or by another institution’s IRB under an inter-institutional cooperative agreement with Purdue University regardless of the location where the research is to be conducted and regardless of the source of funds supporting the research.”

The IRB office is located in YOUNG Hall, Room 1032. The IRB forms are found at the website of http://www.irb.purdue.edu/forms.shtml.

The procedure for submitting IRB forms is:

- Discuss your study and the type of review it requires and any special ethical considerations with your research advisor
- Fill out the forms and have your advisor approve and sign them
- Give the signed forms to the School Head for signature
- Take the signed forms to the IRB office

When you submit forms to the IRB, we recommend that you hand-carry them to the office.

You cannot proceed with your data collection until you have written notification of IRB approval. You should give a copy of your IRB approval letter to your committee chair.

Keeping on Schedule

When you are developing the schedule for your project, be sure to leave enough time at the end for writing and revising the paper. Make sure you reference the graduation timeline located on the School of Nursing web page keep yourself on track for your planned graduation date.

Unlike a course paper, your project will need to be revised until it is acceptable to your committee. This takes time, because after you prepare a draft, you have to give your committee members a reasonable amount of time to read it (a minimum of 2 weeks); and then you will almost always need to make revisions. It is probably wise to allow for at least 2 or 3 fairly extensive revisions and a final editing. **Remember that the timely completion of your project is YOUR responsibility.** This includes identifying a project and faculty person to work with, persisting in working on the project through completion, and staying in touch with your committee chair along the way.

Strategies for Writing the Project

There are several strategies that can help you in writing the project. What you’ve already written in your proposal forms the basis for your final project. You will need to review what you’ve already written, incorporate recommendations from your advisor or committee, and update and edit your work. The final product describes what was done, the findings, and the conclusions. The tense found in the proposal is changed from future (what is the plan) to past (what was done). Any deviation from the proposal must be noted and explained.

You may want to examine articles of similar format in the journal in which you hope to publish.
It is a good idea to divide your writing tasks into smaller parts, and focus on only one part at a time. Sitting down to “write up your project” is an overwhelming task. However, describing the demographic characteristics of your sample and making a summary table is a task you could complete in a day.

Make sure that you have established authorship on your manuscript. Guidelines are available on the Graduate Nursing website. It is expected that the student be the first author. However, you may want to have faculty to assist you in this process and include them as co-authors. There are guidelines on the School of Nursing web page for determining authorship (See Authorship Guidelines).

Perhaps the hardest part for most students is writing the discussion section. You may wish to discuss this with your peers. A simple way to approach discussion is to write what you found, why it is important, what it means in terms of existing research, and the implications of your findings for future research and for clinical practice. The limitations of your findings are also addressed. Consultation with your committee chair is especially helpful during this phase of the project.

**Keeping in Touch with Committee Members**

The most common way committees operate is for you to work primarily with your committee chair. Usually, the two of you will set up regular meetings so that you can continue to make progress. You show initial drafts to your project advisor and make revisions based on that person’s comments. When your chair thinks that your project is ready, you will give a copy to your committee members and arrange a meeting to review the entire project. It is your responsibility to initiate meetings with your committee chair, not your committee chair’s responsibility.

**The Final Committee Meeting**

The procedures for the final committee meeting are very much like the proposal meeting. The date for the final presentations is set in advance by the School of Nursing and is located on the School of Nursing Web Page. You will give each member a draft of the project at least 2 weeks before the meeting. You will present a 15-minute oral summary of your project and its significance or implications for theory, future research, clinical practice, and/or health policy.

Before you come to the meeting, be sure to have Graduate School Form 7 typed and ready to be signed. This form is on our website or can be obtained from the Graduate Secretary.

During the meeting you will begin with an oral summary of your project. Handouts, overhead transparencies, or PowerPoint presentations may be appropriate (you can discuss this with your committee chair before the meeting). Then, the committee members give their comments. Sometimes they will go through page by page, or sometimes each person will discuss all his/her comments and concerns at once. They may also ask you more questions regarding the purpose and overall implications and limitations of your project. Often you will discuss publication and dissemination of your findings.

Then the Graduate Committee will discuss the project. The entire project will be available for review by this Committee. A consensus vote will be taken. The committee has three options: they can accept the
project as is; they can ask for minor revisions to be done but go ahead and approve the project pending these changes; or they can ask you to make specific changes and review these changes before the project is officially approved. Generally, the second option is used only for minor or straightforward changes such as table format, grammatical corrections, and the like. If substantive changes are necessary, the committee will determine whether these changes are extensive enough to require another meeting. If not, they may all want to see the revised version but not meet, or they may delegate one person, usually the project advisor, to oversee the revisions. When all of the requested changes have been made, the members will sign the approval form.

Grades for NUR 598/698

Performance will be graded using the following scale:

- Satisfactory – used when the student has met or exceeded requirements
- Unsatisfactory – used when the student has not met the requirements and has not invested appropriate amount of effort
- Incomplete – used when the student has invested appropriate amounts of satisfactory effort but the project is not yet finished

Final Process

When the final project is complete and your committee members have signed the Graduate School Form 7, you need to take the completed project along with the Form 7 to the Graduate Secretary.

After your committee and the School Head have signed your Form 7, return it immediately to the Graduate Secretary. Submit 2 copies of your bound project to the School of Nursing, and one electronic copy where it will be kept in the Graduate Office (the project can be bound at Printing Services Building PRNT or at the Boilermaker Copy Center in the Purdue Memorial Union. You should also keep a copy for yourself. A copy of the project (either bound or electronic) should be given to each committee member. Make sure you ask your members what format they prefer.

Graduation Deadlines

There are two deadlines that you must consider when preparing for graduation: the deadline for submitting your “Graduate School Form 7” and the deadline for submitting your completed, approved project.

If you want to officially graduate in a particular semester, you must let the Graduate Secretary know by the last day to declare candidacy for degree date. This date will be early in the semester, usually in the second or third week.

The absolute deadline for submitting your completed, approved, bound project is posted on the Graduate School Website.
The deadline for submitting a thesis is several weeks earlier; check the Graduate Schools website for dates.

**Disseminating the Results**

Your first responsibility is to share your results with the clinical site and/or subjects who are interested, if this is relevant for your project. For some studies, it is appropriate to share results with participants, and if you have offered to do this, it is important to do so promptly.

To share your results more widely, you should work with your committee to revise your paper and send it to a journal to be reviewed for publication. Your committee will generally advise you about where they think it would be accepted. You usually will need to do some additional editing. Look in the journal you are targeting for the Guidelines for Authors to get specific requirements as to length and format.

You improve your chances for publication by having your manuscripts reviewed by others. Your reviewers can be clinical experts on your topic. You may also choose to have the manuscript reviewed for clarity by someone who is not an expert in the topic. The process of peer review is an important part of scholarship and one you will want to use whether you are preparing reports at your work site or writing for publications.

You should also submit your research to be presented as a poster or a paper at a regional or national meeting. This is a good way to disseminate findings with clinical relevance. It is also a good way for you to meet people with similar interests and to begin to establish yourself as a master’s prepared nurse with research as well as clinical skills and interests.

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