

**Armstrong Atlantic State University
Graduate Program in Nursing**

The Master's Thesis and Project are scholarly activities with the potential to positively influence nursing practice, patient care, and to contribute to nursing science. In Thesis or Project work, the graduate nursing student identifies a need or problem that is relevant to his or her area of program concentration. Graduate nursing students complete the Project or Thesis work incrementally across three or more semesters. See Project or Thesis Paper guidelines for more details.

Project/Thesis Timelines and Outcomes

Idea Formulation

Graduate nursing students should develop an idea of interest & use course assignments to begin the literature review in core nursing courses (NURS 7750 & NURS 7752). In subsequent courses, students continue to develop a substantive review of the literature.

Spring (a year before expected graduation)

Select committee chair and members.

Graduate students will register in Chair's section.

Discuss guidelines/process of project vs. thesis.

Topic and beginning references must be approved by Chair and members.

Outcome #1: Committee chair & committee members identified.

Outcome #2: Committee has met & topic is approved.

Outcome #3: Thesis/Project Committee Agreement and Topic Approval Form completed and filed with Graduate Secretary.

Outcome #4: Proposal written—1st 3 sections or thesis chapters, including completed initial Review of the Literature. Must complete all papers in correct APA format.

Must meet outcome/deadlines. Failure to do so may mean renegotiation of graduation date.

Summer

Students continue self-paced work.

Fall

Graduate students will register with their individual committee chairs.

Outcome #1: IRB(s) submitted in 1st 4 weeks for Thesis.

Outcome #2: Completed Introduction, Review of the Literature, and Methodology sections or chapters by Midterm. Must complete all papers in correct APA format.

Outcome #3: After Midterm, begin to implement with Chair & Committee's approval.

Outcome #4: Committee meets at least twice during the semester.

Must meet outcome/deadlines. Failure to do so may mean renegotiation of graduation date.

Spring of Graduation

Graduate students will register with their individual committee chairs.

Outcome #1: By Midterm, all chapters (sections) essentially completed and ready to defend.

Project/Thesis Presentation: Following committee approval, the student will need to coordinate the potential presentation date and time with committee members. The Chair will schedule a formal presentation with the graduate nursing office. The presentation will be followed by a comprehensive assessment (defense) by the committee and must occur in the semester of graduation.

Outcome #2: Defense successfully completed.

Outcome #3: Scholarly paper revisions completed. Submit bound final copies to Chair.

Must meet outcome/deadlines. Failure to do so may mean renegotiation of graduation date.

Graduate Secretary

Will keep notebooks by faculty name & by student name.

Will assure 5 students maximum (committee chair or member) per faculty.

Will coordinate all thesis/project activity such as defense dates, rooms, etc.

Will send letters upon Chair request if outcomes not met.

Will publicize student presentation dates so that other students and faculty can attend.

Revised Fall 2007

THESIS AND PROJECT COMMITTEE SELECTION AND RESPONSIBILITIES

Selection of Committee Members:

The student should select committee members who have expertise or interest in the subject matter related to the project or thesis.

Project. The project committee consists of a nursing chair with graduate faculty status and two other nursing faculty members with expertise or interest in the subject matter related to the project.

Thesis. The thesis committee is composed of a nursing chairperson (chair) with full graduate faculty status at Armstrong Atlantic State University and a minimum of two additional committee members. Other committee members with qualifications in the area of the student's research interest may be chosen from the nursing faculty. One non-nursing faculty member may be selected.

Responsibilities of the Chair:

The major responsibility for project or thesis advisement remains with the student's chair. Each individual committee member has the responsibility of responding to the student's requests for consultation. The chair is expected to work most closely with the student and to facilitate the student's completion of the project or thesis.

The chair directs proposal meetings. During proposal meetings, the chair makes notes for suggestions and recommendations and at the end of the meeting summarizes the requested changes and clarifies the committee's decision as to the acceptability of the proposal and the next step for the student.

Responsibilities of the Committee:

As a group, the committee has the following responsibilities:

1. Advising the student through all phases of the project or research process.
2. Approving the proposal prior to IRB submission.
3. Reading drafts of proposal and final write-ups and providing feedback to the student.
4. Attending committee meetings as the student progresses through the project or thesis process.
5. Evaluating the project or thesis, and providing a passing, passing with distinction, or failing grade.

Responsibilities of the Student:

The student should meet frequently with the chair throughout all phases of the project or thesis process: proposal development; instrument development and testing; product creation; obtaining necessary permission for the use of human subjects or access to various clinical sites; data collection and data analysis for interpretation of research findings or evaluation of project objectives; and writing of the final report.

The student is responsible for:

1. Scheduling meetings with the chair and other committee member(s) as needed.
2. Providing the chair and the committee member(s) with drafts of written materials at least two weeks prior to scheduled meetings.
3. Submitting proposals for research to the Institutional Review Board.
4. Setting up a calendar of deadlines with the chair for each phase in the project/thesis.
5. Completing and assisting with filing all materials with the School of Graduate Studies.
6. Registering for the appropriate courses while project or thesis work is in progress.
7. Carefully proofing drafts for grammar and APA format prior to submission to Committee. Making all corrections as directed by Chair and Committee.
8. Submitting the required number of bound copies of the paper as directed upon completion.

THESIS: POLICIES AND PROCEDURES

Thesis: All graduate nursing students must complete a 6 credit hour thesis option as outlined in these policies and guidelines. **The identified research problem should be within the student's area of program concentration. It should be relevant to nursing and of interest to the student.** All *Incomplete* grades must be removed from the student's transcript before the student will be allowed to register for NURS 8899 (thesis) or NURS 8897 (project). Students must have completed the 12 credit hours of core plus six additional credit hours to register for NURS 8897 or NURS 8899.

THESIS POLICY

Graduate students selecting and completing the thesis option will complete a **minimum of 6 credit hours**. The purpose of the master's thesis is to provide students with the opportunity to apply theoretical and empirical knowledge and skills to the systematic investigation of a nursing problem. An investigation that contributes to nursing knowledge is encouraged. The student may wish to replicate a previous study, build on research that has been done by others, or work on some aspect of a faculty member's research project, or pursue original research. Thesis defense must be completed no later than mid-term prior to graduation. It is imperative that the student consult regularly with the chair and committee to determine readiness for the final defense.

THESIS PROPOSAL GUIDELINES

Following are the outlines for quantitative or qualitative studies. These outlines are to be used when writing up the proposal report for theses. Note that the written report may vary slightly depending on whether the research study is of a quantitative or qualitative perspective.

FORMAT FOR REPORTS OF QUANTITATIVE AND QUALITATIVE STUDIES

When the final thesis is written and submitted for approval, the student should follow the approved graduate school guidelines. The body of the text for quantitative and qualitative studies should follow the format listed below. However, some differences may occur due to study design, or preferences by the researcher or the committee.

Chapter 1: Introduction

- 1. Introduction of the Problem:**
2. Statement of the Problem:
3. Significance of the Study:
4. Statement of Purpose:
A purpose statement need not be a single sentence but it probably should not be more than one or two paragraphs. A purpose statement should indicate the "who", "what", "when", and "where" of the study.
5. Research Questions/Hypotheses:
6. Theoretical Framework/Model:
Discuss the organizing framework or theory selected for your study. Explore the framework and clearly delineate the applicability to your study.
7. Definition of Terms:
In this section, major terms that are needed to understand the study purpose and methodology should be defined at a level necessary for this understanding. Every definition that might be made in the study does not have to be included in this section. It can be assumed that readers are professional nurses. Judgment should be used as to which terms need explicit definition, or are likely to be unfamiliar. Operational definitions should be included.
8. Assumptions:
It is not possible to list all assumptions. Judgment is required to identify major assumptions.
9. Limitations:
As with assumptions, it is not possible to state all limitations. Restrict the focus to the major limitations.

Chapter 2. Review of Literature: The literature review must focus on current research related to the variable of interest

A. Literature Related to Statement of Purpose

References that have immediate implications for the study are critically reviewed and analyzed. When summarizing or comparing studies be sure to note differences between study methodologies or findings. Be explicit in demonstrating or stating the relevance of all cited literature. Carefully select the quality of the sources cited. Organize your literature review with an introductory paragraph and the use of appropriate heading and subheadings. Extensiveness of the review will be determined by the type of study, and the amount of information available related to your topic(s).

B. Literature Related to Theoretical Framework

Include research and /or theoretical references which support your selection of the underlying framework of the study.

Chapters 3-5: Quantitative Studies

Chapter 3: Methodology

A. Introduction

Introduce the organization of the chapter. In the introduction, briefly address the major sections of the chapter, including data collection and analysis procedures.

B. Design of the Study.

Identify and briefly describe the design of the study. Include identification of extraneous variables, and discussion of the control achieved through the design.

C. Statement of the Population

The specific population to be studied should be defined.

D. Sampling Design

The method of obtaining the sample from the population should be described.

E. Protection of Human Rights

The steps necessary to obtain approval for conducting research with human subjects are described as well as a clear description of how confidentiality will be maintained throughout the study. Discuss the potential risks and benefits to the subjects.

F. Instrumentation

This section includes treatment of validity and reliability of the instruments to be used.

G. Collection of Data

Procedures used to contact subjects should be described. Information on instrument administration is detailed. Information on instrument scoring procedures is provided.

H. Analysis of Data

The anticipated statistical procedures to be used are identified. Assumptions required for the statistical procedures are reviewed. The nature of the test(s) and the level of significance to be used should be stated.

Chapter 4: Analysis and Findings

In this chapter, the researcher presents the results of careful analysis of the statistical results. **These results are interpreted in light of the study hypotheses or research questions, assumptions, limitations, and other factors which may have affected the results.**

Chapter 5: Discussion, Implications and Recommendations

Chapter 5 includes a summary of the study, discussion of the findings as they are related to the research questions and theoretical framework, conclusions which may be drawn, implications for nursing and recommendations for further research.

Chapters 3-5: Qualitative Studies

Chapter 3: Methodology

A. Introduction

Introduce the organization of the chapter. In the introduction, briefly address the major sections of the chapter, including data collection and analysis procedures.

B. Sample/Sampling

The specific population of interest is described and the techniques for obtaining study participants are clearly described. The sample selection techniques must be appropriate to the selected methodology.

C. Protection of Human Rights

The steps necessary to obtain approval for conducting research with human subjects are described as well as a clear description of how confidentiality will be maintained throughout the study. Discuss the potential risks and benefits to the subjects.

D. Procedures

The procedures for data collection and data analysis are described in detail. This section reflects that the student has a good understanding of the procedures involved in conducting the qualitative study.

E. Verification

Address how reliability and validity will be achieved throughout the study. There is some overlap in the procedures for achieving reliability and validity in qualitative designs. This section should be consistent with the methodology selected and adhere to the assumptions upon which qualitative studies are based.

Chapter 4: Analysis and Findings

In this chapter, the researcher presents a description of the thematic or theoretical constructs uncovered in the study as well as further literature review whereby the findings are linked with other types of data sources or studies in related fields or related areas which are described in the literature.

Chapter 5: Discussion, Implications & Recommendations

Chapter 5 presents a summary of the study, discussion of the findings, conclusions which may be drawn, implications for nursing and recommendations for further research.

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Project Paper Guidelines

General Directions

The project paper is a scholarly work. In the Project work, the graduate nursing student identifies a need or problem that is relevant to his or her area of program concentration. The final form of the project includes a written scholarly paper and a "product". The product may include a variety of forms: videos, educational materials, program evaluations, program development, to name a few. The final form of the product will be determined by the committee assisting the student in the endeavor.

Plagiarism will not be tolerated in any submission of the paper. Primary reference sources should be used. The current edition of APA must be used for all elements of the paper including heading levels format. Writing should demonstrate mastery of grammar and syntax. Graduate nursing students should proof drafts carefully before submitting to their committee. All committee submissions must be submitted two weeks in advance of the committee meeting to give faculty time for review and comments. The following items delineate the sections of the Project Paper:

Introduction:

Introduction to the Problem: This section broadly introduces the topic while laying the foundation for the development of the problem statement. The literature is used to support the identification of this issue as a problem. It may include a brief overview of relevant statistics and other data. Information may be presented from a global to a regional or local perspective. At the end of the section, clearly describe the problem that the project addresses.

Significance of the Problem to Nursing Practice: This section describes the importance of this project to the area of interest in the profession of nursing. This section does not address importance to the investigator or setting. In short, it is the "so what" aspect of the project as it applies to nursing.

Statement of Purpose: A purpose statement indicates the intent or aim of the project. It gives the reader a beginning idea of what the project will accomplish. Further, relevance of the project to the problem is addressed.

Theoretical Framework/Model: This section discusses the organizing framework or theory selected to support the project. Exploration and discussion of the framework as well as a clear delineation of how the theory applies to the project is addressed.

Review of Literature

The literature review should be organized to include an introductory paragraph that discusses information to be presented in the section. Appropriate heading and subheadings should be used to guide the reader. Extensiveness of the review will be determined by the project, and the amount of information available related to the topic. The literature review must focus on current research related to the project.

Literature Related to Statement of Problem and Purpose: References that have immediate implications for the project are critically reviewed, analyzed and synthesized. The relevance of all cited literature to the project should be made explicit. Sources should be carefully selected and reflect appropriate quality and rigor.

Literature Related to Theoretical Framework: Include research and /or theoretical references which support selection of the underlying framework of the project.

Summary of the Review of the Literature: The concluding paragraphs should succinctly synthesize important studies and concepts as they relate to the project. The reader should conclude the review of the literature with a clear understanding of the "state of the science" as it relates to the project.

Methodology

Include an introductory paragraph that discusses information to be presented in this section.

Design of the Project: Re-state the purpose. **What** are you proposing to do? How are you proposing to develop the project?

Project Participants: **Who** is the target audience? **Where** and **when** will you access them?

Implementation: **How** and **when** are you planning to implement your project?

Evaluation: **What** is the plan for evaluation?

Results: **What** are the results of your implementation?

The methodology section describes the "who", "what", "when", and "where" of the project. Description of expert panel consultation and small pilot studies are included in this section. Scope of implementation of the project will be determined by the committee. The methodology section describes implementation efforts as well as formative and summative evaluation. It may also include any pertinent information regarding meetings, memos, minutes of meetings, educational materials, or any other information necessary for understanding the process undertaken to accomplish the project. The use of appendices is recommended for the ordering of this additional information.

Conclusion

Include an introductory paragraph that discusses information to be presented in this section.

Discussion: Discuss the findings or results of your project. Be specific. Utilize the literature review to address your findings or results.

Conclusion: discuss the conclusions that may be drawn from the implementation & evaluation of the project.

Implications: Discuss the implications of this project for nursing practice.

Recommendations: State your recommendations for future nursing project implementation and/or future nursing research.

Appendices and Reference List

Follow the current APA guidelines for formatting. Make sure that all references cited in the body of the paper are included on the reference list. Similarly, be sure that all items on the reference list are actually cited in the paper.

Spring 2006

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Thesis/Project Committee Agreement and Topic Approval Form*

1. Student's name: _____

2. Anticipated semester of graduation: _____

3. Thesis/Project topic idea (attach a 2-3 page summary, including the problem, purpose, significance, brief review of the literature and methodology):

4. Chair's Signature: _____ Date: _____

5. Committee members' signatures:

Date: _____

Date: _____

6. Student signature: _____ Date: _____

*** Form is to be completed within the first four weeks of the first semester registering for Thesis/Project.**

This form is to be filed in the student's folder in the Graduate Nursing Office with a copy to committee chair and members.

Rev. Fall 2007

**ARMSTRONG ATLANTIC STATE UNIVERSITY
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Thesis/Project Proposal Approval Form*

1. **Student's name:** _____

2. **Tentative Thesis/Project Title:** _____

3. **Statement of problem and purpose of the Thesis/Project. (Attach Ch 1-3 or sections)**

4. **Anticipated site of implementation and evaluation:**

5. **Anticipated date of graduation:** _____

APPROVAL RECOMMENDED:

Committee Chair	Date
Committee member	Date
Committee member	Date
Student signature	Date

*** Proposal is to be completed within the first semester registering for Thesis/Project.**

This form is to be filed in the student's folder in the Graduate Nursing Office with a copy to committee chair and members.

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