

Winona State University

Department of Graduate Nursing

MASTER OF SCIENCE THESIS and SCHOLARLY INQUIRY PAPER GENERAL



Introduction to Master's Thesis and Scholarly Inquiry Paper (SIP)

These guidelines provide information, including background and rationale, about the need to complete a major project or paper as part of the Graduate School Requirements. A Thesis or Scholarly Inquiry Paper (SIP) satisfies this requirement for a Master's degree nursing student in NURS 615: *Scholarly Inquiry Paper/Thesis*. A manuscript based on a Thesis or SIP may be submitted for publication.

Generally, the formatting in a SIP or Thesis is aligned with the latest edition of the APA Publication Manual (2020). See Specific Guidelines and formatting requirements for either a Thesis or SIP. Appendices include required forms and helpful information to assist with your writing. Additional resources for writing and formatting are found in the "Resources for Graduate Nursing Students" D2L/Brightspace website. The Writing Center at WSU or your tutor.com are resources for writing skills, as needed.

The two credits for NURS 615 are normally taken for one credit each semester (over two semesters) to allow adequate time to meet with your SIP or Thesis advisor and follow these guidelines for a quality end product.

I. INTRODUCTION to the MS GRADUATE NURSING STUDENT SCHOLARSHIP REQUIREMENT

A requirement for the Master of Science (MS) Degree in Nursing is completion of a Thesis or Scholarly Inquiry Paper (SIP)¹. Both options provide in-depth analyses of a clinically relevant topic and are concerned with the research foundation for clinical practice. The Thesis is completed in groups of two to three individuals, while the Scholarly Inquiry Paper is completed individually. A graduate faculty advisor is required for both options; this advisor will have experience/expertise in the topical area to guide students in the process and may be different from your academic advisor.

The American Association of Colleges of Nursing (AACN) (2006) describes the purposes of scholarly preparation at the Master's level in nursing:

Master's programs prepare nurses to evaluate research findings and to develop and implement evidence-based practice guidelines. Their leadership skills enable them to form and lead teams within their agencies and professional groups. They identify practice and systems problems that require study, and they collaborate with scientists to initiate research ("Creating a Culture and Workforce for Nursing Research" section, para 4).

Students learn the processes for research and scholarly inquiry throughout their core courses. During NURS 614: *Evidence-based Practice*, Master's degree students formulate which scholarship option they plan to complete. Both Thesis and SIP require students to frame a question in the context of clinical significance and analyze levels of evidence in the literature related to the problem area of interest. Both options require capstone writing experience with a final document. A graduate faculty advisor and at least one other committee member are guides through each option. The Thesis/SIP Specific Guidelines are provided for consistency in formatting and style, although your Thesis/SIP advisor may have additional suggestions to follow.

A. The Thesis or SIP Process

Both the Thesis and SIP have established processes for MS students to follow. Table 1 provides information about the differences and similarities of these two options.

¹ In some instances, the advisor/committee chairperson may determine that the unique learning needs of an individual student may require a scholarship project that falls outside the goals and description of the Thesis or Scholarly Inquiry Paper. In this instance, a professional study approach will be determined between the advisor and student to meet WSU's scholarship goals. The student will register for NURS 685 Individual Study in Nursing for 1-3 credits and contract for the appropriate learning objectives with the advisor/committee chairperson for professional study completion.

Table 1
Comparison of Thesis and Scholarly Inquiry Paper (SIP) Options

Section	Thesis	Scholarly Inquiry Paper
Emphasis	Conduct of secondary analysis research or working with faculty on a research question.	Analysis and synthesis of information related to a clinical question, using a variety of knowledge bases; depends on the method used.
Goal	Contribution to an open knowledge base that may be referenced by others.	Development of clinical, education, research, and/ or practice recommendation(s) based on the evidence reviewed.
Literature Review and Synthesis of Evidence	Required.	Required.
Conceptual Model/ Theory/Map	Required, type depends on the research question and literature.	Required, type depends on question and method used.
Method	Secondary analysis from a faculty member's research project or working with faculty on a research project.	Directed by the purpose of the paper; commonly an integrated literature review; may be a concept analysis, theory critique, or policy analysis. Method is negotiated with SIP advisor and depends on the question.
Analysis	Data analysis required, related to the research question(s). Secondary analysis of a faculty member's database or other project.	Negotiated with SIP advisor; commonly a critical analysis of evidence reviewed with recommendations based on the evidence for the problem of study.
End Product	Thesis, chapter 5 may be a manuscript. Group work.	Portions of the SIP may become a manuscript. Individual work.
Thesis/SIP Advisor	**Nursing faculty with Graduate Faculty Status of: "Doctoral Faculty Status" or "Graduate Faculty Status I" and approval of Graduate Council.	**Nursing faculty with Graduate Faculty Status of "Doctoral Faculty Status" or "Graduate Faculty Status I".
Thesis/SIP Committee Member(s)	Thesis advisor and at least one other nursing faculty with Graduate Faculty "Doctoral Faculty Status" or "Graduate Faculty Status I or II" with approval of Graduate Council. Ex-officio members serve at the discretion of the student and/or advisor.	SIP advisor and at least one other nursing faculty with Graduate Faculty "Doctoral Faculty Status" or "Graduate Faculty Status I or II" with approval of Graduate Council. Ex-officio members serve at the discretion of the student and/or advisor.
Proposal	Required includes chapters I-III	Not applicable. Ongoing draft portions to SIP advisor.
WSU Human Subjects	Required.	Confer with SIP advisor; not usually required.
Oral Examination and Defense of the Thesis or SIP	Required upon completion. Needs pre planning for dates, time, delivery method	Required upon completion. Needs pre planning for dates, time, delivery method
Required Pre-requisite courses	NURS 600; NURS 614	NURS 600; NURS 614
Final Disposition	Submit FINAL copy to Open River (SE MN digital open access).	Submit FINAL copy to Open River (SE MN digital open access).
Future Advantages	In-depth application of research process, if planning future research (e.g., PhD). May publish.	In-depth analysis of a topic; may provide background for a future EBP project (e.g., work related or if a future DNP). In-depth review of evidence with nursing recommendations. May publish.

Note. * WSU Graduate Education Requirement, Reference Graduate Catalog

***"Doctoral Faculty Status"= full-time tenured or probationary appointment/ assistant, associate, or professor rank at WSU; "Graduate Faculty Status I" =Full-time tenured or probationary faculty appointment or fixed term appointment/ assistant, associate, or professor rank at WSU; "Graduate Faculty Status II" = Adjunct faculty or expert practitioner and community content expert. FROM WSU website: <https://www.winona.edu/policies/Images/3-18%20NEW.pdf>

B. Beginning the Process for a Thesis or SIP

NURS 615 is the Master's sequenced course after NURS 614 for either a Thesis or SIP. Students work individually with their advisor for a SIP or in their group with their advisor for a Thesis. Several drafts are written during this time. One credit for two semesters (the typical route) OR two credits for one semester may be taken for NURS 615.

NURS 600 and NURS 614 provide students with a foundation for problem identification, literature/evidence review, question development, and methods for conducting either the Thesis or SIP. Through a process of student input and faculty expertise, students are assigned an advisor, based on faculty expertise. If a Thesis is the selected option, students may request their group members (a group is no more than three). However, final assignments depend on topic and faculty workload. Ideally, Thesis/SIP faculty advisor assignments are made near the end of NURS 614. This allows early planning for the SIP timeline or Thesis contract.

Students should meet early with their assigned Thesis or SIP advisor to determine potential questions for study and develop a project timeline. It is imperative to develop a **project timeline** with their advisor. Thesis groups may develop a contract between the student group members and the principal investigator(s) of the primary study. The contract/timeline identifies work to be completed, who is responsible for the work, and the anticipated completion date of each activity. A template/example of each contract type is provided when enrolled in NURS 615. Any other project completion tool may be used so that the SIP or Thesis stays on time. These may be adjusted as the project progresses.

Normally there are several drafts and many edits for a quality product. The writing process is similar to the process graduates use in grant writing and manuscript preparation and offers an opportunity to gain scholarly leadership skills. NURS 615 is taken continuously until the Thesis or SIP is completed. The nature of work during this time is negotiated between the student and the Thesis/SIP advisor. The student keeps the advisor informed of progress in completing the study throughout this time. The advisor determines when the product is adequate to be sent to the other committee member for the next step (i.e., a Thesis proposal, Thesis defense meeting, or a SIP defense meeting).

C. Dissemination of the Final Product

Following a satisfactory oral presentation/examination, the student completes final revisions to the paper and submits the revisions to their Thesis or SIP advisor. The advisor must approve the final version and sign off on the "Thesis/Scholarly Inquiry Paper Approval and Completion" form before the student(s) submits the final edited version to the [Open River Digital Repository](#). Past MS student documents can be viewed at this site at the Kreuger Library. Details about submission to this WSU repository are provided to the student(s) when the Thesis or SIP is final. See specific formatting guidelines for the SIP or Thesis and forms needed by the Department of Graduate Studies and the Office of Graduate Studies at various stages.

Students are encouraged to submit an abstract of their Thesis to ProQuest for publication. More information can be found at ProQuest's website: <https://www.etdadmin.com/main/submitting>. Before deciding to upload your work to ProQuest or Open River, please review the publishing agreement and consideration of an embargo, especially if you plan to submit a manuscript.

Students are encouraged to disseminate the Thesis/SIP to a wider professional or lay audience. For instance, consider submitting a manuscript to a scholarly journal or an abstract to a conference for a poster or podium presentation. Consult with your Thesis/SIP advisor for assistance in dissemination.

D. Professional Writing

A hallmark of a graduate student is scholarly investigation written for a professional audience. *The Publication Manual of the American Psychological Association* (APA) 7th ed. (APA, 2020) is used throughout the Graduate Programs in Nursing. It is vital that students are familiar with this manual, including formatting, writing style, citations, and references. WSU has writing assistance at the WSU Writing Center [Writing Center](#) in Minné 348 and available via zoom. WSU also supports Tutor.com with support 24/7 (See your D2L/Brightspace main page or under the “Resource” menu on the course page). Faculty may require a submission of your writing at any time to a plagiarism checker.

Writing and formatting resources are available on the “Resources for Graduate Nursing Students” D2L/Brightspace site (you must self-register initially on the D2L home page - <https://winona.learn.minnstate.edu/> - sign in and click on “self-registration” at the top left of the page to locate this site, unless you have already “enrolled”). There are helpful resources on this site, created by other nursing graduate students, to assist you in writing, formatting, and presenting your Thesis or SIP.

Summary

Either the Thesis or SIP provides the scholarly work required for your graduate degree. It is a step toward your future work in your advanced nursing role and offers a scholarly experience to build upon. Work closely with your faculty Thesis or SIP advisor and be mindful of timelines, organization of this project, and synthesis of past coursework in your MS program. Use this general guideline, as well as the guideline specific to either the Thesis or Scholarly Inquiry Paper for more directions and formatting.