

Winona State University  
Department of Graduate Nursing

**MASTER OF SCIENCE**

**SCHOLARLY PAPER  
GUIDELINES**



## **Introduction to the Master of Science in Nursing's Scholarly Paper**

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. The Scholarly Paper satisfies this requirement for a Master's degree nursing student in NURS 615: *Scholarly Inquiry and Innovation in Nursing*. A manuscript based on your Scholarly Paper may be submitted for publication.

Generally, the formatting of this paper is aligned with the latest edition of the APA Publication Manual (2020). See Specific Guidelines and formatting requirements. 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 semester. This course is graded with modules guiding Master's students through the process with their assigned faculty Paper Supervisor (PS).

### **INTRODUCTION to the MS GRADUATE NURSING STUDENT SCHOLARSHIP REQUIREMENT**

A requirement for the Master of Science (MS) Degree in Nursing is completion of a Scholarly Paper. The Scholarly Paper, completed individually, provides in-depth analyses of a clinically relevant topic, with focus on the research foundation for clinical practice. A graduate faculty Paper Supervisor with experience/expertise in the topical area will guide students in the process. The Paper Supervisor 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 in nursing level:

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 scholarly inquiry throughout their core courses. During NURS 615 students frame a question in the context of clinical significance and appraise levels of evidence and quality with a thorough search for evidence related to the problem area of interest. The final Scholarly Paper is designed as a capstone writing experience. A graduate faculty Paper Supervisor serves as your main guide. A second faculty member serves as a "second reader" of your final draft near the end and assists with the final oral defense meeting. NURS 615 has online content, with frequent meetings and feedback from your faculty Paper Supervisor.

### **Overview of the Scholarly Paper Process**

The Scholarly Paper is normally considered an Integrative Literature Review, yet other methods can be used, such as a scoping review, policy analysis or theory evaluation. See Appendix A for these potential resources. Consult with your faculty Paper Supervisor (PS) if you desire to use any of those methods, still aligning with the Scholarly Paper Guidelines and formatting.

Students should meet early with their assigned faculty PS to determine potential questions for study and develop a project timeline. Several modules are built into the NURS 615 D2L course along with scoring rubrics to keep the paper on time.

Normally there are several drafts 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. The faculty PS determines when the product is an adequate draft to be sent to the second faculty reader for the next step -a Scholarly Paper defense meeting before the end of the semester.

## Dissemination of the Final Product

Following a satisfactory oral defense presentation the student completes final revisions to the paper and submits the revisions to their Faculty PS who must approve the final version and sign off on the “Scholarly Paper Approval and Completion” form. Next, this signed form will be sent to the student to include near the beginning of the paper. Finally, the student 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 when the final paper is submitted. See specific formatting guidelines and forms needed by the Department of Graduate Studies and the Office of Graduate Studies at various stages on the NURS 615 D2L Course.

Students are encouraged to work with their faculty PS if they wish to submit a manuscript to a journal for potential publication. They may also submit an abstract of their paper to ProQuest for abstract 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 Scholarly Paper 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 your faculty PS for assistance in dissemination.

## 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) 7<sup>th</sup> 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 Scholarly Paper.

## Scholarly Paper Guidelines and Formatting

The following information serves as a guide for formatting your nursing Master’s degree final product (*Scholarly Paper*). Refer to the appropriate guideline section and appendices as you format each section. A checklist for following APA style is in Appendix B. Your research text or another research book is a helpful resource, such as for writing your question and appraising/evaluating the evidence.

### Beginning

Start by meeting with your faculty Paper Supervisor (PS) to create a timeline and provide an update about your potential topic and whether you have started any preliminary work toward the paper.

Review both these guidelines and the content modules on the NURS 615 D2L course.

Start with a beginning question about a practice topic that can be “answered” via the evidence.

Do a preliminary library search, using the Database Search Table (Appendix C) to track your search terms and databases used. Keep refining the search, tracking the evidence to “save”.

Write a purpose or aim.

Once you have determined your question (e.g., narrowed or expanded or revised per the evidence), begin adding each piece of evidence to the Literature Review Table (Appendix D).

Use appraisal tools that are appropriate to the methods of your evidence (see Appendix E for some options). You do not need to attach all appraisal tools with your scoring except for using the AGREE II tool (The AGREE Research Trust, 2017) if you have a clinical guideline to appraise. Your faculty PS may have additional requests for inclusion.

Discuss the method you are using for this paper (See Appendix A or other sources)

Begin writing, following the format or template provided on the course D2L.

### **Conceptualizing**

Work with your faculty PS to determine a theory, framework, or model that can organize your paper. Refer to options and ideas on the course D2L site.

Meet with your faculty PS and assure you are still aligned with your timeline.

Continue writing, perhaps applying the theory, framework, or model you selected. Complete synthesis and summary of the literature review section.

Continue searching for evidence and writing.

Submit your draft and communicate with your faculty PS for feedback. Make revisions.

Discuss a timeline and potential date for your defense presentation of the Scholarly Paper. Check with the second reader for date availability.

### **Recommendations and Paper Summary**

Synthesize recommendations that relate to or answer your question. You may revise your question, if needed, to conform with the evidence that was found.

Summarize what you found succinctly. Your literature review table can assist you to see themes or commonalities/differences in results or outcomes of the evidence reviewed.

List your recommendations for the stated problem. Apply any ideas/findings from your evidence.

Offer any practical suggestions for your audience (e.g., for practice, education, research, policy, etc.)

Submit this final draft to the NURS 615 Assignment dropbox for your faculty PS’s review

### **Finalizing the Paper and the Scholarly Paper Defense Presentation**

Refer to formatting for the Scholarly Paper in Appendix F and be sure to review the paper for all APA requirements (e.g., use the APA/Grammar checklist).

Incorporate feedback from your faculty PS into this final draft.

Send a clean final copy to your faculty PS and the second faculty reader about two weeks prior to your defense meeting/presentation.

Finalize plans with your faculty PS and inform the Office Assistant Specialist (OAS) for what (Project Title and abstract) when (date & time), and where, (what delivery method you desire for your defense meeting/presentation -in-person or zoom). The presentation portion is open to anyone you or the faculty desire to invite.

Prepare your powerpoint or materials for your presentation. The defense presentation is an overview of your paper (introduction as to why this was of interest or need; your question, aim, or purpose; an overview of your evidence, such as in summary table form, a PRISM figure, or anything to show your work; any themes or overview of the findings from the evidence; and recommendations for practice, research, education, and/or policy as applicable to your findings. May include limitations or other content, but your presentation time limit is less than 20 minutes.

Complete your presentation on the date.

Your faculty PS and second reader will score you on both the overall paper and your presentation. Work with your faculty PS about an agenda for what you can expect. See the rubric for scoring your final paper on the NURS 615 D2L course.

Your faculty PS and faculty second reader normally have more revisions to share with you, as well as questions. Be prepared to respond.

Following this defense meeting, complete any revisions requested in a timely manner and return to your faculty PS. Once those changes are approved, your faculty PS will sign the final form (Note: if you plan to graduate at the end of this semester, and your paper is not finalized -signed off- this may delay your degree conferral). The “Scholarly Paper Approval and Completion” form must be completed and submitted to the Registrar showing completion of this final Master’s graduate product.

The OAS will send you directions about loading your Scholarly Paper to Krueger Library’s Open River site. This is highly encouraged. However, if you plan to submit this as a manuscript to a journal for potential publication, check their author guidelines, as Open River is considered a “publication” and the journal’s requirement may want a non-published manuscript. Work with your faculty PS about this.

## References

American Association of Colleges of Nursing. (2006). *Nursing research*. Retrieved from <http://www.aacn.nche.edu/publications/position/nursing-research>

American Psychological Association. (2020). *Publication manual of the American Psychological Association* (7<sup>th</sup> ed.). Author.

The AGREE Research Trust. (2017). *Appraisal of guidelines for research & evaluation II (AGREE II)*.

Canadian Institute of Health Research. <https://www.agreetrust.org/>

## APPENDIX A

### SUGGESTED RESOURCES FOR SCHOLARLY PAPER METHODS

#### **Methods and Differences for Literature Review, Integrative Literature Review, and Scoping Review**

Bowden, V. & Purper, C. (2022). Part 3: Literature review, Integrative review, Scoping review...Part 3. *Pediatric Nursing*, 48(2), 97-100.

<https://research-ebsco-com.wsuproxy.mnpals.net/linkprocessor/plink?id=6d14c264-8d43-3616-bfbb-728c53cf6f61>

#### **Integrative Literature Review Methods**

Cronin, P., Ryan, F., & Coughlan, M. (2008). Undertaking a literature review: A step-by-step approach. *British Journal of Nursing*, 17(1), 38-43.

In addition to basic explanation of types of literature reviews, gives steps for searching. Notes hints about writing the review and basic searching approaches.

Hoglander, J., et al. (2023). Registered nurse-patient communication research: An integrative review for future directions in nursing research. *Journal of Advanced Nursing*, 79, 539-562. doi: 10.1111/jan.15548  
A good example of an integrative literature review.

Hopia, H., Latvala, E., & Liimatainen, L. (2016). Reviewing the methodology of an integrative review. *Scandinavian Journal of Caring Sciences*, 30, 662-229. doi: 10.1111/scs.12327

Whittemore, R., & Knafl, K. (2005). The integrative review: Updated methodology. *Journal of Advanced Nursing*, 52(5), 546-553.

Defines various methodologies of literature reviews; offers a framework for integrative reviews, especially data management from the review.

#### **Theory Evaluation**

McEwen, M., & Wills, E. M. (2019 or other edition). *Theoretical basis for nursing*. Wolters Kluwer/Lippincott Williams & Wilkins.

Chapter 5 provides theory evaluation; additional chapters provide in-depth explanation of selected theories.

Peterson, S. J., & Bredow, T. S. (2009 or other edition). *Middle range theories: Application to nursing research*. (2<sup>nd</sup> ed.). Wolters Kluwer/Lippincott Williams & Wilkins.

Chapter 2 has various authors' theory evaluation methods; pages 58 & 59 offer a process for evaluation of middle range theories.

Reed, P. G. (2022). Midrange theory evaluation to advance nursing knowledge. *Nursing Science Quarterly*, 35(3), 315-320. Doi: 10.1177/08943184221092426.

Offers a framework of midrange nursing theory evaluation criteria.

#### **Policy Analysis**

Browne, J., Coffey, B., Cook, K., Meiklejohn, S., & Palermo, C. (2019). A guide to policy analysis as a research method. *Health Promotion International*, 34, 1032-1044. doi:10.1093/heapro/day052

Porsche, D. (2012). *Health policy: Application for nurses and other healthcare professionals*. Jones & Bartlett Learning.

Includes models for conducting a policy analysis (eightfold path, participatory policy analysis, process model, or substantive model).

## APPENDIX B

### APA (2020) and Grammar Checklist

This APA and grammar checklist serves as a resource for quality APA writing style, grammar, and punctuation. This checklist is used for all papers in the Department of Graduate Studies and for most nursing publications. “Excellence in writing is critical for success in many academic and professional pursuits” (American Psychological Association [APA], 2020, p. xvii). Writing is a continual cycle of refinement. Several strategies are noted (See “Strategies to Improve Your Writing” section, pp. 125-127) in your APA manual, to assist you with a quality writing process.

Your faculty person(s) reviewing any papers are not to be used as an editor. This checklist can assist with identifying common APA and writing errors. Review these APA elements pertinent to your paper and initial when completed. Faculty may request this checklist as a submission along with papers in various courses as well as a plagiarism software program.

All page numbers are from the *Publication Manual of the American Psychological Association* (APA, 2020). **Bolded items** are common errors!

Item No.	Review your completed document for the accuracy of the following items:	Student initials for each element:
1.	Headings are at the appropriate level and formatted correctly (pp. 47-49)	
2.	Do not use “introduction” as a heading (p. 47)	
3.	Preferred font is Times New Roman, size 12, but others listed are acceptable (p. 44)	
4.	Pagination <b>upper right corner</b> (flush right) and in the same font as the narrative (p. 43-44)	
5.	Margins are set appropriately (p. 45 – also see Thesis/SIP or DNP Guidelines)	
6.	Paragraph aligned to left, indented, with right margin uneven; <b>no extra spacing between paragraphs or headings</b> (p. 45)	
7.	Insert one space following periods or other punctuation at end of sentences (p. 154)	
8.	Commas used appropriately in a seriation (p. 155)	
9.	Commas used appropriately (pp. 155, 156)	
10.	Colon vs. semicolon used appropriately (pp. 156, 157)	
11.	Short <b>quotations</b> have quotation marks and <b>accurate page number(s)</b> or other identifiers <b>included in the citation</b> (pp. 271- 274)	
12.	Block quotes (40+ words) are used and formatted appropriately (pp. 272--273)	
13.	<b>Sources are cited correctly</b> within the text (Chapter 8, pp. 253-278)	
14.	The use of ‘et al.’ is used appropriately in citations (for three or more authors, the first time and thereafter) (p. 266)	
15.	Citations within parentheses are in <b>alphabetical order</b> (p. 263)	
16.	Use of the word “and” in the narrative and the “&” sign within citations in parenthesis and on the reference list (p. 266)	
17.	Writing clarity and conciseness (pp. 113 – 115)	
18.	‘that’ vs. ‘which’ used appropriately (p. 122)	
19.	“who” vs “that” used appropriately (pp. 121, 122)	
20.	Pages formatted correctly (e.g., page ordering, header, line spacing, etc.) (pp. 43-46); all double spaced with <b>no added lines</b> between paragraphs, headings.	

Item No.	Review your completed document for the accuracy of the following items:	Student initials for each element:
21.	Use of (a), (b), (c) in seriations within paragraph - NOT 1, 2, 3- unless separate paragraphs (p. 159).	
22.	<b>Numbers used correctly as words</b> - when to use numerals vs words (generally, under 10 write out) (pp. 178-179)	
23.	When using abbreviations, write the words out fully the first time with the abbreviation in parenthesis (p. 173)	
24.	Reviewed reference list basics; reference list is formatted correctly and accurately for each source (pp. 283-307 with examples pp. 313-352)	
25.	Punctuation within entries in reference list (pp. 284, 285)	
26.	Use of DOLs and URLs is appropriate (pp. 298-301)	
27.	Active voice is used throughout (p.118)	
28.	Avoid wordiness and redundancy (pp. 114-115)	
29.	Proper use of pronouns and gender conforming pronouns (first person, third person and use of “they”) throughout (pp.120-121)	
30.	Parallel construction (pp. 124-125)	
31.	Subject/verb agreement (singular and plural) (pp. 119-120)	
32.	Bias-free language (pp. 131-148)	
33.	Transition sentences used between thoughts and paragraphs (p. 112)	
34.	<b>Statistical presentations and formatting is correct</b> (e.g., <i>r</i> , <i>p</i> , <i>f</i> are in italics) (pp. 181-188 and Table 6.5 on pp. 183-186)	
35.	Correct statistical symbols for total sample ( <i>N</i> ) vs sub-samples ( <i>n</i> ) (p. 187)	
36.	Space before and after symbols (i.e. =, <, >, ≥, ≤, +) as you would space words (pp. 187-188)	
37.	<b>Appropriate formatting of tables</b> (pp. 199-205; table checklist on p. 207; table samples on pp. 210-224) and figures (pp. 225-229; figure checklist on p. 232; sample figures pp.234-250). <b>Use “Repeat Header Rows” function in Word for tables longer than 1 page.</b>	
38.	Accurate correspondence between the citations and the reference list (p. 257)	
39.	All faculty comments/edits were addressed (if you have chosen not to follow a suggestion, you have written a note to the faculty explaining your rationale as to why you did not follow the suggestion).	
40.	Have considered using the WSU Writing Center, Tutor.com, or other resources for writing assistance.	

#### Reference

American Psychological Association. (2020). *Publication manual of the American Psychological Association* (7<sup>th</sup> ed.). Author.

## APPENDIX C

### DATABASE ABSTRACTION TABLE

Completing a thorough literature review is one of the most important aspects of a Scholarly Paper for MS students. The initial step is to establish an organizational method for your searches, as you will add, refine, and enhance your literature searching until your paper is completed. This can be done via Zotero, or some other tool. Table 1 is an example to use for organizing your searches. Add or revise as needed.

#### Suggested Data Abstraction Process Table Template

Search Date	Row ID	Key Words	Restrictions (e.g. Peer-Reviewed Journals)	Dates Included in Search	Number of Hits CINAHL	Number of Hits OVID	Etc...
	1						
	2						
	3						

Other databases or sources may be added (or changed) to Table 1, as appropriate.

## APPENDIX D

### SCHOLARLY PAPER LITERATURE TABLE TEMPLATE

Once you have completed your initial literature search, this is a suggested table to use. These are suggested columns; some may be combined, or others added, depending on the type of literature review you are doing. Work with your faculty Paper Supervisor for specifics (e.g., normally there is one citation per page). You may reduce the font size to a minimum of a 10 point font. Always include a key to the sources for the level of evidence or quality reviews used throughout the paper. Suggestion is one study per page and in a landscape format.

**Suggested Literature Review Table**

Citation	Purpose	Sample/ Setting	Design/ Framework	Variables/ Instruments	Results	Implications	Comments	**Level of Evidence/Quality
May use only author (year) here, as all citations will be included in reference list. Work with your Faculty PS	State the purpose(s) from the article as they pertain to your question.	Who was the sample; what setting? Provide the <i>N</i> or sub-sets of the sample. Describe the setting.	Determine type of research design; it may not be clearly stated; you must list the design (e.g., descriptive, comparative or a lit review). Include framework or theory, if noted.	List variable(s) pertinent to your phenomenon. List instruments used to measure these, especially those pertinent to your purpose.	Include findings appropriate to your question. Include <i>p</i> or <i>r</i> values, or other statistical analyses. May include both significant and non-significant findings, as they pertain to your question/purpose.	Note implications germane to your question/ purpose. These may be used in your narrative, as appropriate. Consider practice, research, education implications.	May include notes to yourself as to the helpfulness of this study or flaws, etc. from your critique of the research article.	State the LOE and quality source used. It may be in the narrative and/or as a “note” below the table

Please include which LOE and quality citations used throughout. A key with the type (and citation) of the specific rating **must appear** with the table- either before or after- and be noted within the narrative somewhere.

## APPENDIX E

### RESOURCES FOR EVALUATING TYPES OF EVIDENCE FOR QUALITY

#### **Links for evaluating various types of evidence**

CASP – appraisal tools for a variety of research types (free). Select the appropriate tool for the research design:  
<https://casp-uk.net/casp-tools-checklists/>

Evidence-Based Practice Quality Improvement (EBPQI) Critical Appraisal Tool from Waldrop & Dunlap (2024) Beyond PICO: A new question simplifies the search for evidence. *American Journal of Nursing*, 124(3):34-37:  
<https://research-ebsco-com.wsuproxy.mnpals.net/linkprocessor/plink?id=21e2fe1c-7dc4-34d2-91ee-a9c4338f3241>

Johanna Briggs Institute (JGB) Critical Appraisal tools:

<https://jbi.global/critical-appraisal-tools>

Centre for evidence-based Medicine (CEBM) critical appraisal tools:

<https://www.cebm.ox.ac.uk/resources/ebm-tools/critical-appraisal-tools>

#### **GRADE:**

<https://www.gradeworkinggroup.org/>

[https://www.gradeworkinggroup.org/docs/Criteria\\_for\\_using\\_GRADE\\_2016-04-05.pdf](https://www.gradeworkinggroup.org/docs/Criteria_for_using_GRADE_2016-04-05.pdf)

Use any of your past texts (from NURS 771 or other sources), such as Gray & Grove, Melnyk & Fineout-Overholt, LoBiondo-Wood & Haber) to view an appropriate appraisal for your specific type of evidence (e.g., clinical guidelines, intervention-type research, qualitative research, etc.)

#### **AGREE II tool for Clinical Guidelines:**

[https://www.agreetrust.org/wp-content/uploads/2013/10/AGREE-II-Users-Manual-and-23-item-Instrument\\_2009\\_UPDATE\\_2013.pdf](https://www.agreetrust.org/wp-content/uploads/2013/10/AGREE-II-Users-Manual-and-23-item-Instrument_2009_UPDATE_2013.pdf)

Follow directions for AGREE II (such as having at least 1 other person appraise) when appraising Clinical Guidelines, if you have any related to your topic. The actual tool begins after page 44 in this user's manual.

## APPENDIX F

### FORMATTING GUIDELINES

#### SCHOLARLY PAPER FORMATTING GUIDELINES

Each Scholarly Paper is unique, depending on the topic and planned method. The following guidelines may be revised according to the Paper Supervisor (PS). The paper is completed according to APA format.

APA tips: The narrative section is all double spaced (other than on tables); no need for a running header, pay attention to your spell-checker, check that all citations match with references.

A helpful resource is the “Resources for Graduate Nursing Students” D2L site. Content there helps with writing and formatting resources, tips for Powerpoints and posters, or technology resources. WSU’s Writing Center is also helpful for the basics of writing and grammar.

1. **TITLE PAGE** – The title includes all relevant elements of the topic (method or type of inquiry or setting/population for any clinical applications).
2. You may include a copyright (e.g., Copyright 2026 by YOUR NAME) and/or an acknowledgment to anyone who has been helpful in this endeavor. These are optional.
3. **ABSTRACT** – The abstract provides a summary of your paper. It is typically between 300-350 words. Items to include in the abstract are:
  - Introduction to the problem – identification of the problem, significance
  - Synthesis and analysis of supporting literature
  - Method used for the inquiry – for example, an integrative literature review, policy analysis.
  - Summary of conceptual framework or theory to guide the inquiry, as applicable
  - Brief summary of evidence and strength of evidence on the topic
  - Conclusions, recommendations, and implications for nursing – how this contributes to the knowledge of nursing
4. **TABLE OF CONTENTS** –Information is in the *Resources for Graduate Nursing Students* on the D2L/Brightspace site.

#### 5. INTRODUCTION

**Introduction to the Problem:** The introduction tells the reader what is in this section. What is the problem? Why were you interested in it?

**Background and Rationale:** Include the general area of concern, a brief background about the concern, and the significance of the topic. A justification for addressing the topic is also included. Follow a format suggested by your advisor or one that fits your scholarly inquiry. Support it with examples and citations, as appropriate.

The background includes the general area of concern, a brief background about the concern, and the significance of the concern. This section is normally several paragraphs long, with focus on (a) a summary of what is known about this phenomenon of interest and gap in this knowledge, (b) justification for why there is a need for exploration of this phenomenon, and (c) the population you plan to address. You may see one of these phrases at the end of the problem statement:

- Little is known about....

- Findings of previous studies are conflicting....
- Few studies about \_\_\_\_\_ have been done....

Tips for writing the problem statement:

- Be clear and to the point.
- Use broad generalizations to set the stage for the specific problem, and then give the specifics.
- Present the argument or need for the study in your own words. Use citations and quotes only to assist in making your point, such as data about the need for this exploration of the problem.
- Clarify the setting and/or population of interest to be explored for this SIP.
- Conclude with a concise synopsis of the primary area of study for this SIP.

**Purpose:** Note the purpose for the paper. It is more focused than the introduction. The focus is on the aim of the paper. It should lead into the question.

**Question (as applicable):** Clearly state the question you plan to answer through your scholarly inquiry of the topic via the evidence (e.g., what are best practices for ...? What are gaps in evidence about ...?). Be consistent throughout when stating it. If the paper is an evidence-based-type problem, a clinical question should be noted (e.g., PICOT, PPCO, PCCO). If the paper is more focused on a general (integrative) literature review, a question about the problem exploration through this method is adequate (e.g., What is evidence about ...?). If the focus is a theory (e.g., What is the quality of XXX's theory.....), or policy analysis (e.g., What is the effect of a policy related to XXX on a specific population or setting), state the general question to be analyzed and follow the methodology for that type of analysis.

**Method Used for the Inquiry:** Explain the method used for this scholarly inquiry process. If it is an integrative literature review, explain this method. If it is a concept analysis, describe which author and guidelines will be followed. If the plan is to critique a specific theory in relation to a clinical problem, note clearly which author's critique method is planned. If using Evidence-Based Practice (EBP) methodology, describe the EBP framework/model and how it relates to your question. See Appendix C for suggested resources of various methods.

## 6. LITERATURE REVIEW

**Introduction:** Introduce how you plan to organize this section since it may be especially long. If using literature tables in an appendix, inform the reader. Use the Database Searching and Literature Review table templates found in your NURS615 D2L Course. Work with your PS to determine the best table format to use that is applicable to your method and purpose. A PRISM figure may be used to depict your searching and evidence results.

Synthesize in narrative form the following items:

- How literature/evidence was searched
- Selection criteria used
- Databases searched over which years
- Data abstraction process
- Characteristics of studies included/excluded and rationale for each
- Rating system used to evaluate the evidence

Include appropriate tables (e.g., database search strategies, literature reviews as appropriate to your topic or methodology). Include a summary of levels of evidence and quality found, as appropriate. Information in each column of the literature review table may be helpful to guide your narrative and organization. Be sure to cite which sources are used for the level of evidence and appraisal tools to determine quality.

**Specific Sections:** The headings and sub-headings used in this section are titled according to the concepts and elements of the inquiry. This may vary depending on the topic, the amount of evidence for review, and the method used for inquiry. For instance, if an eightfold path is the method used for a policy analysis, there might be eight different steps, with analysis of each, leading to a summary of the evidence reviewed. If a literature synthesis is done, various headings and sub-headings will follow the themes of the evidence reviewed or may be organized according to levels of evidence or levels of effectiveness (if interventional studies).

Remember to:

- Provide a synthesis of the studies, not merely a paragraph on each study
- Use good writing skills (such as a topical sentence at the beginning of the section and ending with a summary, then leading into the next paragraph or section)
- Cite references according to current APA guidelines and follow the “APA Grammar and Writing Checklist” provided on the Graduate Student Resources D2L site; Section 4 in your APA Manual (2020) offers help for effective scholarly writing.

Offer a synthesis summary of the literature/evidence in a narrative form.

- Synthesize the review of national/institutional guidelines, systematic reviews, and current, seminal, and landmark literature; refer to any appraisal documents used in the appendix (e.g., AGREE II for clinical guidelines)
- Summarize overall levels of evidence; may use a table, as appropriate
- Identify gaps in clinical knowledge related to the clinical problem or topic
- Include an analysis of the strength of the evidence

Include appropriate tools for appraising the evidence (e.g., The AGREE II for clinical guidelines, or other critical appraisal methods, such as for systematic reviews, meta-analyses). Apply appraisal questions from previous classes to offer a synthesis of the quality of the evidence with appendices for each, as appropriate, from previous classes. See resources for these on the NURS 615 D2L/Brightspace course materials.

**General Summary of the Literature Reviewed:** State what you found in a succinct way. Relate the literature reviewed back to your purpose/question, the setting, and/or population under review. Include a summary of gaps uncovered related to the topic.

## 7. CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

**Conceptual Model, Theory, or Map:** In this section the conceptual model/framework, theory, or map that guides the paper is presented and explained. A conceptual model or theory provides the context for your paper, whereas a conceptual map is a graphic depiction of the relationships between your topic and other relevant concepts. Discuss how the conceptual model or theory (e.g., EBP implementation model/theory or middle range nursing theory) relates to and provides context for the topic of inquiry and/or how your topic relates to other relevant concepts. The conceptual framework generally stems from the literature review.

A conceptual map includes the following:

- Mapping of the concepts relevant to the question and findings based on the literature. A diagram or map should be professional
- Draw arrows or depict in other ways any directional relationships for the reader
- A literature key (e.g., coding for each author as depicted on the map). Themes may be grouped on the map, with the groupings included on a key

The conceptual model or theory section includes the following:

- A narrative fully explaining the model or theory
- All relevant evidence that is cited in the literature review and on the literature review tables are discussed in relation to the Conceptual Model or Theory

If using a theory, describe it to the depth appropriate for the topic (e.g., may be a theoretical analysis). A figure or diagram may be included, as appropriate. Refer to past textbooks for a review of these elements, if needed.

## **CONCLUSIONS, IMPLICATIONS, AND RECOMMENDATIONS FOR NURSING**

**Introduction:** Restate your purpose. State how this section is organized.

**Conclusion(s):** Describe salient points from the literature/evidence reviewed. Conclusions should lead into your recommendations.

**Implications for Nursing:** Note how your findings apply to nursing practice, education, research, and/or policy and to a specific setting and population for your topic/question. Refer to any key literature or evidence noted in the paper that ties into these implications.

**Recommendations:** Make recommendations based on the evidence reviewed along with an interpretation. Discuss what the next steps might be, based on your findings (e.g., research study ideas, grant proposal, guideline development, education intervention, and/or EBP project with implementation, policy implications, next steps for practice improvements, need for ongoing surveillance, etc.). Make specific suggestions so that another person may follow-up; provide a plan for possible next steps, as appropriate.

**Summary:** Provide a brief summary of the paper for the reader.

**NOTE:** Segments of the Scholarly Paper may be written as a manuscript for publication, geared for a specific journal appropriate to the topic. Work closely with your Paper Supervisor and 2<sup>nd</sup> reader if you plan to develop a manuscript, as then you would align with the “author guidelines” for a specific journal.

## **FORMAT ORDERING OF THE FINAL SCHOLARLY PAPER**

### **TITLE PAGE**

**SCHOLARLY PAPER APPROVAL AND COMPLETION FORM** – signed by your Paper Supervisor

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**ACKNOWLEDGEMENT** – optional except if funding has been obtained. All funding must be acknowledged (e.g. scholarships, awards used for scholarship/tuition).

### **ABSTRACT**

**BODY OF THE SCHOLARLY PAPER** – use correct APA heading levels

SECTIONS FOR: Introduction; Literature Review; Conceptual Framework; Conclusions,

Recommendations, Implications for Nursing, and Summary

### **REFERENCES**

**TABLES** (if any)

**FIGURES** (if any)

**APPENDICES** – labeled in order they are cited in the body of the paper

