

MS PROFESSIONAL PROJECT / MS THESIS PLAN

Within PREVIOUS (prior to Fall 2014) MS Graduate Curriculum

Graduate students (first nursing masters) will complete an Evidence-Based Practice Project as a MS Professional Project or a MS Thesis. The MS Professional Project or MS Thesis is developed and carried out by the student with the guidance of a faculty supervisory committee. Students may work in a group of no more than two students on a MS Professional Project. See MS Project Guidelines for specific details.

SUPERVISORY COMMITTEE

Purpose

The Supervisory Committee approves the student's program of study, guides the student in the MS Professional Project or MS Thesis process, and administers the oral presentation of the completed MS Professional Project or the oral defense of the completed MS Thesis with all committee members present.

MS Professional Project

- **Chair**
 - **Chairs** can be prepared at the master's level and must be full time **nursing** faculty. Exceptions to these criteria may, in special instances, be made by the Dean of the School of Nursing. Faculty members participating in projects for the first time are encouraged to participate with a current Committee chair before accepting full responsibility for an individual committee. **Must have one committee member who has an earned doctorate degree.**
- **Committee**
 - **For a professional project**, the committee consists of one other full time School of Nursing faculty member. The Committee will consist of at least one faculty with an earned doctoral degree whether that faculty is the chair or committee member. A third committee member from the community or greater university who is an expert in the area of project focus may be appointed.

MS Thesis

- **Chair**
 - **Chairs:** graduate student thesis committee chairs will be regularly appointed, full time School of Nursing faculty who have an earned doctorate degree.
- **Committee**
 - **For a thesis**, the Supervisory Committee consists of three faculty members: a Chairperson and two members. The student, in consultation with the faculty advisor, selects faculty for membership on the Committee. Since the Committee has a major role in guiding the student's work, it is expected that the faculty on the Committee will have individual skills that complement one another in the content area of investigation and research methods to be employed.

Members of the committee may be selected from the faculty of the School of Nursing as well as from faculty of other academic units of the University. At least two members of the committee must be from the School of Nursing, one of whom represents the student's area of concentration in nursing. Faculty members who are students admitted to a Program of Study within Northern Arizona University may not serve on a student's Supervisory Committee. The two members of the thesis committee will be regularly appointed, full time faculty who meet one of the following criteria: 1) earned doctoral degree, or 2) master's degree with documented research experience.

A fourth member of the committee may be appointed to the committee. These may be non-faculty persons who are recognized experts in their field, who are acceptable to Graduate College as committee members. The student must submit the curriculum vitae of the proposed member and rationale to support the addition. The chairperson of the Committee must approve this request and

submit a letter of recommendation for approval by the Dean of the School of Nursing to the Graduate College. The Dean of the Graduate College approves or disapproves this recommendation.

Responsibilities of Committee Members

- The Chair of the Committee has the major responsibility for guiding the student's MS Professional Project (or MS Thesis). The Committee Chairperson, in consultation with committee members, must approve the student's request to present his/her MS Professional Project in an oral presentation or defend his/her MS Thesis in the oral examination.
- Students are encouraged to seek advice about the progress of a project (or thesis) from all committee members. Because of the specific expertise of a committee member, a student may, from time to time, work more intensely with a committee member than the chairperson. It is the student's responsibility to keep the chairperson informed about the progress of the MS Professional Project (or MS Thesis).

Change in Committee Membership

- Any change in committee membership must be approved by the Dean of the School of Nursing. If a student is completing a MS Thesis, approval by the Dean of the Graduate College must also be obtained.
- If the Chairperson of the Committee resigns from Northern Arizona University at the end of the spring semester, the Chairperson may continue to serve as a member of the committee if the student is enrolled during the summer session and plans the oral presentation/defense prior to the beginning of the fall semester. For all other situations associated with faculty resignations, a new committee member must be appointed and approved.

Role Expectations for Committee Chair Working with Students:

- Potential MS Professional Project/MS Thesis chair meets with student initially to determine area of interest and fill out MS Professional Project/Thesis Plan Form (see form in appendices).
- Chair should have applicable substantive or methodological expertise
- No one is to begin a MS Professional Project/MS Thesis without having taken Research. (MS Professional Project/MS Thesis information to be distributed in Research course.)
- The point at which a faculty member agrees to be a MS Professional Project/MS Thesis Chair, the faculty member should begin mentoring the student and suggesting other committee members.
- At each step the committee is to make sure that the student file contains copies of the MS Professional Project/MS Thesis Plan.
- Hold full committee meeting within the first half of the first MS Professional Project/MS Thesis semester to provide guidance to the student.
- Respond to student requests for assistance in a timely manner.
- Be available during regularly scheduled office hours and be available for meetings by appointment.
- Chair responsible for determining that research design is consistent with university standards

Goals through the MS Professional Project/MS Thesis:

- The student should show progress each semester.
- The committee chair should advise the student to make enough progress each semester to graduate in a timely manner.
- The progression through the MS Professional Project (MS Thesis) will vary with the student depending on whether she/he is full or part-time.
- Register for NUR 689 (MS Professional Project) or NUR 699 (MS Thesis) with NUR 605 (Graduate Research Seminar). NUR 689 or NUR 699 is a co-requisite with NUR 605.

Student Responsibilities

- Student is responsible to schedule appointments as needed, and coordinate the following meetings:
 - Completing MS Professional Project Plan Form with committee chair and member (see form in appendices)
 - 1st MS Professional Project/MS Thesis semester meeting **with his/her committee chair**
 - Oral presentation (MS Professional Project/oral defense (MS Thesis)

- Student must provide written work to chair and committee and allow the committee members **two weeks to provide feedback prior to meeting with the faculty and/or scheduling of the oral presentation (MS Professional Project) or oral defense (MS Thesis).**
- Student is expected to participate in a real time oral presentation of the completed MS Professional Project or the oral defense of the completed MS Thesis with all committee members present. Faculty and students are invited to the oral presentation/oral defense. Student sets the date for the presentation/defense in collaboration with the chair and committee. **Final oral presentation or oral defense will be held during the time frame identified by the School of Nursing consistent with the Graduate College policies. NO final oral presentations/oral defenses will be scheduled during the following weeks of the semester:**
 - **End of Term Week (“Reading Week”)**
 - **Finals Week**
- **If needed,** obtain “The Institutional Review Board for the Protection of Human Subjects in Research and Research Related Activities: Procedures and Guidelines.” Read and follow all procedures.
 - Submit completed forms as indicated in the procedures and guidelines. Obtain signatures and forward all forms to IRB. The review committee will notify the applicant of the scheduled date for review.
 - Retain a complete copy of all applications on file in the School of Nursing Student Services Office.

PROTECTION OF HUMAN SUBJECTS IN RESEARCH

Any study involving observation of or interaction with human subjects that originates at NAU—including a course project, report, or research paper—must be reviewed and approved by the Institutional Review Board (IRB) for the protection of human subjects in research and research-related activities.

The IRB meets monthly. Proposals must be submitted for review at least fifteen working days before the monthly meeting. You should consult with your course instructor early in the course to ascertain if your project needs to be reviewed by the IRB and/or to secure information or appropriate forms and procedures for the IRB review. Your instructor and department chair or college dean must sign the application for approval by the IRB. The IRB categorizes projects into three levels depending on the nature of the project: exempt from further review, expedited review, or full board review. If the IRB certifies that a project is exempt from further review, you need not resubmit the project for continuing IRB review as long as there are no modifications in the exempted procedures.

A copy of the IRB Policy and Procedures Manual is available in each department’s administrative office and each college dean’s office or on their website: <http://www.research.nau.edu/vpr/IRB/index.htm>. If you have questions, contact Office of Grant and Contract Services, at 928-523-4340.

Evidence-Based Practice MS Professional Project (item 1) OR MS Thesis (item 2)

1. Evidence-Based Practice MS Professional Project Guidelines

The purpose of the Evidence-Based Practice Project is for the student to identify a significant nursing problem/need in her/his area of specialization, to analyze existing evidence, to propose an evidence-based best practice or solution to resolve the problem/need, **if appropriate** to implement the proposed best practice/solution, and to evaluate the desired outcome(s). *The topic area that the student chooses will have a rural focus/application and a focus relevant to his/her FNP or Generalist role, unless otherwise noted.*

I. Problem Identification and Purpose of the Project

- A. Identify a significant problem or need in area of specialization
 1. Describe the problem/need
 2. Justify the significance of problem/need
 3. Discuss current approaches to the problem/need
- B. State the purpose of the project
- C. Describe the characteristics of the environment within which the problem/need exists
 1. Describe the setting
 2. Describe the population affected by the problem/need
- D. Relate the problem/need to a theory or conceptual model
 1. Discuss the relationship of the problem/need to theory
 - theory-testing (deductive) or theory-building (inductive), as is applicable

II. Review of Evidence-Based Literature

- A. Conduct a complete and exhaustive review of evidence related to the problem/need and describe search terms and parameters
 1. Critically appraise research findings related to the problem/need
 2. Synthesize evidence relevant to the problem/need

III. **Project Plan** Proposed Best Practice or Solution to Problem/Need

- A. Present a complete and detailed description of the proposed best practice or solution to problem/need based on evidence
 1. Use relevant research to justify the proposed best practice (or solution to problem/need)
 2. Specify the desired outcome(s) to be achieved by the proposed best practice or solution
 3. Show feasibility of the proposed best practice or solution as it pertains to the environment and context within which the problem/need exists

IV. **Develop** Proposed Best Practice or Solution to Problem/Need

- A. Pilot test the proposed best practice, *if appropriate*, in the context within which the problem/need exists
- B. **If not pilot testing**, then demonstrate an alternative method by which the solution to problem/need **could be** implemented
- C. Discuss the resources and constraints in the environment or context

V. Evaluation of Desired Outcome

- A. Propose specific outcomes to address in evaluating the proposed best practice or solution to problem/need
- B. Specify the process that would be used to evaluate the outcomes, including timelines, specifics of tools/data to examine
- C. Describe implications/recommendations for nursing practice, education, policy, and/or future research

Dissemination of MS Professional Project Options

The following are MS Professional Project options for dissemination of the evidence-based practice project.

- Complete the Evidence-Based Practice Project (Sections I through V) for submission to the School of Nursing, or
- Write a Manuscript submission to a peer reviewed scholarly nursing focused journal, or
- Develop a Poster or podium presentation at a local, state, regional, national, or international scholarly nursing focused conference two weeks prior to graduation. The conference must have a peer-reviewed selection process for the poster and/or podium presentations.

Please note that no matter which dissemination option you choose, a real time final oral presentation (MS Professional Project) or oral defense (MS Thesis) of the completed project/thesis with all committee members present must be completed two weeks prior to the end of the semester and at least 2 week prior to graduation.

2. Evidence-based Practice MS Thesis Guidelines

- Chapter 1** Statement of problem
Background or historical context
Purpose of the study
Significance of the problem
Definition of terms
Research question(s)
 Hypothesis(es) if used
Conceptual or theoretical framework
Assumptions
Summary
- Chapter 2** Review of literature
Synthesize current knowledge on the topic
Summarize gaps in literature
Conclusion (how the proposed study integrates with current knowledge and gaps in knowledge)
- Chapter 3** Methodology
Research design
Sampling methods
 Setting
 Sample criteria
Intervention if applicable
Measurement methods
 Instruments
 Reliability
 Validity
 How reliability and validity will be examined in proposed study
Data collection methods
 Consent procedures for protection of human subjects
Data analysis method(s) for each research question
- Chapter 4** Results
Presentation of findings for each research question or hypothesis

Chapter 5	Discussion
	Interpretation of findings
	Limitations of the study
	Recommendations
	For practice
	For education
	For future research
	Conclusions

PILOT STUDY

The purpose of the pilot study is to replicate an established study with a different population group. This study may be undertaken as an extension of a School of Nursing faculty member's research or another extant research study. **No new instruments are to be developed.** The pilot study will be kept small and manageable. Follow the outline provided in the MS Thesis Guidelines.

GUIDELINES FOR COMPLETION OF MS PROFESSIONAL PROJECT / MS THESIS AND PROCESSING DURING THE LAST SEMESTER

Student Responsibility for MS Professional Project or MS Thesis

The student and the committee will determine when the work is ready for presentation. The student must be enrolled for at least one hour of MS Professional Project (NUR 689) or MS Thesis (NUR 699) during any semester in which work on the MS Professional Project/MS Thesis requires faculty (Chair) input. **Please note:** When you begin working on a MS Professional Project (NUR 689) or MS Thesis (NUR 699), we expect you to enroll each semester from the time you begin this work until completion of degree. During the term you complete and present/defend your MS Professional Project/MS Thesis you must enroll for at least one unit or the number of units accurately reflecting the demand on faculty (Chair) time.

The completed MS Thesis must conform to the University Standards and Procedures for Thesis. A copy of these guidelines is available in the Student Services Office.

Send the electronic version of your completed MS Professional Project or your completed MS Thesis to:

1. School of Nursing, Student Services
2. Committee chair
3. Student copy