GUIDELINES FOR A PAPER BASED THESIS

In addition to the traditional format for a thesis or doctoral dissertation, the following paper-based format is available for graduate students in consultation with their supervisor and committee. Choosing to complete a paper based thesis is an important decision which must be explored immediately upon entering the graduate program. Both the supervisor and the student should work together as part of the exploratory process, with clear communication and written records playing a key role in that process. Critical to decision making are issues that include study topics, timelines, authorship and appropriate or relevant journals to target for submission.

The Faculty of Nursing notes the following must be met by doctoral and master’s students:

Doctoral Students

- A minimum of three publishable papers that follow the format outlined below. The papers will usually each address a unique objective or question and will form a coherent and integrated set of projects and outputs that have been outlined in the dissertation proposal. Each paper must be independent of the others.
- All PhD students must have, prior to the final oral examination, at least one of the papers under consideration for publication in a peer reviewed journal. The other papers may be prepared for submission, ‘submitted’ or ‘in review’, also to peer reviewed journals.

Masters students

A Masters thesis will usually consist of one to two papers with an introduction and possible short epilogue to connect the papers.

- Depending on the scope and complexity of the topic, one paper with an overview chapter may constitute the thesis. This is determined by the supervisor/committee. All MN students must have the paper, or one of the papers, prepared for submission to a peer-reviewed journal.

FORMAT

Introduction

- The issue/problem to be investigated is clearly identified and all central concerns are outlined.
- The context of the issue/problem is clearly presented
- The conceptual framework that guides the thesis is clarified and is considered appropriate.
- The rationale for the thesis is outlined along with the link between the manuscripts.
- An overview of the entire thesis is clearly presented
- All objectives for the thesis are identified
- The background literature is presented (if it is not presented in a manuscript)

Manuscripts
At least one manuscript is to be a research study and must include all the elements of a traditional thesis.

- Other manuscripts may be reviews, empirical or methodological papers.
- Each chapter of the manuscript must have a title page that outlines the following: title, list of author(s), and information that outlines where the manuscript has been sent for review/publication.

**Discussion**

- An overview of the main findings is provided; material already covered in the manuscripts is not repeated.
- The limitations and strengths of the thesis are clearly listed.
- A general conclusion and recommendations are also provided.

**References**

- References must also be included at the end of each chapter/manuscript along with all charts, figures and tables.

**Final copy of dissertation**

- Document is to be formatted, in a consistent manner, according to FGSR guidelines.
- One referencing system, one formatting system is used throughout.
- For the purposes of the dissertation, a chapter’s (article) format does not change to adhere to the specific journal requirements.
- Footnotes may be provided for those chapters which are submitted for publication; please see the FGSR website for further details: [http://www.gradstudies.ualberta.ca/degreesuperv/thesis/thesisspecs.pdf](http://www.gradstudies.ualberta.ca/degreesuperv/thesis/thesisspecs.pdf). Authorship should always be negotiated early in the writing process. The candidate may be first and/or sole author on each of the papers included in the thesis or dissertation, however, it may also be appropriate to include the supervisor and or committee member(s) as authors. Authorship on subsequent papers arising from the thesis or dissertation will vary. Thesis committee members or other faculty or professionals external to the committee may also be included as authors.

The FGSR notes the following characteristics in outlining the scope intrinsic to each of the doctoral and master’s theses: (Retrieved on May 11, 2009 from: [http://www.gradstudies.ualberta.ca/degreesuperv/thesis/](http://www.gradstudies.ualberta.ca/degreesuperv/thesis/))

- A master's thesis should reveal the candidate is able to work in a scholarly manner and is acquainted with the principal works published on the subject of the thesis. As far as possible it should be an original contribution.
- A doctoral thesis must embody the results of original investigations and analyses and be of such quality as to merit publication; furthermore, it must constitute a substantial contribution to the knowledge of the candidate's field of study.