

UCSF School of Nursing Thesis Handbook

MASTER OF SCIENCE THESIS GUIDELINES

Definition and Considerations

The Thesis is a written scholarly work that reflects original investigation and analysis of a problem. It is one option that fulfills the requirement for the Masters of Science (MS) degree conferral. The systematic process of investigation and writing the thesis is similar to scholarly work on a larger scale, such as the doctoral dissertation. This process includes identification of the problem or area of interest, review of relevant literature, proposal of thesis research topic, determination of research design, analysis strategies, presentation of results and discussion/conclusions.

The thesis investigation and writing process is an excellent opportunity to conduct an independent study/analysis while under the supervision of a faculty mentor and thesis committee members. Thesis work promotes analytic thinking and encourages collegial interaction with faculty and peers. For some students, the thesis stimulates a focus for research that can be further explored in doctoral study or serve as a basis for publication. Therefore, the decision to write a thesis should include careful consideration of short and long term career goals.

The decision to write a thesis should be made early in the masters student's academic program and must involve a discussion with the academic adviser. It is highly recommended this discussion occur in the first or second quarter of enrollment. The Program Director should also be involved in this discussion, as he/she can help identify resources such as a faculty mentor and committee members.

Constitution of the Thesis Committee

The Thesis Committee and Qualifications

The faculty adviser should be the primary resource in the student's determination to write a thesis and should guide the selection of a proposed Thesis Committee. A research focus and identification of the problem to be explored should be determined during the student's first year in the Master's Program. Agreement on the plan of the thesis and selection of a proposed Thesis Committee should be completed in collaboration with the faculty adviser.

The Thesis Committee is comprised of three persons: one (1) Thesis Committee Chair and two (2) Thesis Committee Members.

The **Thesis Chair** is the lead faculty mentor for the thesis research and writing process and may be from within or outside of the student's department. The Thesis Chair must be a member of the University of California San Francisco Division of the Academic Senate and hold a doctoral degree. The Thesis Chair must also have substantive experience in the research topic area.

The **Thesis Committee Members** assist in the supervision of thesis research and writing.

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Members of the San Francisco Division of the Academic Senate as well as non-members of the San Francisco Academic Senate are eligible to serve as a Thesis Committee Member. Non-members of the San Francisco Division must be approved by both the School of Nursing Program Director and approved by the Dean of the UCSF Graduate Division. At least one of the Thesis Committee Members must be from the student's department. At least one Thesis Committee member should be knowledgeable in substantive areas of the proposed thesis, including in research.

The Committee is approved by the chair of the student's department and the Dean of the Graduate Division after the student has been advanced to candidacy by the Graduate Division.

In the event it becomes necessary to reconstitute the Thesis Committee, or if there are program changes after the student has advanced to candidacy, recommendations for such changes must be communicated to the Graduate Division by indicating this on the Approval of Thesis Plan Form (see below).

If a Thesis Committee Member leaves the University before the thesis process has been completed, the student must replace the Thesis Committee Member. The process for replacing the Thesis Committee Member is the same as for establishing the original Thesis Committee. The new committee member will be oriented by the Thesis Committee Chair, who will make available to the new member Committee minutes and deliberations regarding the thesis proposal and plan. The student will provide copies of the thesis and/or sections to members of the Committee.

Administrative Aspects of the Thesis

Required Administrative Petitions and Submission Sequence:

Request for Thesis Plan Approval Form (SoN specific form):

<https://courses.ucsf.edu/course/view.php?id=2117>

Scroll down to "Thesis Resources" to locate "Request for Thesis Plan Approval"

The Thesis Chair and Committee Members approve the thesis plan, including the focus of the research, the identified problem, methodology, and timeline for completion. Approval of the Thesis Plan must be requested from the Chair of the student's department via the *UCSF School of Nursing Request for Thesis Plan Approval* Petition. Copies of this completed form should be submitted to the student's Department Chair, School of Nursing Office of Student Affairs (OSA), the students' Academic Adviser, the Thesis Committee Chair, and the Thesis Committee Members. Additionally, for Thesis Committee members who are outside of the student's department, the Chair of the outside department also receives a copy of the completed form.

Approval of Thesis Plan Form (SoN specific form):

<https://courses.ucsf.edu/course/view.php?id=2117>

Scroll down to "Thesis Resources" to locate "Approval of Thesis Plan Form"

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This form is used to formally submit the thesis title and documents the Thesis Committee Chairperson and Members approval. The student is responsible for obtaining all signatures and submission to the School of Nursing Office of Student Affairs.

Application for Candidacy for the Degree of Master of Science (School of Nursing): Graduate Division Form

<https://graduate.ucsf.edu/sites/graduate.ucsf.edu/files/wysiwyg/advance-candidacy-ms-nursing-2017v2.pdf>

The student who intends to write a thesis notifies the Graduate Division of this decision via the Advance to Candidacy for the Degree of Master of Science (School of Nursing) Form. The student must have successfully completed at least eighteen (18) academic quarter units before applying for advancement to candidacy. The intent to advance to candidacy via thesis is designated as PLAN I on this form. The thesis title, Thesis Committee Chair and up to three Thesis Committee Member names are entered on the form. The academic standing at the time of submission is recorded by the student on the form. The completed form is signed by the academic adviser and the student. The *Approval of Thesis Plan* document must be attached to the *Application for Candidacy for the Degree of Master of Science (School of Nursing) form at the time of submission*. Both documents are submitted to the Graduate Division. Once advancement to candidacy has been approved by the Graduate Division, the student and Office of Student Affairs will receive notification.

A thesis publication fee of \$55 is due at the time of petition submission.

After advancement to candidacy, the student has a maximum of five quarters to complete the thesis. Any leave of absence time is calculated and included as part of this allotted time.

Academic Credit:

Academic credit is not given for the thesis. However, the student may enroll in:

N298: Thesis or Comprehensive Exam (0 units): Fall, Winter, Spring

FOR: Staff

Prerequisite(s): Advancement to candidacy and permission of the graduate adviser.

Course Description:

For graduate students engaged in writing the thesis for the master's degree or taking a comprehensive examination required for the master's degree.

The student should consult with the Thesis Committee Chair if enrollment in this no credit course is needed/recommended.

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Thesis Research Data Source Options

In addition to the traditional thesis research data collection, there are two (2) accepted alternative methodologies:

Alternative A: A secondary analysis of data already collected. An existing data set may be analyzed in terms of the study problem, literature, and methodology chosen by the student. Use of the existing data set must be negotiated and approved by the owner of the data set.

Alternative B: The conduct of thesis research within a larger study being conducted by faculty. A larger study being conducted by a faculty member may provide the context within which the student identifies a problem, reviews the literature, selects a methodology, joins with that of the larger study, adds some element to the total data set being collected, or analyzes the relevant data.

Committee on Human Research (CHR) Approval

After consultation with the Thesis Committee Chair, the student should consult the UCSF Committee on Human Research (CHR) to determine if the approved thesis proposal must be submitted for institutional protection of human subjects review and approval. The thesis proposal must contain at a minimum the information required by the CHR, as virtually all proposals must be approved by this Committee before data collection begins. If the thesis research is a secondary analysis, the student should discuss the necessity of CHR approval with their Thesis Committee Chair and Committee Members.

Thesis Content and Format

Guidelines for Thesis structure are presented in Appendix A. The submission of the thesis should meet the requirements and conform to the Graduate Division's [Guidelines for Formatting the Thesis](#). Research data not within the body of the manuscript format, but relevant to the study question and useful to further development of the question, may be placed in an appendix for submission. The research findings from a traditional thesis or alternate approach may also be submitted in a manuscript format meeting the requirements of the journal selected for submission for publication.

Thesis Manuscript Section Sequence and Content

I: Introduction

Outline the problem area for the study. Ask what is the broader context in which the problem is found and then narrow the topic to the specific study at hand, demonstrating the relationship between the current study and the larger context. From this analysis, clarify the questions being asked, their importance, and why they are of interest. Sections might include the following: statement of the problem, objectives of the study, and significance.

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II: Review of Literature

Review the literature within an organizing framework, with attention given to the most current literature on the specific area of study, as well as to significant variables, etc. The reader is primarily concerned with the study question and needs to understand the state of knowledge in that area. If possible, place the problem in the context of current and past nursing practice. The literature review should provide a critique of relevant studies and identify any gaps in nursing knowledge. Be mindful that the literature review is not an annotated bibliography.

III: Methodology

This section should be organized in a way that is consistent with the study. Sufficient detail should be provided to allow the study to be replicated. Although it is possible to begin by rephrasing the questions asked in the introduction, in this first section of the research design, the research questions usually are conveyed as exploratory questions, null hypotheses, or directional hypotheses. One section of this section should specifically define the variables to be examined.

Research methodology should be described and rationale should be given for why the methodology is appropriate for the study. Sample characteristics, study design, and inclusion/exclusion criteria used during the selection process also should be described. For instance, if there was a control group, similarities between control and intervention groups can be described in methods section, although such sample characteristics may also be presented in the results section.

Another section should include the instruments used in the study. State how they were constructed, why they were selected, what variables were measured, etc. If the instrument was borrowed from another study, include reliability and validity data. If the instrument was developed by the author, include how the instrument was created, field tested, etc. How were reliability and validity determined, e.g., what does the instrument purport to measure (a validity concern), can the data gathered by the instrument be trusted (a reliability concern), and what sources of error were present during the administration or collection of the data (a utility as well as a reliability concern)? Outline the protocol or procedures used during data collection.

IV: Results

In this section, the results of the study are clearly presented and their significance indicated through statistical testing (if a quantitative study) or through presentation of key findings from interviews (qualitative study). If specific hypotheses were offered, they should be answered in the same order as originally presented. Tables should be used to summarize data but these data should not be repeated unnecessarily in the text. Implications of the results belong in the discussion section, as do conclusions.

V: Discussion

In this final section of the thesis, the exploratory or experimental questions that were posed in the introduction should be answered. After study results are compared and

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contrasted to other studies, discuss strengths and limitations of findings, and outline areas that could be strengthened in future studies. Was anything of statistical or clinical significance discovered from the study? How do study results extend or clarify existing knowledge? What is the significance of results for nursing theory, practice, service, and/or education? If the sample size was too small, it is appropriate to state this fact when attempting to draw inferences from the data.

Standard editorial format should follow that of the American Psychological Association. (2009). Publication manual of the American Psychological Association (6th ed.). Washington, DC: Author.

Thesis Presentation:

The Thesis is typically presented orally to the Thesis Committee in a public or private session. Arrangements, such as date, time and location, should be made through the Thesis Chair.

Thesis Formatting and Submission Process

After completion of the Thesis, the guidelines for submitting the final documents are available at the UCSF Graduate Division, [Guidelines for Submitting a Thesis](#). The title page requires ink-handwritten signatures from all committee members. Electronic signatures are not acceptable. The Publishing Agreement must be attached to the final copy submitted to Graduate Division. It should be the final page of the thesis and numbered accordingly.

Formatting the Thesis, Dissertation, or Manuscript:

The text below has been adapted for this handbook from the original source:
<http://graduate.ucsf.edu/document-format>

General Formatting

Fonts

Use a font that is easy to read. Times, Times New Roman, or Arial (11 or 12 point) are safe choices.

Margins

Every page of your thesis, dissertation, or manuscript must have a one-inch margin on all sides, top, bottom, left, and right. The only element that may be placed outside of the one-inch margin is the page number, which should print no closer than one-half inch from the edge of the paper.

Spacing

Double spacing should be used except in those places where conventional usage calls for single spacing such as footnotes, indented quotations, and tables. This includes the abstract and dedication pages.

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Pagination

- All pages must be numbered except the title page.
- Page numbers may be placed at the top or bottom of the page, and may be center or right justified, but must be *consistently* placed throughout the document.
- Preliminary pages must be numbered sequentially using lower case Roman numerals (i, ii, iii, iv, etc.).
- The title page counts as page “i,” but the number should not be printed on the page.
- For numbering the remainder of the manuscript, including the main body text, illustrations, bibliography, appendices, and library release form, use Arabic numerals (1, 2, 3, 4, etc.).
- Do not use letter suffixes, such as 21a, 21b.

Orientation and Page Size

- All pages in your final document must be in the portrait orientation, and all pages must be 8.5” X 11” (standard US letter size).
- If you must use landscape orientation for certain elements of the document (such as a wide, horizontal chart or graph) to fit on the page, rotate the image 90 degrees counter-clockwise, so that the bottom of the element is on the right side of the page. Text should be oriented in the same way as the graphic. However, note that the page number must still be in the same location, and have the same orientation, as on all other pages. ([See a picture of what we mean.](#))

Charts, Figures, Illustrations

All images and illustrations must appear within the required one-inch page margins. When scanning or saving images, be sure to set the resolution for at least 300 dpi.

Using Previously Published Materials

With the approval of your committee and graduate program, material that you have previously published may be accepted as part of a thesis or dissertation. The published material must meet all formatting requirements, which may necessitate reduction of the published material. ([See more information on using previously published materials.](#))

Assembling the Document Elements

Preliminary Pages

Organize the preliminary elements in the following order:

1. **Thesis Cover Page:** [Download the appropriate cover page form](#) from the forms section of this website. Fill in your name, thesis title and graduate program on the cover page. Your name must match the name on all official UCSF documents. Your committee members should sign the Cover Page in black or blue ink. The Cover Page is counted as page i, but the page number should not appear at the

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bottom. Once this page has been signed by your committee you will need to scan it and add it to your thesis as the first page.

1. **Copyright Page:** Insert a blank, *numbered* page, for page number ii, *if* you are not filing a copyright. If you *are* planning to register a copyright, a statement of copyright must be included on this page. [Further information regarding copyright guidelines can be found here:](http://media2.proquest.com/documents/copyright_dissthesis_ownership.pdf)
http://media2.proquest.com/documents/copyright_dissthesis_ownership.pdf

The format should be:

Copyright 2017
by
Albert Einstein

2. **Dedication and Acknowledgments:** You may wish to acknowledge the help and support from particular people during the course of your work. If you are using published material, you may need to include a reference to the publication in which the material originally appeared, including co-authors, multiple published papers, or copyrighted material.
3. **Abstract:** The abstract should not be longer than 350 words. The "abstract" field in the ProQuest interface will truncate the abstract if it exceeds this word limit. However, your actual abstract (i.e. the abstract you upload as a PDF within your document) may be as long as you need it to be. The title of your thesis and your name should appear at the top center of the page. The abstract should include a brief statement of the problem, a description of the methods and procedures used to gather data or study the problem, and a condensed summary of the findings.
4. **Table of Contents:** The table of contents should consist of the chapter titles and page numbers (this page should be double spaced).
5. **List of Tables:** The list of tables, if applicable, should be in the same format as the table of contents, i.e. the names/numbers of the tables, and corresponding page numbers (this page should be double spaced).
6. **List of figures and/or Illustrations:** The list of illustrations, if applicable, should also be in the same format as the table of contents, giving the figure or illustration names/numbers and corresponding page numbers (this page should be double spaced).

Main Body

Place the following elements, which make up the main body of your document, in the following order after the preliminary pages listed above:

Text

The first page of the main body of the manuscript should be numbered with Arabic numeral "1" and *all* subsequent pages (including those with charts, graphs, illustrations, photographs, the bibliography, appendices, and library release form) should be numbered with consecutive Arabic numerals (2, 3, 4, 5 and so on).

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Notes

Footnotes, citations, and bibliographic references may vary by graduate program. Consult your committee for the footnote style used by your program.

Appendices

This section will contain supporting material. You may need to reduce the size of some material to fit within the margins. Appendices must be numbered in consecutive order as part of the main body of the manuscript. For example, if the last page of your text is 101, then the appendix should begin on page 102.

UCSF Library Release

[Download the Library Release form](#), print it out, and sign it. Then, scan it and add this as the last page of your document (include a page number on this page). **OR** you may copy and paste the text below and use it to create the last page of your document:

Publishing Agreement

It is the policy of the University to encourage the distribution of all theses, dissertations, and manuscripts. Copies of all UCSF theses, dissertations, and manuscripts will be routed to the library via the Graduate Division. The library will make all theses, dissertations, and manuscripts accessible to the public and will preserve these to the best of their abilities, in perpetuity.

I hereby grant permission to the Graduate Division of the University of California, San Francisco to release copies of my thesis, dissertation, or manuscript to the Campus Library to provide access and preservation, in whole or in part, in perpetuity.

Author Signature _____

Date _____

(This final page must be signed and dated and should be numbered.)

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Guidelines for Submitting a Thesis (or Manuscript):

Text below is adapted for this handbook. Source: <http://graduate.ucsf.edu/submitting-thesis-or-dissertation#http://graduate.ucsf.edu/submitting-thesis-or-dissertation>

The submission of your thesis or manuscript is the final step in the awarding of your degree. The finished document is a scholarly work, and something to be proud of — the result of a long period of preparation and research. Follow these guidelines carefully to ensure the process goes smoothly.

General Guidelines

Allowing enough time for all the required steps, paying attention to deadlines, and adhering to the required [format guidelines](#) are crucial. The electronic copy of your thesis, dissertation, or manuscript, which you submit to the Graduate Division through Proquest, is deposited in the UCSF Library and becomes an official and permanent record available for use by other scholars and the public. Your committee will guide you in the content of your manuscript, and your graduate program may specify certain elements of style in addition to the prescribed format for all programs.

How much time will the submission process take?

It can be difficult to estimate the time it will take for your thesis, dissertation, or manuscript to be read, revised, and approved. Leave plenty of time to submit work and be aware that faculty may be unavailable during the summer and holidays at the end of the fall quarter. Also, any formatting problems that require revision after you upload documents may delay the approval process, so you would be wise to allow extra time for this too.

What are the deadlines?

The deadline for submitting the thesis or dissertation is the last working day of the quarter. Please refer to the [UCSF academic calendar](#) for this date. If you are unable to submit the thesis or dissertation by the deadline, you must either register or go on filing fee status for the next quarter. In order to be on the degree list, you must either be registered or on filing fee status for the quarter. ([Read more about filing fee status.](#))

How do I submit the final documents?

Theses, dissertations, and manuscripts must be submitted online through [Proquest](#). Note that the options you choose when submitting your document to Proquest, e.g. publishing options, copyright services, etc., will affect costs. UCSF covers the cost of the traditional publishing option for all students. If you choose open access publishing, then *you* are responsible for the difference between the traditional publishing fee and the open access fee. Likewise, if you choose to have Proquest apply for a copyright on your behalf or if you desire any other service (e.g. binding or printing), then *you* are responsible for

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additional fees. [See the Proquest website for more information on pricing and the various options available.](#)

Once you submit your documents to Proquest, the Graduate Division will review them to make sure you have included the following:

1. Full copy of your thesis, dissertation, or manuscript with correct pagination (as a pdf file). [See format specifications.](#)
2. First page of the document (as a pdf file): a scanned copy of the Cover Page with the written signatures of each committee member. Download the required Cover Page [forms section of this site.](#)
3. Last page of the document (as a PDF file): the signed [library release form.](#)

Additional steps required:

1. Please deliver the original signed cover page only to us at Herbst Learning Commons and Student Center, on the 1st floor of the Mission Hall Building (Room 1300, 550 16th Street San Francisco) - on the Mission Bay campus. Or you can send it to us via campus mail box 1227.

2. Alternatively, you may mail this document to:

UC San Francisco, Graduate Division

Attn: Ellen Levitan

Campus Box 1227

550 16th St, Room 1300

San Francisco, CA 94143

Note: If using a courier service e.g. FedEx, use the zip code 94158. If sending the signed title page via campus mail, please send to campus box 1227, attention of Ellen Levitan.

Download the required title page in the [forms section of this site.](#)

Questions about content, citation style, and specific program requirements may be addressed to your thesis, dissertation, or manuscript committee or graduate program.

Questions regarding format, deadlines, and online submission may be directed to:
Ellen Levitan, Student Services Officer, tel. 415 476-8280, email: ellen.levitan@ucsf.edu

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Appendix A

Graduate Division Guidelines for Thesis Structure

Table of Contents (The author should develop logical subcategories under each section heading.)

Title of Thesis

Introduction/Background

- The Study Problem
- Introduction to problem and sub-problems (what led to the problem being chosen?)
- Statement of the problem
- Purpose(s) of the study (list only)
- Need for the study (significance)
- Assumptions (if relevant)
- Hypothesis (if relevant) or questions
- Definition of terms
- Review of Relevant Literature (the following components may be reversed)
- Conceptual or theoretical framework (discussion of theoretical framework underlying study and operational description of concepts)
- Overview of relevant research reports directly related to the problem

Methodology

- Research design (survey, experimental, field studies, case studies, etc.)
- Description of research setting (if relevant)
- Sample
- Sample size
- Criteria for sample selection
- Instruments
- Description
- Scoring
- Validity and reliability
- Procedures: how, when, etc., instruments are to be used
- Instruments: interview guide (structured or non-structured), participant observation, chart audit, etc.
- Procedure for data collection
- Statistical/data analysis plan
- Human subjects assurance

Results

- Findings
- Discussion
- Limitations
- Implications for nursing
- Future research