Culminating Experience
Student Handbook

SF State University School of Nursing

Master of Science in Nursing
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CULMINATING EXPERIENCE PROCESS

**Background**

The Culminating Experience (CE) is the School of Nursing (SoN) Master of Science in Nursing (MSN) program’s capstone event. The CE provides you with the opportunity to demonstrate that you have achieved the program expected student learning outcomes. By demonstrating achievement of the program expected learning outcomes, you also show that you have achieved the competencies within your concentration. Over time, graduate programs have measured student achievement in various ways including oral and/or written comprehensive examinations, thesis or applied research projects such as a field study. All graduate programs are required to have a culminating experience to measure student achievement of expected program learning outcomes. The SoN revised the MSN curriculum in 2011 for implementation in fall 2012. A major change incorporated in the revised curriculum was a change in the culminating experience reflected in the 2013 CE Guidelines. In fall 2017, the SON opted to further refine the expectations of the CE experience.

**Expected MSN Program Learning Outcomes**

- Applies and integrates broad organizational, client-centered, and culturally appropriate concepts in the planning, delivery, management, and evaluation of evidence-based clinical prevention and population care and services.
- Demonstrates nursing and inter-professional collaboration that facilitates open communication, mutual respect, and shared decision-making to achieve quality patient care.
- Creates collaborative programs and educational approaches that address health promotion and disease prevention needs of culturally-ethnically diverse individuals and populations.
- Demonstrates a professional leadership role to promote quality and safe clinical patient care that incorporates ethical and critical decision-making approaches, fiscal accountability, effective working relationships, and systems perspectives.
• Assimilates nursing knowledge and expertise through research utilization, informatics literacy, and generates educational, leadership, or clinical approaches to advance professional nursing practice.
• Utilizes information technology to communicate effectively, manage knowledge, mitigate error, and support decision-making.
• Designs evaluation strategies for nursing care outcomes to assess, manage, and determine resource allocation for evaluation of nursing care outcomes.
• Evaluate methods, tools, performance measures, and standards related to quality improvement within a healthcare organization.
• Applies research outcomes within the practice setting to resolve identified practice problems.
• Organizes interventions at the health care system level utilizing policy development processes, economic principles, and employing advocacy strategies to influence health and health care services for individuals, families, aggregates/identified diverse populations and communities.

**Description of the Culminating Experience**

Course work in the MSN program is designed to give you the skills and knowledge necessary to successfully complete the culminating experience. During your last semester in the graduate program, you will enroll in a 3-unit course, NURS895. This course is designed to give you one-on-one support from your first and second reader as you complete the final written paper.

You will demonstrate achievement of expected program learning outcomes by writing a final paper. This written document integrates advanced nursing scholarship such as an education plan, intervention plan, grant proposal, business plan, clinical protocol, or analysis paper. The culminating experience (CE) demonstrates achievement of advanced practice nursing competencies. It draws upon knowledge generated from the course work, and reflects growth in knowledge and skills required of advanced practice nurses. The CE contains both formative and summative evaluation components, which are demonstrated in the final paper. Each student must address the same specific requirements for the CE.
(outlined below) but there are options for you to choose. This handbook is designed to provide you with guidance regarding the CE expectations and completion.

Formative Evaluation

Beginning with your core nursing courses in the graduate program, you will complete course assignments that require mastery of various competencies as described in the Essentials of Master’s Education for Advanced Practice Nursing (AACN, 2011), Statement on Clinical Nurse Specialist Practice and Education (NACNS, 2016), and Core Competencies for Nurse Practitioners (NONPF, 2017). By completing all the courses in the MSN curriculum, you will be able to integrate content and competencies from individual courses into your final paper. For example, you will integrate the following competencies and/or content into your culminating experience:

1. **Theoretical Basis for the Intervention:**
   a. What theories are commonly used in nursing practice and/or research?
   b. How can you use theory in your current or future work settings?
   c. What theoretical framework supports your proposed intervention?

2. **Research and Evidence-based Practice:**
   a. How is research integrated with theory to influence practice?
   b. How will you identify practice discrepancies in your work setting?
   c. What are the criteria for evaluating the credibility of the evidence?
   d. What evidence supports your proposed intervention?

3. **Epidemiology:**
   a. How have epidemiological methods or studies been used to address the topic of your culminating experience?
   b. What broad ecological, global, and social determinants of health may influence patient care outcomes?
   c. What is the role of epidemiology in policy development and program planning?

4. **Health Systems Management:**
a. What organizational systems need to be considered to assure successful implementation of your proposed intervention?

b. What impact will your proposed intervention have on safety and/or quality of care?

c. What are the political, legal or ethical issues influencing the care setting or patient population?

d. What quality improvement strategies would be appropriate to implement in your care setting to improve patient outcomes?

5. Policy:
   a. What are the overarching policy issues involved in this topic?
   b. How has political process or political environment been implicated in causing/maintaining/solving this problem?

6. Program Planning:
   a. How do the principles of program planning assist you to understand programmatic barriers or solutions to the problem?
   b. Which finance principles are key to successful implementation of your proposed intervention?

**Summative Evaluation**

The final paper will need to meet the following requirements:

1. Meets graduate-level writing proficiency standards for the SON.

2. Demonstrates integration and application of expected program learning outcomes as described above.

3. Includes the core graduate nursing competencies as described above

4. Involves an in-depth examination of the topic, with a minimum of 10 peer-reviewed publications in the body of the paper to support the evidence.

Successful completion of the culminating experience includes:
1. A written paper of 20-30 pages (at discretion of 1st reader) excluding title page, table of contents, references, tables/figures, and appendices.

2. Submission of final paper to TurnItIn (<10%, excluding student’s previously submitted paper(s) and references)

3. Final review and approval by the first and second readers

4. Three bound copies of final paper (One for each reader and one for the student)

5. Submission of abstract and report of CE completion to Grad Studies

6. Credit/No credit will be assigned to your transcript as a final grade

**Options for the Culminating Experience Paper**

The Culminating Experience project options have been designed as broadly as possible to allow flexibility in choosing a topic and format that works best for you. You may choose from:

1. **An analysis paper:** This paper requires you to take a strong position and defend it via use of the existing literature. Position papers may be used to support programmatic changes or to advocate for policy change.

   Example: Should family members be present during a code.

2. **A grant proposal:** The proposal requests funding for additional services. Methods sections for a grant proposal include details about sampling or target audiences, instruments, procedures, data analysis, budget, and timeline. Submitting parts of a grant proposal may be negotiated with the first reader if the project is beyond the scope of the CE, especially if the student is working alone.

   Example: Applying for a grant to provide internet service to a village in Kenya

3. **A business plan:** This is a written document that describes in detail how a business is going to achieve its goals. A business plan lays out a written plan from a marketing, financial and operational viewpoint. The plan design incorporates the steps necessary to develop a successful business venture. This includes an executive summary, business description, market analysis, organization and management, service or product line, marketing and sales, funding strategy and financial
projection. Submitting parts of a business plan may be negotiated with the first reader if the project is beyond the scope of the CE, especially if the student is working alone.

Example: Developing business plan for an airport clinic.

4. **An intervention plan:** This plan proposes an intervention plan supported by a literature review. The theoretical framework guiding the intervention will be presented along with a detailed methods section focused on implementation and evaluation of the intervention.

Example: New graduate transition program.

5. **A clinical protocol:** Assuring that quality, patient-centered care is provided is dependent on the development of evidence-based clinical protocols. This format requires you to complete a literature review and a detailed clinical protocol including assessment and evaluation criteria.

Example: Contraception management in Latina adolescents

6. **Educational plan:** This plan identifies the need for an educational intervention and presents a theoretically guided evidence-based educational plan, the setting, pertinent stakeholders, teaching strategies and evaluation tools (short and long-term). Examples of settings that students may choose can be their place of employment or their volunteer organization. Students can choose other settings as long as: 1) an educational issue and intervention is identified; 2) a presentation and evaluation can take place; and 3) their advisor approves of the setting.

   a. Example: Development of an education plan for pediatric intensive care nurses on the use of augmentative and alternative communication.

The guidelines for each of these formats for the culminating experience are included later in this document. The final culminating experience is to be submitted using this MS Word template available at [http://grad.sfsu.edu/content/current-students/thesis-dissertation-word-template](http://grad.sfsu.edu/content/current-students/thesis-dissertation-word-template)
The Role of the First and Second Reader

You will select your first reader for your culminating experience during the semester before the semester you intend to graduate. Selection of your first reader is based on the focus of your field study and discussion with your advisor and faculty teaching N794. It is recommended that you begin your thesis/field study work in N794. As part of the selection process, you should interview faculty members that could be potential first readers based on their expertise, interest, and availability. You will determine the best format for your culminating experience from those listed above in collaboration with your first reader. Selection of your second reader is made in collaboration with your first reader. At the beginning of the semester in which you are enrolled in NURS895, you must meet with your first reader to develop a timetable with specific deadlines for completion of the final paper. The first reader will review all written work as you write your final paper including outlines, drafts of the paper, abstracts, etc. After the first reader has done the initial review, the second reader will review the paper and often acts as an additional resource for evidence-based content and the overall quality of the paper. Expect and allow time for revisions based on recommendations from both readers. Communication between the readers (both first and second reader) and the student is of paramount importance for the successful completion of the paper. You will need approval of the final paper from both of the first and second reader. You will not be eligible to graduate if you do not get final approval from both your first and second reader. You must complete your editorial changes in a timely manner or you will jeopardize your chances of graduating on time and participating in commencement activities. Signatures of both readers as well as the chairperson of the department or graduate coordinator are required before submitting abstract and report of completion to the Division of Graduate Studies. Your first reader can guide you through these final steps.

Selecting a Topic and Format

You have the freedom to choose a topic that is interesting to you. The only requirement is that it be related to nursing. The biggest challenge will be to identify a project that is...
narrow enough to complete within the timeframe, but broad enough to keep you interested in it. You will spend many hours on your final paper, so choose the topic wisely.

First you will what to start with a general idea of what your topic will be. Most often, you will start with a broad topic area. The table below demonstrates how a broad topic can be narrowed to a specific project idea.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Broad Topic</th>
<th>Specific project ideas</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Diabetes</td>
<td>1. Intervention plan to increase exercise in school-aged children</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2. Educational plan for elders who were recently diagnosed with diabetes to prevent neurological and circulatory disorders</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>3. Clinical protocol for the management of patients who have consistent HgA1C levels that are elevated</td>
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<tr>
<td>Health promotion</td>
<td>1. Grant proposal for a community organization to implement a program to use lay health workers to do outreach into the community</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2. Focused literature review to identify gaps in knowledge about effective health promotion activities in low-literacy populations</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Health disparities</td>
<td>1. An analysis paper that identifies political, social and economic barriers to health and wellness in a specific community</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2. A grant proposal focused on increasing access to care for members of a specific target population</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

You should start identifying your topic by jotting down 4-5 broad topic areas that you find interesting using the template below. Once you have identified broad topic areas, start listing possible project ideas.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Broad Topic</th>
<th>Specific project ideas</th>
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Evaluating Your Project Ideas

Before you start working on your culminating experience you should evaluate your specific project ideas using the following guidelines:

1. Passion/Enthusiasm for the project
   a. How strongly do you feel about this project?
   b. Are you excited about the project?
   c. How interested are you in knowing more about this topic area?
   d. Is this a topic you may be working with for years to come?

2. Relevance of the idea
   a. Is the topic of high significance to nursing?
   b. Does the project encompass the core graduate nursing competencies of patient-centered care and cultural appropriateness, evidence-based practice, health promotion and disease prevention, advanced practice nurse competencies, health disparities and social equity?
   c. Will the skills you learn doing this project help you in your nursing practice?
   d. Will conducting this project help you apply the knowledge and skills you learned in your coursework?

3. Practicality of the idea
   a. Can you do this project in a reasonable amount of time (4-5 months)?
   b. Can you do this project with limited or no financial resources?
   c. Is the project concrete and narrow enough to accomplish?

Note on practicality. By the time you start on your project, you could only have 4 months to complete it. Keep in mind what your other commitments are and choose a project that will not be too stressful or does not extend your time in school. Of course, you may choose to take longer to do the culminating experience and complete it after you complete all the other graduate nursing courses. Be advised that faculty guidance will not be available to you during the summer, as most faculty members are not available from the end of spring semester to the beginning of fall semester.
Rate each of your project ideas on these three criteria, giving a score of 0 to 10 to each criterion, whereby 0 = very low and 10 = very high on the criterion.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Idea #</th>
<th>Passion/Enthusiasm</th>
<th>Relevance</th>
<th>Practicality</th>
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Building the Case for the Specific Project Idea

The format you choose for our culminating experience will determine the language used to build the case for the importance of the project. For example, if you are developing a program plan or an educational program, you will have goal statement. If you are writing a grant or business plan, you will have a problem statement based on a needs assessment. If you are doing a focused review of the literature or an analysis plan, you will have a hypotheses or research questions. This one-sentence statement is critical to developing a clear and concise proposal. Everything else will flow from this sentence.

Choose the two ideas that you rated the highest in the last exercise, and turn these into a one-sentence statement that fully describes the purpose of the project. The statement describes what you want to do in a concrete fashion. Using some of the project ideas in the example above, a one-sentence statement that describes the project could include:

1. Intervention plan to increase exercise in school-aged children.

   Example: The proposed intervention will increase physical activity among 3rd and 4th grade students by providing a structured after school regimen.
2. Clinical protocol for the management of patients with consistently elevated HgA1C levels.
   Example: Effective management of patients with consistently high HgA1C levels through the use of a clinical protocol decreases the likelihood of adverse sequelae from diabetes.

3. A grant proposal focused on increasing access to care for members of a specific target population.
   Example: The purpose of this grant proposal is to increase access to primary care services for low-income seniors living in the Tenderloin.

Try to create at least two statements for each project ideas you rated highest (for a total of 4 statements). Now review these research questions in terms of enthusiasm, relevance, and practicality. Can you select the focus area for your culminating experience yet? If not, repeat the process as many times as it takes to come up with an idea that meets the criteria.

Selecting a Format

Now that you have a topic idea, you need to choose a format for the project. This section provides more detail about the formats to aid you in selecting one that best fits your project idea.

Grant Proposal

The written proposal should be formatted using the following outline:

I. Face Page. (Do this after you complete all the other parts)
   a. Title of project
   b. Name and affiliation of applicant(s)
   c. Funding agency (proposed or actual)
   d. Dates of proposed period of support (from MM/DD/YY thru MM/DD/YY)
   e. Costs requested for initial budget period
   f. Costs requested for proposed period of support
   g. Applicant organization
   h. Type of organization

II. Project Summary (maximum 2 pages)
   a. A brief statement includes:
      i. Problem
      ii. Goals and objectives
iii. Methods to achieve results
iv. Expected results/impacts

b. Relevance
c. Project/performance site location (s)

III. Narrative (maximum 20 pages, excluding sections e, f, h, and i)
a. Introduction
   i. Starts with a clear, explicit statement of the problem and target population
   ii. Presents background of the specific problem relative to the community (problem(s) expressed as needs of the community, not the applicant's)
   iii. Relates to goals/purposes of funding agency
   iv. States the relevance of the problem: supported by statistical evidence/expert opinion; is brief and interesting to read; appropriately targeted to identified funding source(s).

b. Specific Aims
   i. Clear, unambiguous statement of overall goal(s)
   ii. Objectives reflect overall goal(s)
   iii. Timeframe for accomplishment of objectives
   iv. Aims stated in quantifiable, measurable terms

c. Review of the Body of Knowledge (include 10 peer-reviewed publications within the last 5 years)
   i. Exhibits understanding of the conceptual basis for the problem and the intervention
   ii. Identities targeted population
   iii. Presents key existing studies/interventions
   iv. Uses primary sources for references

d. Methods and Procedures (based on the work plan)
   i. Provides a brief description of the methods (intervention)
   ii. Defines important terms and, if necessary, operationalizes terms
   iii. Explains procedures, activities, and instruments that method(s)/intervention(s) entail
   iv. Has a logical flow from goal(s) and objectives
   v. Selected methods and instruments appropriate for the problem and objectives
   vi. Briefly describes organizational structure within which the activity is to be carried out
   vii. Presents brief chronological description of activities
   viii. Presents a plan for evaluating accomplishment of objectives
   ix. Presents a plan for evaluating and modifying methods over the course of the intervention

Rev. April 9, 2018
x. Defines criteria for success in terms of quantifiable/measurable products (or, if qualitative, in terms of interpretation)
xi. Tells who will be responsible for the evaluation
xii. Defines when and how often evaluation will take place
xiii. Planned activities are sequenced logically
xiv. Logistic consideration (e.g. transportation, coordination of sites, hiring) are addressed for each activity
xv. Responsibility for activities are delineated in terms of personnel, agencies, or institutions

e. Data Safety Monitoring Plan
   i. Describes how data will be handled
      - Collection: identify specific data that will be collected and timelines.
      - Processing
      - Analysis: reflects methods described in the methods section of the narrative
      - Confidentiality of records (if appropriate)
f. Work Plan**
   Includes a table showing timelines for completion of activities
g. Qualifications of the applicant/organization
   i. Describes the agency resources, personnel, capabilities, programs in service that will support accomplishment of the goal(s) of the proposed program
   ii. Delineates experience and accomplishments of the agency which will establish its expertise and creditability relevant to this project
h. Qualifications of principal investigators and key personnel, including:
   - Training
   - Education
   - Area of expertise
   - Experience and accomplishments related to the project
i. Interagency cooperation and coordination (if applicable)
   Reflects participation and cooperation among participant agencies
   Includes plan for continuity: What would happen if there are changes in personnel?

IV. Budget Information
a. Budget
   i. Personnel
      - Salaries and wages including units of time required to complete activities (e.g. % of effort or number of hours needed)
      - Fringe benefits
      - Consultants and contract services
   ii. Non-personnel
      - Space costs
- Rental, lease or purchase of equipment
- Consumable supplies
- Travel (number of trips, cost per trip)
- Communications, including phone, fax, mail, etc.
- Other costs

iii. Includes funds being requested including in-kind contributions
iv. Realistic and adequate to carry out all the planned activities

b. Budget justification
   i. Brief justification of the elements included in the budget including:
      - Basis for cost determination (e.g. salary range for position within agency)
      - Rationale for specific budget items (e.g. percent of time for personnel, travel, need for consultation)

V. Appendices (optional)
   a. Letters of Support
   b. Biographical sketches of the investigators
   c. Other (as appropriate)

** The work plan shows materials presented in the narrative section of the proposal. No new concepts should be introduced in this table.

**Intervention Plan**

1. Abstract (150-250 words)
2. Introduction
3. Body: Literature review supports the need for the intervention, method of implementation and evaluation. Minimum 10 scholarly articles
   a. Issue
      a. Background
      b. Significance
      c. Problem Statement
      d. Study Purpose and Objectives
      e. PICO(T) question
   b. Conceptual/Theoretical Framework
      a. Examples - The Health Belief Model, Orem, Watson, Leininger, etc...
      b. Supports intervention plan and type of learners
   c. Implementation Plan
      a. Components of Intervention
      b. Feasibility
      c. Usefulness
      d. Targeted clients
      e. Implementation team members
      f. Proposed timeline
      g. Proposed budget
4. Evaluation
   a. Outcome indicators
   b. Data collection plan
c. Evaluation method and timeline

5. Conclusions, Implications and Recommendations
6. References: Majority from scholarly journals published within past 5 years
7. Appendices
   a. Intervention Plan
   b. Consent
   c. Pre- and post-test if applicable
   d. Evaluation form

Business Plan

1. Executive Summary
   a. Briefly tell your readers what your company is and why it will be successful. Include Mission Statement, your product or service, basic information about your company’s leadership, team, employees and location. You should include financial information and high level growth plans if you plan to ask for financing.

2. Mission Statement & Company Description
   a. A clear statement of your company’s long-term mission. Try to use words that will help direct the growth of your company, but be as concise as possible.

3. Survey of the Industry
   a. Overview of the present situation
      i. Who are the consumers of your product or service at the present?
      ii. Who are the providers at present?
      iii. Where is the primary source of financing coming from at present?

4. Market Research Analysis
   a. Market: past, present, & future:
      i. Description of the competition, market size and industry trends, identification of target populations, market share and projected sales

5. Competition
   a. Summarize competition
   b. Outline your company’s competitive advantage

6. Opportunities
   a. Problems and opportunities:
      i. State consumer problems, and define nature of product/service opportunities created by those problems.
      ii. Be specific! Generalities such as "better quality of care" will not translate to successful operations, but "reduction in inpatient readmissions within 72 hours" will

7. Business Concept
   a. Summarize key technology, concept or strategy on which your business is based
   b. Be specific! Does your company intend to provide a better
      i. Product?
ii. Service?
iii. Information Management?
iv. Outcome?

8. Goals & Objectives
   a. Five-year goals
      i. State specific measurable objectives
      ii. State market share objectives
      iii. State revenue/profitability objectives

9. The Management Team
   a. List CEO and key management by name
   b. Include previous accomplishments to show these are people with a record of success
   c. Summarize number of years of experience in this field

10. Resource Requirements
    a. Technology requirements
    b. Personnel requirements
       i. Includes attorneys, accountants, bankers, insurance agents
    c. Resource requirements
       i. Financial, distribution, promotion, etc.
    d. External requirements
    e. Products/services/technology required to be purchased outside company

11. Operations Plan
    a. Linear timetable for startup
    b. Include parallel development tasks
    c. Include chain of command
    d. Plan should dovetail with projected financial milestones

12. Research & Development
    a. What needs to be developed before project can move forward?
    b. Examples:
       i. Cost management of product production
       ii. Plans for intellectual property like copyright or patent filings
       iii. Government regulation, e.g., Federal Toiletries and Cosmetics, FDA, OSHA, Bureau of Transportation, etc.

13. Key Timing Issues
    a. Near term
       i. Isolate key decisions and issues that need immediate or near term resolution
    b. Long term
       i. Isolate issues needing long-term resolution
       ii. State consequences of decision postponement
    c. If you are seeking funding, state specifics

14. Risks & Rewards
    a. Risks
       i. Summarize risks of proposed project
    b. Addressing risk
       i. Summarize how risks will be addressed
c. Rewards
   i. Estimate expected pay-off, particularly if seeking funding
d. Troubleshooting
   i. Internal and external threats to the business

15. Financial Plan
   a. High-level financial plan that defines financial model, pricing assumptions, and reviews yearly expected sales and profits for the next three years. (quarterly scales)
   b. Use several pages and diagrams or tables to cover this material appropriately. (include income statements, balance sheets, cash flow, capital expenditure budget)

16. Proposed Financing
   a. Be very specific (debt or equity)
   b. Who is funding how much at what time?
   c. At what intervals is the funding to take place and what triggers the next round of funding?
   d. Give detailed description of how you will spend the funds.

17. Legal Structure & Regulation
   a. The legal entity: Subchapter S, C Corp, LLC, etc.
   b. What regulatory agencies must be cleared?
   c. What is the ownership distribution? Stock?
   d. Organizational chart

18. Percentage ownership?
   a. Who is legally responsible for company?
   b. Errors and Omission Insurance
   c. Bonded employees
   d. Copyright & Trademark
   e. Protection of IP - Patents

19. Appendices

20. Supporting Documents
   a. Credit History
   b. Resumé
   c. Literature bibliography
   d. Tables
   e. Charts
   f. Photographs
   g. Testimonials, letters of reference
   h. Permits, patents, legal documents & contracts

Analysis Paper

1. Abstract (150-250 words)
2. Introduction
3. Problem statement: Define the concept of interest
   a. Clear and concise explanation of the problem, purpose, setting, and target population
b. Significance of the problem on the target population
c. Objectives: SMART, no more than 3 objectives
4. Review of literature: Minimum 10 scholarly articles
   a. Present the state of the science on the issue
      1. Uses reliable and valid sources of information
      2. Presents key existing studies/interventions/theories
   b. Will involve the discovery of the attributes of the concept
      1. Is conducted to generate a picture of what is known and not
         known about a particular situation
   c. Refers to relevant sources that are important in providing in-depth
      knowledge
      1. To provide evidence for concept analysis
      2. Gain a broad background or understanding of the information
         that is available related to a problem
   d. Synthesize the literature
5. Thesis Statement: Delineation of your perspectives on the issue based on the
   literature
6. Recommendations
   a. Provides a discussion of recommended intervention(s) to address specified
      concerns. Discuss all options including research, education, training, and
   b. Qualifications of key personnel: area of expertise
7. Evaluation: Suggestion for evaluation of intervention
8. Summary
9. References
10. Appendices (as appropriate)

Clinical Protocol (Standardized Procedure)

1. Introduction: Brief description, background, and significance of the health issue.
2. General policy component for SPs
   a. Development, Approval, Revision, and Review of the protocol (How often? By
      whom?)
   b. Scope and Setting of practice
   c. Supervision of NPs using the protocol
3. Protocols
   a. Definitions of the diagnosis and any related terms to include specific
      population if protocol is written for a particular group.
      i. Data base:
         1. Subjective; health history to include HPI, pertinent PMH, SH, 
            FH, SH, medications, and allergies
         2. Objective Physical exam: Specific parts of the PE for the
            diagnosis, critical observations
   b. Differential diagnoses considered
c. Diagnostic criteria
   Pertinent lab/X-rays/EKG/testing necessary for diagnosis

d. Plan of Care: Evidence based medical treatment plan
   i. Management
      1. Recognition of emergencies requiring immediate referral
      2. Non-Pharmacologic:
         a. Physical therapy?
         b. Diet/Exercise?
         c. Further lab or x-ray studies
      3. Pharmacologic: Medications furnishing/formulary. Please give all medications and dosages that may be used for this diagnosis. Included alternatives for patients with allergies.
   ii. Patient conditions requiring consultation (with physician or specialist)
   iii. Education- patient/family
   iv. Follow-up recommendations

e. Record keeping
   i. Charting
   ii. HIPAA

4. NPs authorized to perform procedures/protocols at the clinic:
   a. Qualifications for NPs using the protocol
      i. Nurse practitioner education program/specialty
      ii. Advanced level training
      iii. Experience as an NP
      iv. National Certification in area of specialty
      v. Method of initial and continuing evaluation of competence using the protocol

5. References (At least 10 current references within the past 5 years)

6. Appendix
   a. Protocol outline from N804
   b. BRN scope of practice for NP
   c. NP/MD Collaborative agreement
   d. General Policies Page
   e. Development and approval of the Standardized Procedure
      i. Method: (Title 16, CCR Section 1474 (a))
      ii. Review schedule
      iii. Signatures of authorized personnel approving the SPs and dates
         1. Nursing
         2. Medicine
         3. Administration
Educational Plan

1. Abstract (150-250 words)
2. Introduction
3. Body: Minimum 10 scholarly articles
   a. Issue: Literature review supports the issue and avenues to resolve the issue
      i. Identification of educational problem
      ii. Environment in which it occurs
      iii. Audience
   b. Educational Theory:
      i. Examples – Bandura, Bloom, Knowles, Kolb, Freire,
      ii. Supports educational plan and type of learners
   c. Teaching Strategies:
      i. Learning objectives (SMART)
      ii. Address different learning styles
      iii. Outcomes
      iv. How strategies align with organizational mission
      v. How transfer of knowledge/dissemination of information will occur
   d. Evaluation: Short and long term outcomes
      i. Type of measurement (Survey, Existing tool)
      ii. When and how administered
      iii. Should include components of overall presentation and feasibility of using tool
      iv. Long term evaluation should determine if educational tool was implemented
4. Conclusion
5. References: Majority from scholarly journals published within past 5 years
6. Appendices
   a. Education Plan Materials (if applicable)
   b. Pre- and post-test (if applicable)
   c. Budget
   e. Evaluation form

Developing Your Final Paper

When you have decided on the topic and format of your final paper, you will want to meet with your first reader to go over your plan. It may be helpful to have an outline of your final paper ready to focus the discussion. It is best to do this in the semester prior to the semester in which you intend to graduate. Once you have reached agreement regarding the final paper with your first reader, contact your second reader so that you can discuss your plan. In collaboration with your first reader develop a plan for completion of your final paper. This should include timelines for completion of key portions of the paper and developing a method of communication that meets both your needs. You will want to share
this information with your second reader. Next, you will want to begin work on the final paper. You can start working on your final paper during your last 2 semesters of the graduate program. Do not wait until the last moment to get started or you risk not completing the final paper within the last semester of your nursing course work and extending your time in the nursing program.

**Do I Need Institutional Review Board (IRB) Approval?**

It is your responsibility to determine if your project needs IRB approval or not. To determine if your project needs IRB approval [http://research.sfsu.edu/protocol/require_review](http://research.sfsu.edu/protocol/require_review). If after reading this information you still have questions regarding whether your project needs IRB approval or not, contact your first reader.

**Searching for Information and Interpreting Research Articles**

Through your nursing course work you will develop the skills necessary to conduct a comprehensive literature review. All formats of the culminating experience require you to review and critique at least 10 peer-reviewed scholarly works. The most commonly used databases used in nursing are PubMed, Cumulative Index of Nursing and Allied Health Literature (CINAHL), Web of Science, and PsychInfo. You will be oriented to each of these databases at various points in the graduate program.

An important aspect of success in writing a comprehensive review of the literature is being able to critique the research by determining its significance to the discipline and assessing reliability and validity of the study and study methods. Most students benefit from building a table that aids in summarizing each of the studies reviewed. It may be beneficial for you to develop a table similar to the one below to help you organize the studies you’re reading.

**Taking Notes from Research Sources:**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Complete citation in APA style:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>(save yourself work at the end by carefully recording citations as you read)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Purpose and type of research (Quantitative or qualitative; experimental or descriptive; longitudinal or cross-sectional, etc):</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(record the kind of information you will need for your literature review)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Methodology:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(number and type of subjects, control groups, measures/variables, procedures)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Findings:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(record statistically significant findings or general themes)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Comments</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(limitations, relationship to your topic, notes to yourself)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

When it is time to write your literature review, it is easier to organize the review if you have a stack of single page summaries of the sources you have read instead of a lot articles and reports.

**Writing the Literature Review**

The literature review that is required in the final paper is much more detailed than those in most published research articles. The goal of the literature review is to review and critique the most current research to support your project. You are required to review and critique a minimum of 10 peer-reviewed scholarly works (journal articles, etc.) in your literature review. However, your topic area may require that you review more than 10 to provide the reader with an understanding of the state of the knowledge. Most of the topics of papers in graduate school will be subjects with hundreds of potential sources, including books, articles, chapters, monographs, government reports, and other sources of information to inform the paper. Literature reviews are rarely exhaustive of the entire literature unless that literature is sufficiently small.

**Acknowledgement**

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