Faculty of Nursing

Master of Nursing

Curriculum Guide

October 5, 2021

Introduction

Curriculum renewal is an important process for all educational programs. Recent revisions to the Master of Nursing curriculum reflect commitment to sustain and advance the highest quality of educational programming in Nursing as we anticipate and respond to changes in nursing and health sciences, local and global health trends, and the evolution of health systems. The curriculum changes are intended to reflect the Faculty of Nursing vision and strategic plan, and our reputation as a global leader in nursing research and education.

In the fall semester of 2021, revisions to the Master of Nursing curriculum have been implemented for all students commencing MN their studies on September 1, 2021. Curriculum revisions were approved after an extensive period of curriculum review, analysis of data reflecting nursing education, nursing roles and employment, and significant consultation with faculty, students, and stakeholders.

Purpose of this curriculum guide
This document provides a reference for students, faculty, and clinical partners to understand the conceptual framework underpinning the MN curriculum, and the courses and pathways available in the MN program. It will assist students to appreciate the intentions behind their learning journey and will enable faculty and staff to advise students on course selection and program planning.

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1. MN CURRICULUM FRAMEWORK

The Faculty of Nursing revisions to the MN curriculum reflect the recommendations from the faculty working groups and consultations that culminated in the Rizzoli Report (2020), the "Connected Curriculum" framework articulated by Fung (2017), and the strategic vision and priorities articulated in the Faculty of Nursing Strategic Plan (2018-2023). The knowledge and dispositions that are cultivated across the master's program are intended to support learners to connect their capacity to ask questions and conduct inquiries about meaningful experiences in their professional lives. This process develops skills for: lifelong learning and adaptive leadership in complex health care systems and settings; exploring and critiquing evidence; uncovering assumptions; identifying trends; asking questions; engaging in collaborative communities of inquiry; generating knowledge; and advancing nursing practice. In the process, learners are empowered to find their own voice, articulate well-informed perspectives to diverse audiences, and actively shape the systems in which they participate and lead (Fung, 2017).

Outcome-based
The curriculum design reflects an outcome-based framework for professional nursing education at the master's level. The overall curriculum is guided by a core set of 12 program outcomes to be met by all program graduates. It also includes specific outcomes to be attained in one of four advanced focus areas of study, including research, leadership, education, and clinical practice (Nurse Practitioner). Students select either thesis or course-based studies for completion of the program and select one area of advanced focus study.

Research and Inquiry-Mindedness
Core premises of the "Connected Curriculum" framework (Fung, 2017) are that research/inquiry and learning are mutually synergistic activities, and that active modes of inquiry offer an experiential basis for empowering learners to explore, question, and critique knowledge that is needed for professional work and ongoing learning within nursing. The curriculum framework presents a systematic pathway for building individual and group capacity for inquiry and research. Core courses expose students to topics and questions that are shaping the evolution of nursing knowledge and practice, and community of inquiry courses build skills for actively engaging in the process of inquiry. These studies encourage learners to consider diverse forms of knowledge within nursing, other disciplines, and other cultures.

A community of inquiry approach (Garrison, 2017; Vaughn et al., 2013) explicitly draws on Fung's (2017) conceptual framework, providing opportunities to apply emerging inquiry skills and positioning students to learn with and from each other. Students have opportunities to connect with researchers, to consider important lines of inquiry within their workplace arena, and to formulate their own questions about nursing knowledge and practice. Course work provides progressive opportunities to build inquiry skills, moving through structured, guided, and independent applications of skills required in the conduct of research and scholarly inquiry. These experiences build toward exploration of a focused area of study, addressing topics and questions within advanced nursing roles that may reflect their current arena of workplace application or future opportunities for practice and inquiry.

Reconciliation, Equity, Diversity, and Inclusivity
The Faculty of Nursing 2020 Strategic Plan for Equity, Diversity, and Inclusivity provides direction to address issues of reconciliation, equity, diversity, and inclusivity. This plan commits the Faculty to prepare nursing graduates to meet the healthcare needs of Indigenous persons and communities, and to advance the process of Canadian reconciliation by acting on the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada Calls to Action (#18 – 24) (p. 9).

Regarding graduate students, the EDI plan (2020) also commits that "We will prepare the next generation of expert nurses in advanced clinical practice, education, and research (Master of Nursing and Doctoral programs) who are ready to advance professional nursing roles in diverse and complex contexts by:

- Attracting and retaining a robust body of outstanding graduate students.
- Reviewing criteria (e.g. holistic admission) to promote an intersectionality approach to admissions. Building a community of graduate students marked by excellence, engagement, equity, and inquiry that is open and diverse.
- Creating orientation and professional development activities that are respectful to the diverse needs of all students.
- Reviewing and revising the graduate programs in anticipation of the comprehensive requirements of future nursing researchers and leaders.
- Imbedding Indigenous ways of knowing, where appropriate, throughout the courses offered across the graduate programs" (p. 6).

The revisions to the MN curriculum provide opportunities to demonstrate action on these commitments to advance social equity and the spirit of reconciliation with Indigenous peoples, communities, and knowledges. Attention to issues of reconciliation, power, culture, diversity, and equity is noted in several course descriptions, and these commitments are increasingly explicit within the courses that have been developed.

It was intentional that the first item on the list of MN Program Outcomes (p. 7) states that graduates will be able to "Demonstrate leadership by creating health systems that are equitable, diverse, and inclusive, and by engaging in reconciliation with Indigenous peoples, communities, and knowledges". MN graduates are leaders in the health care arena with potential to exercise power and influence to advance equity, diversity, and inclusivity. These leaders must contribute to creation of health care contexts where there is equitable access and representation of diverse peoples, and meaningful engagement and participation of socially diverse peoples. Our efforts in this curriculum are intended to support capacity building and advance these important goals.

Accessibility and Choice
The curriculum framework intentionally aims to offer flexibility in course sequencing and programming with minimal prerequisites to avoid creating barriers to program progression. At the graduate level, nursing learners need a range of options for full-time and part-time progression in their studies. Many students are juggling multiple professional, workplace and family commitments. They require scheduling formats that may include daytime, evening, and remote options.

Course scheduling may include options for on-campus, online, or hybrid courses (ie. Classes that concurrently engage students face-to-face in the classroom and online participants). Courses often use web-based technologies for synchronous and asynchronous learning activities that support and extend classroom lectures for all students, including those in the classroom and at remote sites. Students must be available to participate in regularly scheduled classes and seminars. The Advanced Clinical-NP Focus stream is available by distance to students across Alberta and other provinces, who are also supported to complete their clinical practicum hours within or close to their home communities.

Four Advanced Focus Areas of Study
MN students select one of four focus areas of study that reflect advanced nursing roles, including:
1. Leadership – building expertise for current and future nursing leadership roles in the health sector;
2. Education – preparation for practice in both academic and clinical sector teaching contexts;
3. Research – building capacity for working with data; using research; conducting and leading research projects; seeking advanced research skills;
4. Clinical – leading to licensure as a nurse practitioner.

2. GRADUATE PROGRAMS PHILOSOPHY AND VALUES STATEMENT

Graduate Programs in the Faculty of Nursing are designed to cultivate critical engagement, intellectual curiosity and global citizenship. Students are welcomed into a research-intensive environment that honours learning and scholarship. Students are invited to think critically and reflexively about their place in the world, and to engage with personal and professional opportunities to promote health equity and quality of life for the public good.

Learning is understood as a journey situated within vibrant, engaged, scholarly communities that value and support dialogue, intellectual curiosity and comfort with the uncertain nature of knowledge. The Faculty of Nursing aims to create a collaborative learning milieu that promotes engagement within nursing and across broader communities.

Students work in a context that encourages them to delve into complex problems, drawing on diverse schools of thought and academic traditions, honoring Indigenous ways of knowing and doing, to push the boundaries of nursing through the creation and dissemination of knowledge and insight.

Philosophy Statement Rationale

Each succinct sentence within the above Graduate Programs Philosophy and Values Statement is grounded in assumptions and values which are further elaborated in the following description of the rationale for these commitments.

I. The Environment and Purpose of Programming
"Graduate Programs in the Faculty of Nursing are designed to cultivate critical engagement, intellectual curiosity and global citizenship."
This statement emphasizes that the environment for learning is thoughtfully created, as an intentional, yet organic process leading to clear outcomes.

Intellectual curiosity is viewed, and fostered, as a foundational intrinsic motivator that serves as the enduring spark within an individual. Critical engagement describes the desired mode of interaction with knowledge and supports advocacy and global citizenship establishing a vision aligned with wider societal and institutional goals.

"Students are welcomed into a research-intensive environment that honours learning and scholarship."
This statement recognizes that the Faculty of Nursing is situated within a research-intensive university and emphasizes the institution's balanced focus on research as well as teaching and learning. We view our responsibility as promoting and modeling a firm commitment to research. This, combined with attitudes of

respect for entrants into graduate studies in the field of nursing, establishes an open, welcoming and supportive environment for learners.

"Students are invited to think critically and reflexively about their place in the world, and to engage with personal and professional opportunities to promote health equity and quality of life for the public good."
This statement sets up the scope and focus for learning while acknowledging each student's point of influence. Students are encouraged towards personal reflection and to question how their unique interests, skills and developing knowledge can contribute to human health in alignment with wider societal, disciplinary and institutional values.

We want to emphasize both the internal reflection and growth that form part of a student's experience as well as the purpose-driven, external outcomes that arise out of their work.

II.   The Experience: "What we offer"
"Learning is situated within vibrant, engaged, scholarly communities that value and support dialogue and intellectual curiosity."
This statement emphasizes that the Faculty of Nursing is thoughtfully creating a learning space for students that is collaborative and community based. The programs enable an active approach to learning that encourages students to interact meaningfully and contribute to research as they develop their interests and skills.

"The Faculty of Nursing aims to create a collaborative learning milieu that promotes engagement within nursing and across broader communities"
This statement describes the wider disciplinary environment in which the faculty community is situated, establishing an expectation that relationships beyond the faculty are thoughtfully developed and nurtured. The faculty community builds global relationships in which students are encouraged to participate.

III.   The Focus
"Students work in a context that encourages them to delve into complex problems, drawing on diverse schools of thought and academic traditions, honoring Indigenous ways of knowing and doing, to push the boundaries of nursing through the creation and dissemination of knowledge and insight."
This statement emphasizes a focus on research that has the potential to influence practice. We take a broad conceptualization of nursing and recognize that practice takes place in many circumstances and contexts. Nursing continues to evolve and remains firmly focused on the wellbeing of populations and individuals.

3. MN PROGRAM OUTCOMES

The Faculty of Nursing vision and mission statements and strategic priorities; the Faculty of Nursing strategic plan for Equity, Diversity, and Inclusivity; and the philosophy of the Faculty of Nursing Graduate Programs provide context for the following program outcomes to be attained by all master's level graduates as they prepare for advanced nursing roles.

Graduates of the Master of Nursing program will be able to:

1. Demonstrate leadership by creating health systems that are equitable, diverse, and inclusive, and by engaging in reconciliation with Indigenous peoples, communities, and knowledges.
2. Draw on diverse schools of thought and academic traditions to explore complex problems and practice issues.
3. Explore, develop, and apply knowledge in their substantive area of nursing inquiry to advance practice, health, and system improvement.
4. Use systematic research and inquiry methods to explore health and nursing questions, and practice problems.
5. Collaborate in research, knowledge development, and/or knowledge synthesis initiatives.
6. Develop and support initiatives to improve healthcare delivery, promote health, and reduce / minimize health inequity through critical evaluation, dissemination and application of knowledge.
7. Support the ethical collection and analysis of relevant operational, research and patient-specific data, and maintain commitments to best practices of data management.
8. Articulate and use nursing knowledge and evidence to inform decisions related to clinical practice, policy, education, administration, and research.
9. Advocate for federal, provincial, local and institutional policy initiatives based on available evidence and critically informed analysis.
10. Apply appropriate pedagogies and strategies in the creation of engaging learning experiences, and in the assessment and evaluation of educational outcomes.
11. Use a variety of technologies to support health, health service delivery and advanced nursing roles.
12. Evaluate care practices from the context of policy, ethics, economics and operational viability.

Additionally, Graduates of the MN Program will achieve program outcomes related to their selected advanced focus area of study.

Graduates of the Advanced Clinical Focus (Nurse Practitioner) will be able to:
1. Actively appraise and integrate evidence-based practice research, and lead or participate in research activity to demonstrate optimization in patient care for advanced clinical practice.
2. Operationalize advanced clinical knowledge and experience to successfully meet Nurse Practitioner entry-to-practice competencies.
3. Display capacity for professional advocacy, partnership, and leadership both intra and inter-professionally.

Graduates of the Advanced Education Focus will be able to:
1. Draw on diverse educational philosophies and pedagogical theories to explore curriculum issues relevant to learning and teaching in the nursing context.
2. Use systematic inquiry to inform, develop, and evaluate educational endeavours that maximise opportunities for learning.
3. Support educational practices that honour the Calls to Action of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada.
4. Recognize and incorporate a sensitivity to the needs of learners from diverse cultural groups as well as individuals who suffer discrimination as a result of disability, racism, and/or marginalization.

Graduates of the Advanced Research Focus will be able to:
1. Select and apply appropriate methods for systematic literature review to develop research questions and synthesize evidence to support planning and decision-making.
2. Design a research project incorporating relevant key elements of the research lifecycle.
3. Collaborate in creative development and exploration of cutting-edge research to advance knowledge in nursing and health sciences.

Graduates of the Advanced Leadership Focus will be able to:
1. Design organizational transformation initiatives using advanced leadership concepts for health care organizations.
2. Apply knowledge of health system organization, health human resources, change processes, and financing to proposed solutions for improved health system outcomes.
3. Promote evidence-informed decision making for policy assessment, development, and/or implementation for local, national, and global health issues.

4. COURSE TITLES AND COURSE DESCRIPTIONS

Four clusters of coursework unfold across the program:
- Community of Inquiry
- Core courses
- Advanced focus courses
- Thesis or capstone project

Course-based students in the Advanced Education Focus and Advanced Leadership Focus also complete one elective course. See Appendix D (p. 22) for a listing of courses, credits, and prerequisites.

1. Community of Inquiry (9 credits)

A distinguishing feature of this curriculum is the integrated developmental journey of discovery through participation in a scholarly community. A series of 3 one-credit courses (NURS 589, 590, 591) will normally be taken sequentially across three consecutive terms (fall, winter, spring/fall), and will engage students as a community of inquiry (Garrison, 2017; Vaughan, Cleveland-Innes, & Garrison, 2013). Students will gain scholarly experience and consolidate what it means to think like a researcher, and to progressively build their personal capability to conduct their final capstone or thesis project.

Two additional applied inquiry courses (NURS 593 and 594 - 3 credits each) create a scaffolded sequence of opportunities for research and inquiry, steadily building capability and confidence as students integrate research thinking into their overall learning journey and personal goals. These courses also explicitly build knowledge and skills for development of the capstone and thesis projects.

a. NURS 589 *Community of Inquiry I - Engaging with Nursing Scholarship* (1 credit)
   Deepen understanding of the nature of nursing scholarship and research by engaging with the work of nursing faculty researchers. Emphasis is placed on developing collaborative critical dialogue as an introduction to systematic enquiry into a topic of relevance to the student's selected area of advanced focus.

b. NURS 590 *Community of Inquiry II - Research Question & Literature Review* (1 credit)
   Explore development of questions appropriate for systematic research and inquiry. Emphasis is placed on locating and exploring literature that informs the current state and limits of knowledge relevant to the student's selected advanced focus area of study. (Prerequisite: NURS 589)

c. NURS 591 *Community of Inquiry III - Building Collaborative Inquiry* (1 credit)
   Build collaborative capacity in the development of systematic research and inquiry. Emphasis is placed on peer review of capstone and thesis proposal development and on strengthening communication skills for the effective articulation of ideas and arguments to and with diverse audiences. (Prerequisite: NURS 590)

d. NURS 593 *Applied Inquiry I – Framing the Inquiry Focus* (3 credits)
   Engage in structured inquiry in relation to issues from health care and/or nursing practice. Emphasis is placed on exploring key elements of such issues, identifying knowledge gaps, and shaping current understandings in pursuit of questions and methods appropriate for systematic research and inquiry. (Prerequisite or Corequisite: NURS 589) (Note: Not required for Advanced Clinical-NP focus)

e.   NURS 594 *Applied Inquiry II – Grand Challenge Questions* (3 credits)
Participate in guided inquiry, applying research skills and inquiry approaches, designing solutions, and contributing to a knowledge-building community. Student teams investigate a current nursing issue from a range of perspectives informed by advanced leadership, education, clinical and research-based knowledge, theory and practice. (Prerequisite: NURS 593) (Note: May choose a 600 level research methods course or equivalent course approved by department as alternative; Not required for Advanced Clinical-NP focus)

2. Core Courses (15 credits)

Five core courses support attainment of overall MN program outcomes. In these courses, students explore diverse knowledge traditions from other disciplines, cultures, and related approaches to research and inquiry. Students deconstruct philosophical assumptions, consider the complexity of systems, and engage with current research topics and methods that are pushing forward the limits of nursing knowledge and practice (Fung, 2017). There is emphasis on understanding how knowledge is formed and communicated, and how it must be tested and critically interrogated. There is explicit attention to issues of inequality, inclusion, and power differentials in nursing approaches to research and inquiry.

a.   NURS 595 *Foundations of Scholarship/Critical Thought* (3 credits)
Develop critical thinking skills through exposure to approaches to knowledge and knowledge production in diverse disciplines and cultures, including Indigenous ways of knowing. Emphasis is placed on issues of inequality, inclusion, and power in knowledge production, and systematic scholarly analyses of everyday nursing experiences.

b.   NURS 596 *Research Foundations* (3 credits)
Explore diverse methods and approaches to formal research inquiry, including Indigenous research approaches. Compare and contrast research methods and practices, including approaches to framing of the research question, generating and analyzing data, presenting and disseminating findings. Increase understanding of research literacy, appraisal of rigour, and roles of research team members leading and participating in research endeavours.

c.   NURS 597 *Understanding Complex Systems* (3 credits)
Explore the complex nature of nursing practice in the context of evolving healthcare systems, including fiscal, policy and regulatory environments. Emphasis is placed on models of care delivery, relationships within and between systems, and issues of health inequity, gender, culture, and bias.

d.   NURS 598 *Translating Knowledge* (3 credits)
Examine use of knowledge in diverse settings, by different stakeholders, and for various types of decision-making. Explore evidence-based decisions, guidelines, policies and procedures, quality improvement, and knowledge translation strategies.

e.   NURS 599 *Philosophy and Ethics in Nursing Inquiry* (3 credits)
Explore philosophical and ethical questions related to nursing practice, professionalism, scholarship, and research, including Indigenous research ethics. Emphasis is placed on the nature of responsibility and professional obligation associated with systematic nursing inquiry and knowledge application. (Note: Not required for Advanced Clinical-NP focus)

3. Advanced Focus Courses (6 credits for Education, or Research, or Leadership foci OR 24 credits for Advanced Clinical Focus-NP)

Students apply for admission to one of the four advanced focus area of study (i.e. Education, Research, Leadership, or Clinical-NP). With the exception of the latter (Advanced Clinical Focus-NP), each focus area consists of two courses (totalling 6 credits) that explore the conceptual frameworks, methods and approaches associated with knowledge generation and application in the context of advanced nursing roles in each of these areas. The core courses and community of inquiry courses that are taken during the first year of the program are consistent across advanced focus areas of education, research, and leadership, so that students may request a transfer between these advanced focus areas during their first year of studies (or equivalent for part-time students).

A. *Advanced Focus Education – 6 credits*
   a. NURS 558 *Perspectives on Nursing Pedagogy* (3 credits)
   Explore historical and contemporary perspectives on nursing pedagogy, with emphasis on the language, concepts, and theories that have shaped education in nursing. Underlying influences such as empirical, behaviourist, emancipatory, and interpretive philosophies will be examined as these perspectives interact with the dynamics of politics, economics, gender, culture, and power as experienced by learners in nursing. Approaches to learner-centered education informed by the scholarship of teaching and learning in nursing will be explored.

   b. NURS 559 *Approaches to Learning and Teaching Innovation in Nursing* (3 credits)
   Examine approaches to learning and teaching in diverse nursing practice settings. Develop a repertoire of strategies related to planning educational experiences that may include establishing relational contexts for learning, becoming an inclusive educator, offering feedback, measuring learning outcomes, and incorporating technology.

OR

B. *Advanced Focus Leadership – 6 credits*
   a. NURS 568 *Advanced Nursing Leadership in Health Systems* (3 credits)
   Analyze aspects of healthcare planning and evidence-informed decision making related to core functions of nursing leadership across diverse settings. Emphasis is placed on health human resources, change management, fiscal planning and monitoring, interprofessional and cross-sectoral collaboration, quality and safety processes, strategic planning, and policy development.

   b. NURS 569 *Nursing Power and Policy in Health Care Leadership* (3 credits)
   Examine the ways that nurses gain and leverage power to impact health systems and health care practices. Explore local, national, and global health issues through the lens of power, influence, and policy development. Emphasis will be placed on organizational, regulatory, and policy contexts for nursing practice and health issues as they relate to health equity, inclusivity, health promotion, and health outcomes.

OR

C. *Advanced Research Focus – 6 credits*
   a. NURS 578 *Knowledge Synthesis* (3 credits)
   Examine the methods used to conduct various types of systematically conducted literature reviews or syntheses. Apply key steps for systematically conducting selected types of literature reviews, and the benefits and challenges associated with each of these approaches. Challenges, debates, and issues in evidence-based/evidence-informed practice and policy will be addressed.

b. <u>NURS 579</u> *Operationalizing Research Design* (3 credits)
Critically discuss and select basic research designs while considering application and integration of theory, research question, population of interest, and research methods. The research lifecycle and the complexities of operationalizing the research project will be introduced and explored. Assess challenges and potential mitigation strategies related to logistical aspects of research activity, including project planning, implementation of the project, and dissemination of findings.

OR

D. ***Advanced Clinical-Nurse Practitioner Focus – 24 credits***
The overall program requirements for the MN (clinical focus) are unique as this curriculum must meet provincial/national competencies for nurse practitioners. The clinical program is approved by the provincial nursing regulator (CARNA – College and Association of Registered Nurses of Alberta). This advanced focus requires a total of 24 credits for clinical courses. To align with overall MN outcomes and to ensure comparability with other advanced focus streams of study, the integration of the clinical courses (24 credits) was achieved by reducing other required courses to a total of 15 credits as follows:

      a. Core Courses (12 credits)
- NURS 595 - Foundations of Scholarship/Critical Thought
- NURS 596 - Research Foundations
- NURS 597 - Understanding Complex Systems
- NURS 598 - Translating Knowledge

      b. Community of Inquiry Courses (3 credits)
- NURS 589 - Community of Inquiry I - Engaging with Nursing Scholarship
- NURS 590 - Community of Inquiry II - Research Question & Literature Review
- NURS 591 - Community of Inquiry III - Building Collaborative Inquiry

      c. Clinical Courses (24 credits)
The following 8 clinical courses lead to preparation for nurse practitioner practice and licensure. The course numbers, titles, and their related calendar descriptions were revised in 2019-2020, have previously received University approval, and were approved by CARNA/NEPAC in May 2020.

- 507 (520) – Advanced Pharmacotherapeutics (Neonatal)
- 509 (522) – Advanced Pathophysiology (Neonatal)
- 516 (518) – Advanced Health Assessment (Neonatal) (100 clinical hours)
- 530 – Advanced Clinical Care I (100 clinical hours)
- 531 – Advanced Clinical Care II (100 clinical hours)
- 532 – Advanced Clinical Care III (100 clinical hours)
- 533 – Consolidated Practicum I (200 clinical hours)
- 534 – Consolidated Practicum II (200 clinical hours)

4. Elective Option - *3 credit*s **(course-based students in Advanced Education or Leadership focus only)**
Course-based students in Advanced Education or Leadership focus will select one graduate elective course. This may be an advanced focus course outside their selected program focus, an interdisciplinary graduate course from another faculty, or an independent study course.

5. **Capstone** - *3 credits* **(course-based students only) <u>OR</u> Thesis Project**

Upon admission to the Faculty of Nursing, master's students select either a course-based or a thesis-based program of studies. The major distinguishing feature between these programs is the final project required for program completion. Required coursework is nearly identical for both program options. MN thesis students are required to complete 30 course credits compared to 36 credits for course-based students (with exception of MN Clinical-NP). Students may transfer between course-based and thesis-based routes, and vice versa (ideally prior to commencing NURS 591) with approval of the Associate Dean Graduate Studies. A thesis project is a requirement for students in the Advanced Research Focus area. The thesis route may also be selected by students in other advanced focus areas (ie. Education, Clinical, and Leadership).

In their projects, students formulate questions and develop processes for inquiry or research and implement a full project cycle. Learners demonstrate the knowledge, skills and approaches to inquiry needed for professional work and for lifelong learning. Throughout their coursework and projects, students will have opportunities to maximize student ownership and voice, employing scholarly dialogue and engagement to test their arguments and assumptions, developing appropriate tools for inquiry, and developing communication skills and digital practices needed to engage diverse audiences in the knowledge that is generated through their projects (Fung, 2017).

Both theses and capstone projects are developed throughout the program. As coursework progresses, students select a focus of inquiry for either a capstone or thesis project and develop a plan to implement their project. The Community of Inquiry courses and Applied Inquiry courses (described above) support the development of skills required for project development and completion.
NURS 589 – Identify focus/topic/question for the project
NURS 590 – Develop literature review and background for project
NURS 591 – Develop the thesis/capstone proposal
NURS 900 – Implement the project and complete the report

All projects are completed under the supervision of a faculty member (Capstone Supervisor or Thesis Supervisor) who must approve the proposal for the project, and who evaluates the final project report. See Appendix C for a summary of faculty roles in relation to capstone and thesis projects.

NURS 900 (course-based students only) is offered in fall and winter terms. The instructor supports students as they implement their capstone projects by providing project planning and management tools, and guidance for completion of the final project report.

Completion of the thesis project is supervised by the Thesis Supervisor and supervisory committee, in accordance with FGSR regulations pertaining to theses [supervision and examinations](#).

Faculty members may propose a collaborative group project (capstone or theses) that would involve 2 to 4 master's students in completion of a series of small projects in a related theme. In this instance, specific project details and an evaluation plan for each student's contribution must be explicitly identified in the project proposal.

Appendix A
Master of Nursing – Guidelines for Capstone and Thesis Projects
September 21, 2021 (Approved by GEC)

Introduction
Core intentions of the MN curriculum are that students will:
- enhance their capacity to ask questions and conduct inquiries about meaningful experiences in their professional lives;
- engage in active modes of inquiry that offer an experiential basis for empowering learners to explore, question, and critique knowledge that is needed for professional work and ongoing learning within nursing; and
- experience research, inquiry, and learning as mutually synergistic activities.

For full-time students, thesis and capstone projects are developed during their first year of the MN program, and implemented during the second year (timelines for part-time students are developed in consultation with the student's Academic Advisor).

Faculty members may propose a collaborative group project (capstone or thesis) that would involve 2 to 4 master's students in completion of a series of small projects in a related theme. In this instance, specific project details and an evaluation plan for each student's contribution must be explicitly identified in the project proposal.

Community of Inquiry Courses Support Proposal Development & Project Completion
The curriculum framework presents a systematic pathway for building individual and group capacity for inquiry and research. Core courses (NURS 595, 596, 597, 598, 599) expose students to topics and questions that are shaping the evolution of nursing knowledge and practice. Community of Inquiry courses (NURS 589, 590, 591, 593, 594) support the development of research and inquiry skills. As coursework progresses, students select a focus of inquiry for either a capstone or thesis project, conduct a literature review in the inquiry/thesis focus area, and develop a proposal to implement their project. These experiences culminate in a focused area of study through the capstone or thesis projects, as they address particular topics and questions within advanced nursing roles that may reflect the student's current arena of workplace application or future opportunities for practice and inquiry.

A.   Capstone Project
The capstone project demonstrates the application of systematic inquiry to explore a nursing or health issue/question. The project is normally completed in the final year of MN studies, as students synthesize, integrate, and apply knowledge from their coursework and their professional lives to explore a question or issue that is meaningful in their advanced practice. Capstone projects do not normally involve primary data collection or require research ethics approval.

Students are encouraged to explore issues or topics related to their current or prospective employment or practice. With support from the student's Academic Advisor during NURS 589, students recruit an appropriate Capstone Supervisor in the Fall semester. The Capstone Supervisor

and the student may also identify and engage a Capstone Consultant who has expertise in the content area, or who can facilitate engagement in an organizational initiative or community/agency partnership to support proposal development and implementation. The Capstone Consultant may be a teaching professor, adjunct professor, adjunct clinical associate, doctoral student, postdoctoral fellow, or an agency/community partner.

The capstone project proposal is developed across NURS 589, 590, and 591. Throughout these courses, the Capstone Supervisor provides feedback and approves the substantive development of the student's project proposal, which is completed during NURS 591. The capstone project is normally implemented and completed during the final year of the MN program in NURS 900 (3 credits) which is offered in either fall or winter semester. The NURS 900 course Instructor engages students to develop a project management and implementation timeline and plan, and to develop a writing plan to complete the final project paper/product by the end of the semester. The Capstone Supervisor is also the lead support for implementation and evaluation of the capstone project.

See Appendix C for a summary of faculty roles related to Capstone/Thesis projects and Community of Inquiry courses.

Examples of capstone projects include:
1. A small-scale project that explores the feasibility, appropriateness, and utility of a new practice, practice guidelines, policy, education program, or administrative tool.
2. A synthesis project that reviews existing theories, research, practice guidelines and/or health policies to inform the development of new practice standards, education programs, and/or policies.
3. A literature review that generates a useful analysis and critique to inform future inquiry and that will inform practice and health care decision-making.

The capstone project culminates in a report/product that may be communicated to diverse audiences and in diverse forms, including visual arts, social media, podcasts, webinars, and written form. Projects in non-traditional formats must be accompanied by a scholarly report that details the significance of the inquiry, and the process, evidence-informed findings and recommendations of the project. Students are encouraged (but not required) to publish and disseminate their work in appropriate academic presentations and journals and should discuss any expectations in this regard with their Capstone Supervisor.

B. Thesis Project
The thesis-based program may be selected by students in any advanced focus area (i.e. Education, Clinical, Leadership) and is required for students registering in the Research advanced focus stream. The master's thesis must demonstrate that the student has applied an appropriate method to investigate the research question and understands the main scholarly/disciplinary questions and issues related to the chosen topic. FGSR requires that "the master's thesis, at a minimum, should reveal that the student 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."

Requirements for thesis supervision and examinations are determined by the Faculty of Graduate Studies.

Master's thesis projects typically involve primary data collection/generation, or secondary analysis of a research data set, and typically require research ethics approval. Literature reviews which are guided by a research question and explicit methodology are acceptable as a thesis project. In this instance, students will attend to the implementation of a rigorous methodology, conceptualise their work as a scientific inquiry and address the validity and reliability of their work, in accordance with the methodology chosen to undertake the review. Thesis projects may also take the form of theoretical, historical, or philosophical inquiry.

With support from the student's Academic Advisor, during NURS 589 students engage an appropriate Thesis Supervisor, who normally recruits at least one supervisory committee member with appropriate expertise to support the research project. Students work with the Thesis Supervisor and supervisory committee to develop and finalize the research question and selected research method. A draft of the research proposal is developed over the course of NURS 589, 590, and 591.

After completion of NURS 591, final approval of the research proposal follows completion of an oral MN thesis proposal examination. Students are subsequently supported to implement the research project by the Thesis Supervisor and committee, including application for agency administrative or operational approval, and application to the appropriate research ethics board. Thesis approval occurs through successful final oral MN thesis examination. Thesis students are strongly encouraged to publish and disseminate their work in appropriate academic presentations and journals.

Appendix B - Comparison of Capstone and Thesis Projects/Processes

	Capstone Project	Thesis Project
Total Program Credits	Course based program - 36 credits (including 3 credits for NURS 900)	Thesis based program - 30 credits plus thesis
Guidelines	Faculty of Nursing MN Guidelines for Capstone and Thesis Projects	Faculty of Nursing MN Guidelines for Capstone and Thesis Projects FGSR regulations for graduate supervision & exams
Supervision	Collaboration between NURS 900 Course Instructor and Capstone Supervisor (see roles described in Appendix C)	Thesis Supervisor and supervisory committee are established as per FGSR and Faculty of Nursing guidelines.
Purpose	Synthesis and application of existing knowledge to particular nursing/health concerns or issues; Integration of inquiry skills explored throughout program coursework	Original research contribution to new nursing knowledge; Research training to prepare for advanced research studies; Integration of research and inquiry skills explored throughout program coursework
Process	Application of appropriate inquiry process	Application of formal research processes.
Proposal	Completed in NURS 591; Approved by Capstone Supervisor	Completed in NURS 591; Approved by Thesis Supervisor/supervisory committee following proposal oral examination
Ethics Approval	Not normally required	Required for most thesis projects
Timeline	Project implemented and completed within one academic semester while registered in NURS 900 (i.e. fall or winter term of year 2 for full-time students)	Proposal development and project implementation spans ~10-12 month period throughout second year
Implementation	May involve secondary analysis of data	Normally involves primary data collection; May involve secondary analysis of data
Final Report	Capstone project report describes the significance of the inquiry, and the process, findings and recommendations of the project.	Thesis as per FoN guidelines: chapter based or article-based thesis options
Dissemination of Results	Final report includes a strategy to share findings with appropriate audiences. No expectation of publication	Expectation that a publishable paper and/or scholarly presentations will follow thesis defense.
Completion	Capstone project report is evaluated and approved by Capstone Supervisor with recommendations from Capstone Consultant.	Final thesis is approved following successful oral exam as per FGSR guidelines. Oral thesis exam normally occurs following completion of project and all coursework.

Approved GEC September 21, 2021

Appendix C - Faculty roles related to Capstone and Thesis Projects and Community of Inquiry Courses (589/590/591)
Faculty of Nursing

*Note: MN students in both the course-based and thesis-based routes take NURS 589, 590, and 591 as required courses.

Course focus and Roles for each course	589 (Fall) course focus (1 cr)	590 (Winter) course focus (1 cr)	591 (Spring) course focus (1 cr)	900 capstone – course focus (3 cr)
Course Focus	-Build community -Develop beginning question for project (thesis or capstone) -Develop timeline for capstone/thesis process -Process to select project supervisor	-Refine research/inquiry question. -Conduct literature review for project -Confirm research method/inquiry approach.	-Develop a fulsome next-to-final draft of the project proposal.	-Capstone projects are implemented with project management guidance from NURS 900 Instructor, and supervision of project implementation by the Capstone Supervisor. -Develop project management timeline and plan -Develop a writing plan to complete the final project paper/product by the end of the semester.
Course instructor responsibilities	-Provides guidance on process and structure to develop project topic and recruit an appropriate thesis/capstone supervisor -Evaluates quality of student engagement in activities leading to proposal development.	-Provides guidance on process and structure to develop methods for refining topic and conducting literature review -Evaluates quality of student engagement in activities leading to proposal development.	-Provides guidance on process and structure to final capstone/thesis proposal -Evaluates quality of student engagement in proposal development.	***New Instructor Role for NURS 900** **Note:** A faculty member will be assigned to teach a section of NURS 900 in each of fall and winter terms (weighted 10% teaching workload). -Develops learning activities for project management plan and writing plan to ensure project completion by end of semester. -Connects with students at checkpoints throughout the term to provide *process* support & feedback.

Course focus and Roles for each course	589 (Fall) course focus (1 cr)	590 (Winter) course focus (1 cr)	591 (Spring) course focus (1 cr)	900 capstone – course focus (3 cr)
				NURS 900 evaluation could include Part A: pass/fail grade on course components related to project planning assessed by NURS 900 instructor (*i.e. instructor does not review/evaluate final project reports); Part B: pass/fail evaluation of the project as assessed by the Capstone Supervisor with recommendation from Capstone Consultant. Students must attain a passing grade on both components for successful completion of NURS 900 and capping requirements.
Academic Advisor All master's students are assigned an Academic Advisor upon admission based on faculty availability and on the background information and career goals provided by the student during the application process. The Academic Advisor provides guidance to the student in course selection, course and curriculum changes, progress within the program, selection of a capstone or thesis supervisor, and opportunities and challenges arising throughout the student's program.	By end of Fall term: Accepts the role of capping/thesis supervisor **OR** Assists the student to identify a Thesis Supervisor OR Capping Supervisor who also agrees to accept responsibilities as Academic Advisor for the remainder of the program. If the student is unable to confirm an appropriate Thesis or Capstone Supervisor, the Academic Advisor will consult with the Associate Dean Graduate Studies.			

Course focus and Roles for each course	589 (Fall) course focus (1 cr)	590 (Winter) course focus (1 cr)	591 (Spring) course focus (1 cr)	900 capstone – course focus (3 cr)
Capstone Supervisor (Note: Title is changed from Capstone "Advisor") FGSR states, as minimum criteria, supervisors must: -be active in the general area of the student's research ; -have a tenured (or tenure track) faculty appointment in a department relevant to the field; -hold a degree equivalent to or higher than that for which the student is a candidate; and, -demonstrate continuing scholarly or creative activity of an original nature (i.e., publication of research papers in refereed journals, publication of books/monographs, peer recognition of outstanding professional practice, etc.)	The Capstone Supervisor will be selected & confirmed by the student and their Academic Advisor by the end of first year Fall term for Full-time students, or by end of second year Fall term for Part-time students.	Collaborates with the student to refine project focus and approach to the inquiry. Collaborates with the student to identify and recruit a Capstone Consultant who will support the project through provision of expertise, professional network, community engagement, or access to project site.	**The Capstone Supervisor leads and approves the substantive development of the student's proposal.** Provides feedback to the student on the draft of the capstone proposal during NURS 591. **Evaluates and provides a pass/fail assessment of the capstone proposal.** Upon completion of NURS 591, provides formal approval of the capstone proposal.	**The Capstone Supervisor is the lead support for the implementation and evaluation of the capstone project.** Meets regularly with the student to review progress on project implementation. **Evaluates and provides a pass/fail assessment of the capstone project (i.e. Part B of the NURS 900 evaluation described above).**
Capstone Consultant (Note: Title is changed from Capstone "*Evaluator*") *Note: the scope of this role is at the discretion of the Capstone Supervisor. This individual brings content expertise or community/agency partnership influence to support proposal development and project implementation. Does not require an academic appointment. May be a teaching professor, adjunct professor, adjunct clinical associate, agency/community partner, doctoral student, or post-doctoral fellow.		The scope of the Capstone Consultant's role and level of involvement will be negotiated and formalized by the Capstone Supervisor during this term. May be consulted by the student and the Capstone Supervisor as the project plan is in the early development stage.	Provides feedback to the student on the draft of the capstone proposal. Provides a recommendation to the capstone supervisor on the acceptability of the final capstone proposal.	Contributes to evaluation of the project by providing feedback and a pass/fail recommendation to the Capstone Supervisor who submits the final grade.

Course focus and Roles for each course	589 (Fall) course focus (1 cr)	590 (Winter) course focus (1 cr)	591 (Spring) course focus (1 cr)	900 capstone – course focus (3 cr)
Thesis Supervisor Role is unchanged, as reflected in the FGSR Manual And guided by FGSR policy and regulations for thesis supervision.	The Thesis Supervisor will be selected & confirmed by student and their Academic Advisor *by end of Fall term for Full-time students, or by end of second year Fall term for Part-time students.*	Collaborates with the student to refine the research focus and methods appropriate to the project. Identifies and recruits <u>one or two</u> other faculty members as supervisory committee members with expertise to support the research as a content or methodological expert.	Provides feedback to the student on the draft of the thesis proposal prepared during NURS 591. Evaluates and provides a pass/fail assessment of the thesis proposal for NURS 591.	Not applicable as thesis students do not take NURS 900. Normally after completion of NURS 591, the Thesis Supervisor: -Schedules MN Thesis Oral Proposal defense; -Supports preparation of the ethics application to the Research Ethics Board.
Associate Dean Graduate Program Upon admission of the MN student, assigns an Academic Advisor based on faculty availability and on the background information and career goals provided by the student during the application process.	If the Academic Advisor is unable to confirm a faculty member to serve as Capstone/Thesis Supervisor, the Associate Dean consults with the student and their Academic Advisor as needed regarding supervisor options.		Approves recommendations to FGSR regarding thesis proposals.	Approves recommendations to FGSR regarding successfully completed theses and capstone projects.

June 15, 2021   Reviewed by GEC
June 29, 2021   Reviewed by Nursing Leadership Team
August 17, 2021   Reviewed by GEC
September 21, 2021   GEC Approval

Appendix D – Master of Nursing
COURSE LISTING, CREDITS & PREREQUISITES

Course #	Course Name	Credits	Prerequisite(s)/Notes
	COMMUNITY OF INQUIRY		
589	Community of Inquiry I - Engaging with Nursing Scholarship	1	
590	Community of Inquiry II – Inquiry Topic and Literature Review	1	589
591	Community of Inquiry III - Building Collaborative Inquiry	1	590
593	Applied Inquiry I– Framing the Inquiry Focus	3	589
594	Applied Inquiry II – Grand Challenge Questions (OR a 600 level research methods course or equivalent course approved by the Associate Dean Graduate Studies)	3	593
	CORE COURSES		
595	Foundations of Scholarship/Critical Thought	3	
596	Research Foundations	3	
597	Understanding Complex Systems	3	
598	Translating Knowledge	3	
599	Philosophy and Ethics in Nursing Inquiry	3	
One of	**ADVANCED FOCUS COURSES**		
	Advanced Clinical Focus (Nurse Practitioner) 507/520 Advanced Pharmacotherapeutics 509/520 Advanced Pathophysiology 516/518 Advanced Health Assessment (204 hrs clinical) 530 Advanced Clinical Care I (100 hrs clinical) 531 Advanced Clinical Care II (100 hrs clinical) 532 Advanced Clinical Care III (100 hrs clinical) 533 Consolidated Practicum I (200 hrs clinical) 534 Consolidated Practicum II (200 hrs clinical)	24 (total)	
or 558 559	Advanced Education Focus Perspectives on Nursing Pedagogy Approaches to Learning and Teaching Innovation in Nursing	 3 3	 NURS 558
or 568 569	Advanced Leadership Focus Advanced Nursing Leadership in Health Systems Nursing Power and Policy in Health Care Leadership	 3 3	
or 578 579	Advanced Research Focus Knowledge Synthesis Operationalizing Research Design	 3 3	
	PROJECTS		
900	Capstone Project	3	
or	Thesis		
	ELECTIVE (does not apply to Thesis route & Advanced NP focus)	3	

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