

Honors Research Thesis

The University and School of Nursing have a commitment to research as one form of scholarship. This thesis option proposal offers undergraduate honors students a pathway to pursue a nursing research idea for their Honors Research Thesis and Honors Program requirements. The proposal offers a guide through a data-driven process to address a significant nursing problem.

In order to prepare Honors nursing students for a rigorous Research Project and Thesis students must meet the Honors Program Requirements. The composition requirements include five sequential parts (Part I – Part V). Each part with detailed student expectations are described below. Ideally, Honors nursing students will select this option as early as possible in their course of study during their first year, however, must opt in by the start of the spring semester of their second year. Students who select the Honors Research Thesis in their Freshman year the timeline as described below may be excellerated. Regardless of the timeline, NURS 4597W will occur in the spring semester of the Senior year before graduation.

The timeline is based on the need for scholarly output to be built on accompanying first-hand experience with various aspects of the research process, as well as the development of ideas over time. In addition, the expectation is that multiple drafts of the Honors Research Thesis are submitted, prior to the final writing of the thesis in NURS4597W.

The following guide details the five parts of the Honors Research Thesis and a semester-by-semester plan of for preparing the drafts of the thesis, activities that prepare the student for completing a research project, and activities that reflect engagement in the major field.

Part I: Nursing Clinical Problem Identification

Research begins with identification of a problem, something that is “wrong,” a discrepancy, between what currently exists and what should be, what one knows and what one needs to know, often called a knowledge “gap.” There are many sources of problems, including experience, readings, informal conversations, but it should be a difference that matters, is important for nursing and health care consumers, and is under our control (*Diers, D. (1979). *Research in Nursing Practice*, J.B. Lippincott Company, Philadelphia). Likewise, identification of something that works well, however, there is no evidence for- or documented innovative method for which to explain a phenomenon, is also worthy of honors level scholarly inquiry.

The first part of the research thesis begins with the significance of the overall problem. Incidence and prevalence data are usually presented to justify the importance of the problem. Then the actual gap – what is known and not known or whether there are conflicting findings – is presented. As the work of problem identification begins, the full extent or impact of the problem may not be evident. Therefore, the initial drafts of the thesis are not fully developed until Part II: The Literature Review is completed.

Throughout the course of honors study, you will research the unmet needs in clinical nursing as well the potential implications of fixing the discrepancy or of not fixing it, for nurses and for patients, or for public health in general are described. Part I, normally 1-2 pages, ends with a statement of the overall purpose of the study. The purpose is generally a fairly broad statement of goals or aims and is a logical outcome of the problem. There may be more specific research questions or aims that are developed after the literature review, which tend to be very specific and are placed at the end of Part I.

Honors Research Thesis Activities to be completed by end of spring semester, Sophomore year:

1. Discuss areas of interest with Director of Nursing Honors Program
2. Meet with potential Honors Thesis Advisor to discuss topic and identify what activities are required to be part of the research team
 - a. Identify how the student's project might fit into a smaller, more manageable project (optional)
3. Mutual agreement on student participation in the project
 - a. Draft preliminary schedule of meetings with Honors Thesis Advisor and student responsibilities
 - b. These may, but are not limited to include:
 - i. Literature reviews
 - ii. CITI or other relevant training
 - iii. Data collection or entry
 - iv. Participant recruitment
 - v. Team meetings
 - vi. Help with poster or slide presentations or IRB or manuscript preparation
4. Draft of Clinical Problem Statement
 - a. APA format (7th edition)
5. Begin Reference list – start bibliographic database
6. Discuss University Laureate option with Honors Thesis Advisor
7. Enroll in NURS 4299, Independent Study (1-3 credits); 1 credit = 3 hours of time in lab/on project

Honors Program **Engagement in Major Field Requirements** Related to an Honors Research Thesis (Checklist for all engagement activities is in Appendix A; general honors requirements are in Appendix B):

1. Attend workshops/seminars related to Honors Research Thesis
 - a. How to search databases to find empirical data
 - b. Workshop/tutorial on RefWorks/Mendely/Sciwheel/other reference managers
 - i. Start reference library

- c. Other workshops – CAMP, INCHIP, etc.
2. Discuss submission of SURF, SHARE or IDEA grant (optional) with Honors Thesis Advisor (requires full proposal)
<https://ugradresearch.uconn.edu/funding-opportunities/>
3. Attend two (2) separate Office of Undergraduate Research workshops or information sessions before the conclusion of the “sophomore” year on campus. Junior admits will attend sessions within the first 10-weeks of the start of the first semester in the SON. <https://ugradresearch.uconn.edu/>

Part II: Literature Review

Part II informs the design of the study and conveys what is known about the topic. It may include a historical perspective, theoretical or conceptual framework, and what others have studied and discovered including gaps, limits, consensus vs conflict, key factors (variables) studied and the relationships found. Generally, primary sources are used, meaning the initial citation of a research finding instead of another researchers secondary reference to others findings. The literature review results in a critical analysis and synthesis of the available data. Importantly, the review provides a blueprint for the study, as well as eventual discussion of findings relative to what others have found. Expect to write 4-5 pages.

Honors Research Thesis Activities to be completed by end of fall semester of the Junior year. Some students may choose to take NURS 3205 in Sophomore year or a graduate research course:

1. Update student participation requirements as necessary with Honors Thesis Advisor
2. Identification of a conceptual/theoretical framework that will help guide the study. Write 1-2 paragraphs describing the framework and if appropriate, provide a Figure (Tables and Figures are put at the end of the thesis).
3. Complete tables of major study findings and quality appraisal of studies
4. Synthesize study findings based on #3
5. Write specific research questions or hypotheses
6. Update Reference list
7. Enroll in NURS 4299, Independent Study (1-3 credits)

Honors Program **Engagement in Major Field Requirements** Related to an Honors Research Thesis:

1. Take basic statistics course (optional)
2. Attend SON Open Houses or other nursing service opportunities (must complete at least one service opportunity during program)

Part III: Research Methods

The research methods section is like a recipe. Specifically, all aspects of the study methods are detailed to enable others to ascertain exactly what and how the study was conducted. The methods section allows the reader to judge the strength/quality of the study and should provide sufficient level of detail so that the study will be replicated exactly. The student does not need to do primary data collection as this requires a great deal of time; they may use data previously collected and perform secondary analysis. The methods section, generally 3-4 pages in length shall include the following sections:

1. Study design
2. Subjects and setting
 - a. Sampling – how they were chosen
 - b. Inclusion and exclusion criteria
 - c. Description of site at which data were collected
3. Instruments used to measure factors under study
 - a. Tools - reliability and validity, scoring, sensitivity/specificity
4. Data collection procedures
 - a. If intervention, described in detail; study protocols
 - b. How participants were approached to enroll
 - c. Exactly HOW data were collected and by WHOM
5. Data analysis plan
 - a. How data were entered
 - b. Statistical analysis software used
 - c. Statistical tests used to answer each of the research questions

Honors Research Thesis Activities to be completed by end of spring semester, Junior year:

1. Update student participation requirements as necessary with Honors Thesis Advisor
2. Write Draft of Section III
3. Review Study IRB Protocol
4. Update Reference list
5. Enroll in NURS 4299, Independent Study (1-3 credits)

Honors Program **Engagement in Major Field Requirements** Related to an Honors Research Thesis:

1. Take basic statistics course (optional)
2. Participate in nursing service opportunity (must complete at least one service opportunity during program)
3. Submit SURF or SHARE grant (optional)

4. Begin to prepare abstract for Eastern Nursing Research Society (ENRS) or other conference (costs of attendance covered by School of Nursing). Submission is **not** required, only preparation of abstract

Part IV: Results

The results section describes the actual study findings. Results often begins with a description of participant characteristics, often displayed in Tables for human studies, although it may be placed elsewhere. These include demographic characteristics, as well as an overall description of all the major factors under study. Then the analysis of each of the aims/research questions/hypotheses are presented sequentially.

Honors Research Thesis Activities to be completed by end of fall semester, Senior year:

1. Update student participation requirements as necessary with Honors Thesis Advisor
2. Complete data analysis
3. Write Draft of Section IV
4. Update Reference list
5. Enroll in NURS 4299, Independent Study (1-3 credits)

Honors Program **Engagement in Major Field Requirements** Related to an Honors Research Thesis:

1. Complete abstract for ENRS or local/regional conference
2. If recipient of grant, completes a poster for Frontiers (fall or spring)
3. Attend Open Houses or other nursing service opportunity (must complete at least one service opportunity during program)

Part V: Discussion

This 2-3 page section is where findings are discussed (not repeat) in terms of the previous literature. Why are they the same or different? Limitations of the study are discussed, as are implications for clinical practice and future research.

Honors Research Thesis Activities to be completed by end of spring semester, Senior year:

1. Final Thesis – set deadlines with Honors Thesis Advisor for drafts and final thesis by January 30
2. Complete References
3. Complete NURS 4597W

Honors Program **Engagement in Major Field Requirements** Related to an Honors Thesis:

1. If recipient of grant, complete a poster for Frontiers (fall or spring)
2. Participation in School of Nursing Honors Symposium and Celebration following University Honors Ceremony (Sunday before graduation).
 - a. Prepare poster or oral presentation of Honors Research Thesis at School of Nursing

Appendix A

Checklist of Activities for Honors Program Engagement in Major Field Requirements Related to an Honors Research Thesis

	Suggested/required Completion Times				
	Sophomore – Spring	Junior – Fall	Junior – Spring	Senior - Fall	Senior - Spring
Workshops/Seminars					
Searching Databases					
RefWorks/Mendeley					
1-3 credits NURS 4299					
SURF/SHARE grant (optional)					
Statistics course (optional)					
Attend Open House/service opportunity*					
Abstract for ENRS or other					
Frontiers poster					
Participate in SON Honors Symposium and Celebration					

*At least once during program