

The *Thesis Guide* was last updated in January 2008.

School of Population Health and Clinical Practice

Discipline of Nursing

© The University of Adelaide 2008



CRICOS Provider Number 00123M

CONTENTS

Introduction.....	6
Communication.....	6
Initiating the research process	7
Selecting the problem or topic	7
Steps in developing the literature review	8
Stages of writing a literature review	9
Summary and conclusion.....	10
Referencing.....	10
Ethical issues and ethics approval processes	11
Research supervision	11
Supervisor / student contact.....	12
Responsibilities of Supervisors and Students	12
The Honours Degree in the Bachelor of Health Science (Bhsc) and Master of Nursing Science (Mnsc) thesis	15
The research proposal	15
Submitting the thesis for examination	15
Final submission of the thesis to meet the requirements for the award	16
Examination of the thesis	17
Grading of the thesis	18
Examination procedures.....	20
Thesis preparation and submission.....	21
Research proposal outline.....	23
Research proposal outline: empirical/analytical approach	24
Research proposal outline: interpretive/critical approach	27
Research protocol outline: systematic review	30
Thesis structure.....	33
Thesis format.....	34
A title page	34
A table of contents	34
A signed statement.....	34
Acknowledgement.....	35
Abstract.....	35
The main text.....	35
Chapter outline: empirical/analytical approach	36
Chapter 1 - introduction.....	36
Chapter 2 - Literature Review	36
Chapter 3 - methods	37
Chapter 4 - results	37
Final chapter - discussion.....	38

Chapter outline: interpretive/critical approach	39
Chapter 1. Introduction	39
Chapter 2. Literature Review	40
Chapter 3. Methodology	40
Chapter 4. Methods	41
Chapter 5. Analysis	41
Chapters 6 onwards. Interpretation	41
Final Chapter. Discussion	41
Systematic review	43
Chapter 1. Introduction	43
Chapter 2. Background	43
Chapter 3. Methodology	43
Chapter 4. Method	44
Chapter 5. Results	45
Chapter 6. Discussion	45
References	45
Appendices	46
References	46
Appendices	46
Typing	47
Margins	47
Page numbering	47
Diagrams and figures	47
Binding	48
Soft-binding of thesis for examination	48
Hard-binding	48
Checklist to evaluate the thesis before final submission	50
Content	50
Purpose of study	50
Definitions.....	50
Background or context of the study	50
Significance of the study	50
Research methods	50
Description and analysis of data	50
Assumptions and limitations.....	51
Conclusions	51
Presentation	51
Organisation.....	51
Style of writing	51
Technicalities.....	51
Bibliography	52

INTRODUCTION

This document sets out the expectations of the thesis component of the Bachelor of Health Science (Honours) and Master of Nursing Science degrees and outlines the processes to be followed to examine a thesis. Most of the components are identical for both degrees but where variations exist these have been accounted for in the guide. If you require any clarification relating to these variations check with your supervisor or the program coordinator.

All students and their supervisors should be familiar with the contents of the Thesis guide before commencing preparatory work for the thesis. Although many aspects of this document relate to final preparation of the thesis, decisions about formatting and structure should be made as early as possible. The guide contains a large amount of information that will assist you in undertaking your research and preparing your thesis for examination. The guide is not a substitute for supervision. Early and frequent contact with your supervisor is essential for the successful completion of your thesis.

Communication

Address

Discipline of Nursing
Level 3, Eleanor Harrald Building
THE UNIVERSITY OF ADELAIDE
SA 5005

Phone: +61 8 8303 3595

Fax: +61 8 8303 3594

Email: nursing.sec@adelaide.edu.au

Web: www.health.adelaide.edu.au/nursing

Academic matters

For all academic matters you will need to contact your course coordinator.

On-campus students should contact Discipline administrative staff with any administrative queries relating to your program.

Email communication

All email communication will be via your student email address. Personal email addresses will not be used. Both on and off campus students are strongly advised to check their student email weekly. You may link your account to your personal email if desired.

INITIATING THE RESEARCH PROCESS

A task of major importance in research at any level is that of identifying the exact nature of the issue or problem to be studied (the research topic). Great care is needed selecting a problem which can be researched in the time available.

Honours students must select their research topic from the honours topics nominated by staff of the Discipline as listed in the Honours and higher degree research booklet available each year.

Master of Nursing Science (MNSc) students are strongly encouraged to link their research topic with research that is currently being undertaken by staff in the discipline. Research within the discipline is currently being focused in four main areas—acute care, community health and primary care, evidence based practice and education. Further information is available on the Discipline website. Students with specific research interests that do not link with the Discipline's research focus can negotiate a suitable topic with the program coordinator.

SELECTING THE PROBLEM OR TOPIC

To find a good topic, adopt a critical attitude to the field in which you are interested. Read the literature in the field. Question assertions and statements. Do not read with blind acceptance of authority and the printed word. Look for gaps in the field that textbook writers tend to gloss over. The formulation of the topic should be done with great care and with the assistance of your supervisor, and/or with a member of staff whose course you are taking in your program. When you have selected a topic, ask yourself 'What do I mean by these questions?' 'What are the assumptions underlying the asking of such questions?' Use these questions (and their qualifiers) to direct your reading, thinking and note-taking.

Since the problems in nursing are many and complex, no single researcher, particularly at Masters or Honours level, can expect to make other than a contribution to their solution.

The researcher has some of the characteristics of the ant, who brings his single grain of sand to the ant hill (Best 1978, p. 18).

Best's statement implies that the person contemplating a research study should not think of him or herself as a lone pioneer making an organised attack on some problem area, but rather one of many people engaged in similar endeavours. Consequently, the scope of the problem should be manageable by the researcher, not too broad, yet worthwhile, not forgetting the purpose is to successfully complete a degree.

To gain some insight into the nature of a research problem and the methods by which it may be attacked, students are advised to browse through a

selection of completed theses that may be found in the Discipline or in the Australian Digital Theses Program at

<<http://digital.library.adelaide.edu.au/dspace/handle/2440/14759>>.

The development of a literature review will also enable students to become familiar with existing research in their selected area, identify gaps or voids in existing knowledge and so formulate a specific research problem.

STEPS IN DEVELOPING THE LITERATURE REVIEW

The literature review is an important part of the thesis. It gives readers background information needed to understand your study, shows you are familiar with research that has previously been carried out and establishes your study as a link in a chain of research that is developing and increasing knowledge in the field. In some theses, for example some of those in the philosophical area, there may not need to be a separate literature review; reference to the various writers being made at appropriate places in the development of the argument. Finding literature associated with your topic is a demanding, time consuming task. To help you further, the following indices are extremely useful:

Aust Health

APAIS. (Australian Public Affairs Information Service)

CINAHL.

Current Contents

ERIC

MEDLINE

Health Source Nursing (for full text articles)

Emerald

Social Science Citation Index.

SOCIOFILE

PsycINFO

Union List of Higher Degree Theses in Australian University Libraries.

Thesis Abstracts International (1938 to date).

Index to Theses accepted for Higher Degrees in the Universities of Great Britain and Ireland (1716 to date).

The Barr Smith Library has search facilities available for the above databases and students are strongly recommended to take advantage of the computer search facilities available. Students have access to many full-text articles that can be downloaded via the library web site. Contact can be made directly with library staff or via the University of Adelaide website to help nursing students use the library and its resources:

<<http://www.library.adelaide.edu.au/guide/med/nursing>>

An academic librarian, Ms Maureen Bell, is also available to assist nursing students as needed.

The inter-library loan service is useful to obtain material not in the library but incurs a cost.

Stages of writing a literature review

1st stage

The task of writing a literature review may be simplified by breaking it down into three stages. The first stage involves wide reading on the selected topic and constructing a working outline in the form of a series of headings. At this stage, this outline is merely a rough expansion of the selected topic without reference to specific texts or articles. Reading need not be very intensive at this stage because the objective is to roughly map out the scope of the selected topic. Students should skim read, using tables of contents, chapter titles and indexes to obtain headings and sub-headings for the outline.

In the process of reading and constructing an outline it is vital to note all the references used (books, articles etc.). Students are encouraged to use bibliographic software for managing references, such as EndnoteTM, freely available through the University

(<<http://www.adelaide.edu.au/library/guide/gen/bibsoft/>>).

When this outline has been expanded as far as possible on the basis of the literature the student is able to locate, it would be advisable to confer with the supervisor to make a preliminary assessment of the information collected and to decide which portions of the outline should receive more attention. The student and supervisor may together decide that it would be advisable to focus only upon certain sections of the outline rather than the whole. The onus is on the student to contact the supervisor on such matters.

2nd stage

The second stage of the task requires more intensive reading on the headings in the outline or on selected sections of it; expanding and refining this outline with more detailed subheadings. At this stage it would be useful to make notes on each subheading and cross-reference the outline with the notes and index cards. The notes might, for example, contain definitions of concepts, descriptions of specific problems studied, relationships found, interactions reported, explanations offered, arguments developed, hypotheses posed and confirmed, populations sampled, research methods used, questions raised, conclusions drawn and problems identified as needing further research. Students should also note any of their own criticisms, questions, comparisons and inconsistencies that arise through a critical review of the literature. Headings or subheadings based on these notes may then be inserted in the outline.

3rd stage

The third stage involves using the outline to write up a preliminary literature review. Review the expanded and refined outline and decide on the best order for the headings. In making decisions on the final order, look for logical sequence, relationship between headings, new grouping of subheadings

under more inclusive headings and repetition. Each major heading may constitute a section of the literature review. Subheadings may represent paragraphs or sentences depending on how detailed the outline. Some students have found it helpful to have a V shape in mind for the literature review where the top of the V suggests the literature review begins very generally and then it proceeds to become more and more specific, just as the V narrows toward the bottom. Before submitting the review to the supervisor, students should write introductory and concluding sections. The introduction could consist of a few paragraphs describing the topic, questions or issues the review is concerned with and the order in which the information will be presented.

Summary and conclusion

The concluding section may summarise the key issues discussed, indicate apparent trends or common threads, or major gaps in the literature (ie aspects of the topic that have not been studied or written about extensively). The concluding section could also indicate trends in research methods and directions indicated for further research.

Finally, the student should describe the relationship between his or her research question and the literature. Some research questions arise directly out of a review of the literature, that is, gaps in the literature in a particular area emerge and possible fruitful areas for investigation become evident.

Many nursing questions, however, arise out of practice, so these may have a different relationship to the literature. In this case the literature should be explored as a source of possible solutions to the research questions. The review should, therefore, make it clear in what ways the literature fails to provide solutions to the questions posed (if it does not) and where further investigation is required.

Referencing

The review should include a comprehensive list of references with the bibliographical details organised in the Harvard or Vancouver style (See the Discipline of Nursing *Student Handbook and Style Guide*) available on the discipline website at

<<http://www.health.adelaide.edu.au/nursing/resources/>>.

A typed copy of the review should be submitted to the supervisor for comment. It is normal for the literature review, or sections of it, to be rewritten following the advice of your supervisor. You would then resubmit it at a later date arranged with your supervisor.

A truncated version of the literature review is normally found as an important part of the proposal.

ETHICAL ISSUES AND ETHICS APPROVAL PROCESSES

All research has ethical implications. Areas involving ethical issues include, selection and invitations to participate, provision for anonymity/confidentiality where appropriate, informing participants of the broad goals of your research and your identity, ensuring appropriate and reasonable demands on participants/subjects/respondents and providing useful feedback to participants in research. In all research it is essential to be sensitive to cultural issues especially in research overseas. Other issues involving ethics will likely emerge and you should discuss these with your supervisor.

It is essential that students undertaking research obtain permission to do so from the appropriate authorities before embarking upon fieldwork. There are ethics committees in both the university and service areas for all research involving human beings. These committees are guided by the NH&MRC guidelines for experimentation involving human beings. For proposals submitted by a member of its clinical staff the university accepts protocol approval granted by the ethics committee of the Royal Adelaide Hospital, the Queen Elizabeth Hospital or the Women's and Children's Hospital. In other areas a formal application will have to be submitted to other hospital ethics committees and the Adelaide University Ethics Committee.

Lead-time can be substantial and students are encouraged and advised to present proposals to the appropriate committees as soon as possible. Before any research proposal is sent for scrutiny outside the Discipline of Nursing it should be submitted for approval to the Discipline Research and Higher Degrees Subcommittee. The members of this Research Committee are experienced researchers who may be able to give the researcher some valuable advice regarding the quality of the proposal.

Although the Human Ethics Committee may approve research studies it is the responsibility of both the student and the supervisor to ensure that ethical comportment throughout the study is monitored. This involves vigilance and an ability to recognise problems that affect the rights of the participants as they arise; not all ethical problems are foreseeable when the proposal is granted approval by the ethics committee. Problems that cannot be resolved by the supervisor, the student and the Research and Higher Degrees Subcommittee should be referred back to the Institutional Ethics Committee.

RESEARCH SUPERVISION

MNSc students are allocated to a supervisor on enrolment in the thesis component of the program. Honours students will have negotiated a supervisor on the basis of the research topic selected at the very beginning of the program. While Honours students select a topic for research from a specified list, MNSc students are able to develop their own ideas to produce a thesis. Nevertheless MNSc students are strongly encouraged to link their project to the discipline's program of research. The advantages of working on

a program of research are that: staff have established expertise in the area; literature reviews have usually been completed and findings contribute to a substantive body of knowledge that is ongoing.

When choosing a topic, be aware that the range of thesis topics staff members may supervise is dependent on the relationship of your topic to their own research interests. A further consideration is the size of the supervision load carried by individual staff members. You should note that staff members in the Discipline are engaged in their own research projects as well as teaching responsibilities.

The purpose of supervision is to assist students toward independent research and scholarship. You may already have a number of ideas for developing/refining your research topic. Normally these require considerable thought and refinement resulting in the development of a proposal. This takes place as you collaborate with your supervisor and as you become familiar with the relevant literature.

In higher degree studies, it is the student's task, in collaboration with the supervisor, to define in broad terms the research problem or thesis topic and to identify possible lines of investigation, although in the MNSc much of this work will have been done prior to the appointment of a supervisor in semester one of the first year of stage two. It is part of the supervisor's role to criticise constructively a student's detailed plans, and to ensure that the student is adequately prepared to address the topic. The relationship you develop with your supervisor is an important one.

Supervisor / student contact

Students are expected to contact their supervisor at commencement and to seek regular contact (at least monthly). They are expected to take the initiative in consulting with their supervisor on the development of the proposal, the conduct of the research and subsequently, the preparation and writing of the thesis. As the thesis writing proceeds, chapter outlines and draft chapters should be submitted chapter by chapter directly to the supervisor for comment.

If you find yourself unhappy with your supervision contact your supervisor and discuss the problem. It is much better to address this early rather than to leave it and hope that it will disappear. If you remain unsatisfied, contact the Postgraduate coordinator or coordinator of the BHSc/MNSc.

Responsibilities of Supervisors and Students

The University provides a Code of Practice for Postgraduate Coursework Studies manual (<<http://www.adelaide.edu.au/policies/1283/>>) that outlines the responsibilities of supervisors and students in regards to research projects or thesis components within coursework programs.

The responsibilities of the student include:

1. Becoming familiar with, and abiding by the specific Academic Program Rules, this Code, any relevant Faculty/Program addenda to

- the Code and the administrative policies and procedures governing the degree.
2. Becoming familiar with Faculty, School or Discipline information including resources, facilities, funding allowances and postgraduate representation on committees.
 3. Where applicable, selecting an appropriate research topic with the assistance and advice of supervisors.
 4. Adopting at all times, safe working practices and adhering to the ethical practices appropriate to the Discipline.
 5. Initiating discussion with lecturers and supervisors, where applicable, concerning the type of help considered most useful, and keeping to an agreed schedule of meetings to ensure regular contact.
 6. Taking the initiative in raising problems or difficulties, sharing responsibility for seeking solutions, and providing feedback on courses and programs through established program/course evaluation processes, and to student representatives on Discipline, School or Faculty committees.
 7. Maintaining the progress of the work in accordance with the stages agreed with the Program Convenor/Supervisor(s) including, in particular, the presentation of any required written material in sufficient time to allow for comments and discussions before proceeding to the next stage.
 8. Discussing with Program Convenor/Supervisor(s) at regular intervals the progress towards, and impediments to, maintaining the agreed timetable.
 9. Where applicable, accepting responsibility for producing the final copies of the research project/minor thesis/thesis and ensuring that both content and presentation are in accord with the relevant requirements of the Faculty.

The responsibilities of the supervisor are:

1. Becoming familiar with, and abiding by the Academic Program Rules and administrative policies and procedures governing the degree.
2. Providing appropriate academic support throughout the research component of their program to enable students to achieve their highest standard.
3. Meeting with the student at the commencement of the research component of their program to clarify their respective roles, responsibilities and expectations.
4. Determining a program of research (when appropriate) in consultation with the student that is capable of being completed

- within the timeframe allocated to the research/project component of their program.
5. Identifying if the proposed research has commercial implications resulting from the student's work, or may result in intellectual property rights for the student outside of their normal right to have a thesis examined and submitted (see Commercial Development of the University's Intellectual Property).
 6. Meeting with, or otherwise contacting, the student regularly during the course of their research component.
 7. Being aware of any cultural differences between themselves and the students, and abiding by equal opportunity principles and practice.
 8. Arranging appropriate access to School/Discipline or external facilities.
 9. Participating in regular training in supervision as directed by the School/Discipline.
 10. Suggesting ways that the student can make the most effective use of time. This will involve discussing the nature of research with the student, the standard and timeframe expected for particular degrees, the choice of the research topic, planning of the research program, the availability of library resources in the field, bibliographical and technical assistance, and applying for ethical clearance(s) where this is required.
 11. Carefully monitoring the performance of the student relative to the standard required for the degree, and ensuring that inadequate progress or work below the standard generally expected is brought to the student's attention. The supervisors should assist with the development of solutions to problems as they are identified.
 12. Requiring written work from the student on a prearranged and agreed schedule so that progress can be monitored at regular intervals.
 13. Providing constructive and critical advice to the student about their written work.
 14. Commenting on the content and on drafts of the research project/minor thesis and, at the time of submission, providing advice on the proper presentation of the work, its conformity to the relevant requirements of the Faculty and, therefore, its prima facie readiness for examination.
 15. Providing advice and assistance as appropriate.

THE HONOURS DEGREE IN THE BACHELOR OF HEALTH SCIENCE (BHSC) AND MASTER OF NURSING SCIENCE (MNSC) THESIS

The thesis component of the BHSc (Hons) and MNSc degrees is designed to prepare students to become early researchers. In the MNSc the research consists of 12 or 6 unit points of study out of a total of 24 unit points in stage two of the degree. In both awards the research is allocated six to twelve months of full time study.

The thesis serves to demonstrate to examiners the student's understanding of the research process and the student's ability to develop a research proposal and carry out a small research project. Theses should be between 20,000 and 25,000 words in length (for a 12 unit in the Masters or Honours Degree) and should include a description of the research questions, purpose of the study; background to the study; a theoretical or conceptual framework; a description of the study design and methods; the findings of the study; and a discussion of the findings. Guidelines for the structure of the thesis and study proposal can be found further on in this document.

THE RESEARCH PROPOSAL

All students are required to submit a fully developed research proposal to the Research and Higher Degrees Sub-Committee (RAHDS) of the Discipline of Nursing by the end of their first semester of research. Following approval by the RAHDS, the ethics proposal must then be approved by EITHER the University Ethics Committee OR an ethics committee in an appropriate service agency.

SUBMITTING THE THESIS FOR EXAMINATION

Two soft bound copies of the thesis **MUST** be submitted on the specified due date. For students who are due to complete in semester 1 the due date is the last day of June. For those due to complete in second semester the due date is the last day of October. Extensions of time are only granted in exceptional circumstances in consultation with the Head of the Discipline, the MNSc/BHSc coordinator and the student's supervisor.

FINAL SUBMISSION OF THE THESIS TO MEET THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE AWARD

Following examination and notification of the result, the **student must submit two hard bound copies of the thesis**—purple for BHSc (Hons) and navy blue for MNSc—according to University specifications. If thesis are bound in a different colour than what is specified you may be requested to reprint the hard bound copy for the Discipline. You are required to submit a copy of the completed thesis on CD-ROM to the discipline. **Please note that the degree will not be awarded until these copies are submitted to the Discipline of Nursing.**

EXAMINATION OF THE THESIS

The examination process of MNSc and BHSc(Hons) theses is the responsibility of the Head of Discipline. A sub-committee, consisting of the Head of Discipline or nominated other, BHSc/MNSc coordinator, Post-graduate coordinator and where necessary other co-opted individuals, make decisions on the appointment of examiners; the endorsement of examiners' reports; and the grading of the thesis.

Examiners must be members of the Discipline of Nursing who are qualified and experienced in the area studied. Your supervisor will not examine your thesis. The agreement of the nominated examiners is then sought by phone, email or by using a standardised letter (Appendix I). Should any nominated examiner be unavailable, additional recommendations are made until two examiners are appointed. On receipt of the soft-bound theses, one copy is sent to each examiner with examiners' guidelines (Appendix II); an examination form (Appendix III); and a request to return the Thesis with the completed examination form within four weeks of receipt.

On receipt of both examiners' reports, the BHSc/MNSc coordinators consider their recommendations and submit them to the Head of Discipline.

When examiners are in agreement the BHSc/MNSc coordinators will normally recommend that their reports be endorsed.

When examiners disagree the BHSc/MNSc coordinators will normally recommend that the two confer at a moderation meeting and inform the committee of the result of their conferring.

If, after conferring, the examiners are in agreement, the BHSc/MNSc coordinators will normally recommend that their revised reports be endorsed.

If, after conferring, the examiners still disagree the Head of Discipline will normally recommend that a third external examiner who is not a member of the University Discipline and who is qualified and experienced in the area studied be appointed. The third examiner will be provided with the reports of both previous examiners and will be asked to indicate which of the two recommendations she/he supports. On receipt of the third examiners report the Head of Discipline will endorse the final grade.

An External Examiner who can make recommendations for change of marks reviews all theses. On completion of this review a confidential report will be submitted to the Head of Discipline.

Any feedback and recommendations for revision and/or re-examination will be provided to the student by their supervisor.

GRADING OF THE THESIS

The following recommendations may be made with regard to the examination of the thesis.

- a. It be accepted without further examination as meeting the requirements for the appropriate degree and graded at the level of:

Master of Nursing Science

Theses are graded in the same way as other coursework assessments:

HD	High Distinction
D	Distinction
C	Credit
P	Pass

See the criteria for the grading scheme in the Discipline's *Student Handbook and Style Guide*.

Bachelor of Health Science (Honours)

I	First class
2A	Second class div A
2B	Second class div B
3	Third class
NAH	Not Awarded

OR

- b. It be accepted as meeting the requirements for the appropriate degree, provided that corrections along the lines set out in the examination report are made to the satisfaction of the Head of Discipline and graded at one of the levels listed above.

OR

- c. The candidate is permitted to revise the Thesis in the light of the examination report and re-submit it for examination.

OR

- d. It not be accepted as meeting requirements for the appropriate degree

If it is resolved that a candidate is permitted to revise and resubmit the thesis for examination, the Head of Discipline shall prescribe a maximum period of further candidature and may prescribe particular conditions to be met.

EXAMINATION PROCEDURES

The following steps should be followed in the examination of a thesis:

1. The examiners are recommended by the sub-committee and invited by the coordinator.
2. If invitations are not accepted, the BHSc/MNSc coordinators seek further recommendations from the Head of Discipline.
3. On receipt of the thesis (TWO SOFT BOUND COPIES ONLY), the BHSc/MNSc coordinators forwards copies to both examiners with an examiner's report form and examiners' guidelines.
4. The BHSc/MNSc coordinators bring the examiners' reports to the Head of Discipline and a recommendation is made.
5. The BHSc/MNSc coordinators arrange for the theses to be reviewed by an external examiner who submits a report to the Head of Discipline.
6. When a thesis is passed, the BHSc/MNSc coordinators returns the thesis and examiners comments to the supervisor who informs the student and requests her/him to submit two hardbound copies and a disk/CD-ROM copy of the final thesis. On receipt of these one bound copy is lodged in the Discipline Thesis collection and one bound copy is given to the supervisor.
7. The MNSc and BHSc coordinators take the necessary action to record results and to enable the student to graduate.

THESIS PREPARATION AND SUBMISSION

The purpose of this section is to provide information and guidance on the preparation of a thesis and to describe the procedures to be used in submitting the thesis either for the Honours degree in the Bachelor of Health Science or the Master of Nursing Science degree. The coursework component of both courses is intended to provide appropriate substantive and methodological background to the researching and writing of a thesis as well as providing a coherent pattern of specialised advanced level work. It is usually the case that the thesis topic takes shape or is more clearly specified in content and/or methodology during the coursework semester(s).

In the Discipline of Nursing a thesis:

- shall be a report of an investigation of an approved topic
- shall be based on a program of research and shall demonstrate significant originality and insight into the research area.

A thesis is a sustained line of argument, supported by evidence, which may be based upon analysis of data and will contain argument relevant to the examination of (and/or defence of and/or confutation of) a particular topic or hypothesis (or set of particular hypotheses). A thesis for evaluation is usually divided into sections or chapters for the convenience of discussion. Each chapter, however, should contribute to an advancement of the argument and when taken together should form an integrated unit. A writer endeavours to maintain and present the argument in a clear, precise, and consistent manner. Judgement, logical presentation, and sound interpretation are vital in research.

Most theses begin with the statement of a question, issue or problem whose relationship and significance is linked to a review of the pertinent literature. In the body of the thesis the problem is examined, and certain conclusions are drawn. It is essential that the conclusions stated are consistent with the question the thesis purports to examine and that they are arrived at through the examination of relevant evidence and argument. There should be a clear and logical argument running through the thesis from beginning to end. If, as is often the case, the direction of the argument changes as a result of the research undertaken, the overall pattern of the thesis, as originally projected, will need to be revised. The writer often concludes the thesis by offering suggestions for further research. These should clearly follow from the findings presented.

Students are encouraged to look at previous examples of master's level theses. Your supervisor may be able to recommend some that he or she has supervised. While your topic is different, it is useful to see what some finished products look like. Both BNSc(Hons) and MNSc theses completed by

students in the Discipline of Nursing are housed in the Discipline. These may not be removed from the Discipline but your supervisor can arrange for you to read them on site.

RESEARCH PROPOSAL OUTLINE

Students undertaking research are required to submit a research proposal to the supervisor. The research proposal serves the dual purpose of allowing you to think through what it is you want to do in detail and letting your supervisor know whether or not you have a clear grasp of the task in front of you. You should consult your supervisor before submitting the final proposal as a good deal of constructive discussion often takes place over drafting the proposal. The proposal in its final form is submitted to the RAHDS for peer review.

The proposal is written in the present or future tense, whereas when describing research procedures that have been completed, the thesis is usually written in the past. The research proposal has no specified length but would normally be somewhere between four to ten typed pages. There are many texts that deal with the writing of a thesis and research proposal. A recommended text is:

Thomas, SA 2000, *How to write health sciences papers, dissertations and theses*, Churchill Livingstone, London.

You are requested to use the formats presented below. Both an empirical/analytical and interpretive/critical proposal outline is presented.

RESEARCH PROPOSAL OUTLINE: EMPIRICAL/ANALYTICAL APPROACH

The proposal will generally consist of the following sections:

1. title
2. investigator(s) and qualifications
3. purpose of the study (general) and aims (specific)
 - establish the purpose of the study
 - identify the variables or issues to be examined and the questions that will be asked about their relationships
 - statement of the research question(s) or hypothesis(es)
4. research questions/hypotheses help to focus a study and give it direction
5. they should be stated clearly and concisely
6. care should be taken here to judge whether the questions are 'manageable' and worthwhile
7. background and preliminary studies (if any)
 - identify the context and background of the study
 - refer to the important literature relevant to the topic and cite key references dealing with each of the variables/issues
 - show how results in the research literature are related to the study and identify differences in findings
 - critique the literature and indicate how the proposed study relates to other research and the contribution it may make to gaps in existing knowledge
8. subjects—inclusion and exclusion criteria
 - outline who the subjects will be, where they will be recruited from (study setting), how they will be identified and how they will be recruited to participate in the study – justifications for these decisions need to be made
 - state the number of subjects that will be recruited and how this will be/was determined
9. study plan and design
 - study design and rationale for choosing that design

- methods used to collect data or evidence
- tasks (if any) to be assigned to participants
- the order in which various procedures will be used
- the timing of different procedures
- data gathering instruments to be used (if any – enclose copies in an appendix) and issues of validity
- identify any assumptions made in the study
- indicate awareness of any potential limitations

10. outcomes

- indicate the relevance, value or potential significance of the topic to be studied to nursing practice or theory and/or patient outcomes or potential benefits

11. ethical considerations

- a clear description of procedures to be performed on patients or volunteers
- pay particular attention to possible risks, pain or discomfort
- indicate whether the procedure is part of normal diagnosis and treatment
- indicate procedures to minimise potential problems (eg coding of data, safe keeping of data and informed consent)
- where necessary special considerations for projects requiring access to medical records
- provide copies of any information sheets and consent as appropriate

12. drugs

13. specific safety considerations

14. analysis and reporting of results

- statistical analysis to be used (if any)
- indicate how and where results will be disseminated, presented and/or published

15. references

- reference list as described in the *Student Handbook and Style Guide*. It is usual practice to use the Vancouver referencing system in Empirical and Analytical research

16. other relevant information

17. other Ethics Committees to which the Protocol has been submitted

18. date of proposed commencement

19. resource considerations

20. financial statement.

Note: Your supervisor will be able to show you examples of past proposals.

RESEARCH PROPOSAL OUTLINE: INTERPRETIVE/CRITICAL APPROACH

The proposal will generally consist of the following sections:

1. title: the title should be succinct but meaningful
2. investigator and qualifications
3. purpose of the study (general) and aims (specific)
 - statement of the area of interest:
 - establish the purpose of the study
 - statement of the research question:
 - the research question helps to focus a study and give it direction
 - it should be stated clearly and concisely
 - care should be taken here to judge whether the questions are 'manageable' and worthwhile
4. background and preliminary literature (if any)
 - context of the issue/question/problem:
 - identify the context and background of the study
 - refer to the important literature relevant to the topic and cite key references dealing with issues (unless contraindicated eg grounded theory)
 - show how results in the research literature are related to the study and identify differences between findings
 - critique the literature and indicate how the proposed study relates to other research and the contribution it may make to gaps in existing knowledge
5. subjects—inclusion and exclusion criteria
 - outline who the subjects will be, where they will be recruited from (study setting), how they will be identified and how they will be recruited to participate in the study – justifications for these decisions need to be made
 - state the number of participants that will be recruited and how this number will be/was determined
6. study plan and design

- outline the methodology that will underpin the study and the rationale for its choice
 - state the methods that will be used to collect data
 - tasks (if any) to be assigned to participants
 - the order in which various strategies for data collection will be used
 - the timing of different strategies
 - data gathering instruments to be used (usually self) and validity issues
 - identify any assumptions and/or potential limitations
7. outcomes
- identify the relevance, value or potential significance of the topic to be studied to nursing practice or theory (or both) and patient outcomes or potential benefits
8. ethical considerations
- Nursing research is usually concerned with exploring the effects of nursing interventions on people. Research participant's rights must be protected throughout the research process. Aspects to consider here include: informed consent; respect for human dignity; privacy and the right to confidentiality. Enclose copies of information sheets and consent form in an appendix. If the proposed study requires permission or any special arrangements with health agencies or any particular abilities for it to be undertaken successfully, these should be indicated. Indicate strategies that will be implemented in order to minimise potential ethical problems in relation to transcribing of text, observational issues and safe keeping of data.
9. drugs—indicate if not relevant
10. specific safety considerations—indicate if not relevant
11. analysis and reporting of results
- set out the analytic and interpretive phases of the project:
 - outline in detail the methods that will be used for thematic/content/hermeneutic analysis or any other analysis techniques
 - outline the strategies to be used for interpreting the findings
 - indicate how and where findings will be disseminated, presented and/or published
12. references
- reference list as described in the *Student Handbook and Style Guide*. It is usual practice to use the Harvard referencing system in Interpretive and Critical research

13. other relevant information
14. other Ethics Committees to which the Protocol has been submitted
15. date of proposed commencement
16. resource considerations
17. financial statement (where necessary).

RESEARCH PROTOCOL OUTLINE: SYSTEMATIC REVIEW

The proposal will generally consist of the following sections:

1. title
2. investigator(s) and qualifications
3. purpose of the systematic review
 - establish the purpose of the study
 - identify the variables or issues to be examined and the questions that will be asked about their relationships
 - statement of the systematic review question(s):
 - systematic review questions help to focus a review and give it a clear direction
 - they should be stated clearly and concisely
 - care should be taken here to judge whether the questions are 'manageable' and worthwhile
4. background
 - identify the context and background of the systematic review
 - refer to the important literature relevant to the topic and cite key references dealing with each of the variables/issues
 - demonstrate why a systematic review of the existing research is needed on the topic
 - indicate how the proposed review relates to other research/reviews and the contribution it may make to gaps in existing knowledge
5. review method
 - review question(s) / objective(s)
 - clearly state the review questions or objectives
 - inclusion criteria:
 - describe what studies will be included in terms of:
 - population
 - intervention
 - outcomes

- state what study designs will be included
 - describe any exclusions
- search strategy
 - describe how studies will be located in terms of
 - search terms will be used
 - databases to be searched
 - journals to be hand searched
 - conference proceedings to be searched
 - any experts are to be contacted
- critical appraisal
 - describe how studies will be critically appraised
 - include any critically appraisal tools to be used in an appendix
- data collection
 - describe how data will be collected (extracted) from each study
 - describe what steps will be taken to minimise transcription error
 - include any data collection tool(s) in an appendix
- data synthesis
 - describe how results from individual studies will be pooled
 - describe what statistical approaches to meta-analysis will be used
 - describe how heterogeneity between studies will be evaluated
 - describe what steps will be taken to minimise data entry errors
- 6. outcomes
 - identify the relevance, value or potential significance of the topic to be studied to nursing practice or theory (or both) and patient outcomes or potential benefits
- 7. references
 - all references cited in thesis must be listed according to details outlined in the *Student Handbook and Style Guide*
- 8. appendices—appendices may be needed and may include:
 - inclusion criteria appraisal tool

- **critical appraisal tool**
- **data collection tool.**

THESIS STRUCTURE

What you have to say must be directly related to your topic. You will need to pay considerable attention to your style of writing and the way you organise what you have written. Cultivate clarity of argument and precision of expression. If a word or phrase or sentence or paragraph is obscure, work on it until it is crystal clear. To this end a good dictionary, a thesaurus and a dictionary of synonyms and antonyms are helpful. Academic writing should be in clear, precise language.

A thesis should be written in the past tense as it is a final report of work that has already occurred.

A good style is also something to cultivate. It is partly a matter of precision in the choice of words, care in punctuation and skill in constructing sentences; it is partly a matter of taste. Students should use inclusive language (see the Discipline of Nursing *Student Handbook and Style Guide*)

<<http://www.nursing.adelaide.edu.au/resources>>

A 'typical' thesis structure is outlined below. Each thesis does, however, have its own structural peculiarity, and therefore, the most appropriate structure for any particular thesis will be developed in consultation with the student's supervisor.

The University's specifications for formatting of the thesis can be found in the section 'Board of Graduate Studies—specifications for Thesis' at the end of the University Calendar Volume II.

The responsibility for the layout of the thesis and selection of the title rests with the candidate after discussion with the supervisor, and the completed thesis should be shown to the supervisor before submission. The candidate must consult with the Discipline concerning selection of an appropriate style for the thesis. It is a good idea to peruse other recent theses to get a good picture of the kinds of presentation decisions that previous students have made. A list of useful guides and style manuals for theses may be obtained on request from the Information Services Librarian of the Barr Smith Library. The Language and Learning Service of the Centre for Learning and Professional Development runs seminars and workshops on thesis writing.

<<http://www.adelaide.edu.au/clpd/>>

THESIS FORMAT

The thesis should incorporate in the following order:

A title page

A title page giving the title of the thesis in full, the name of the candidate, the name of the Discipline of the University (Discipline of Nursing) associated with the work and the date (month and year) when submitted for the degree. There is a limitation of 160 spaces and characters in the title of the thesis. You should ensure, therefore, that your thesis title does not exceed that limit.

A table of contents

The table of contents should sequentially list the chapters, sub-headings and page numbers, throughout the thesis. A list of tables, figures and/or diagrams should also be included.

A signed statement

A signed statement to the effect that:

- the thesis contains no material which has been accepted for the award of any other degree or diploma in any university and that, to the best of the candidate's knowledge and belief, the thesis contains no material previously published or written by another person, except where due reference is made in the text of the thesis
- the author consents to the thesis being made available for photocopying and loan if accepted for the award of the degree.

This statement should be included on the same page as the statement regarding originality (see sample below). If the candidate has any objections to including such a statement, the candidate must apply to the Registrar, Graduate Studies, immediately, in writing, for a period of embargo to be placed on the candidate's thesis.

Sample:

This work contains no material which has been accepted for the award of any other degree or diploma in any university or other tertiary institution and, to the best of my knowledge and belief, contains no material previously published or written by another person, except where due reference has been made in the text.

I give consent to this copy of my thesis, when deposited in the Discipline Library, being available for loan and photocopying.

The statement must be signed by the candidate and dated.

Acknowledgement

An acknowledgment of any help given or work carried out by any other person or organisation. This page should not be included in the thesis when submitted for examination. It should only be included in the final hard bound copies of the theses.

Abstract

Note that an abstract must be included. It provides an overview of the purpose of the research, the major findings, and a brief summary of the conclusions drawn from the research. It should be less than a page in length, and is written last, to best convey the achievements of the thesis in its final form.

The main text

The main text is usually divided into chapters. The chapter outline will naturally vary depending on your approach. Two suggested chapter outlines, an Empirical/Analytical and an Interpretive/Critical example are provided.

CHAPTER OUTLINE: EMPIRICAL/ANALYTICAL APPROACH

CHAPTER 1 - INTRODUCTION

The introduction is concerned with identifying the problem or purpose of the study. The introductory chapter should state the nature of the issue that you are investigating, how this fits into the current research on this topic, and how you intend to go about answering it.

The subheadings of this chapter may include the following:

- introductory paragraph
- context of the study (an succinct outline of the specific topic/area of research)
- purpose of the study
- statement of the research question/issue/problem
- statement of the hypothesis (if applicable) or research questions
- significance of the study
- assumptions
- definitions of terms
- summary of the thesis—a succinct outline of the content of each chapter of the thesis
- conclusion.

CHAPTER 2 - LITERATURE REVIEW

In the thesis the literature review must be tightly organised. It should not be a loosely related supplement or an uncritical listing of others' results. The purpose of the review is to fit your study into a broad scheme or framework, enabling the reader to see its importance and relationship to other studies, and perhaps to provide an empirical basis for the hypotheses or questions of the study. In other words, the student should so organise the previous findings that the reader can see, if it is a question arising from the literature, why the study is important and it is worthwhile and justifiable or, if it is a question arising from practice, where the literature does not provide adequate answers but does provide indicators towards fruitful investigation. Include only references relevant to the topic statement and/or the hypotheses that surround it. Use sub-headings to facilitate organisation and meaning. Summarise the conclusions or trends evident from the literature reviewed

under each sub-heading and relate them to the thesis topic and hypotheses or research questions/objectives.

CHAPTER 3 - METHODS

In this chapter you describe only the methodology on which the study is based, and this should be presented in sufficient detail to enable other workers to replicate your study. In the empirical thesis, this will generally all be contained in a single chapter, however, in some theses these may be separated out into different chapters.

Subsections in this chapter for an empirical thesis may include the following:

- introduction
- description of research design. This should present information on all major study elements, including the protocol (study population including inclusion/exclusion criteria, recruitment strategies, study setting, interventions or exposures, piloting of any tools that were developed and outcomes). Reports of randomised clinical trials should include details of assignment of interventions (methods of randomisation, concealment of allocation to treatment groups, issues of reliability and validity), and the method of masking (blinding)
- ethical issues including securing informed consent
- data gathering instruments and/or procedures including details of any laboratory procedures
- issues of validity and reliability
- statistical analysis. Describe statistical methods with enough detail to enable a knowledgeable reader with access to the original data to verify the reported results
- conclusion/summary of the chapter.

CHAPTER 4 - RESULTS

In this chapter the results of the data analysis are reported. One of the most difficult tasks when preparing the results section is deciding how much detail to include; remember it is not necessary to present detailed analysis of every piece of data collected, but should be limited to those needed to explain the argument of the thesis and to assess its support. The structure and content here depends largely on the nature of your work and this should be developed in consultation with your supervisor.

Present your results in logical sequence in the text, tables, and illustrations. Do not repeat in the text all the data in the tables or illustrations, rather point out significant relationships, and do not duplicate data in graphs and tables. Good tables and figures are relatively simple, pointing out the findings.

FINAL CHAPTER - DISCUSSION

Your conclusion is about what you now know as a result of carrying out your research and what still needs to be done. It is where the findings of your study are interpreted and incorporated into existing knowledge. Do not repeat the findings of the study, only summarise the major points. You should critically review your study, which includes identifying any shortcomings in your study design or data collection methods, and you should also identify areas for further research. Be sure to avoid unqualified statements and conclusions not completely supported by the data.

This chapter may include the following headings:

- restatement of the problem
- summary description of procedures (briefly stated)
- major findings and their significance to clinical practice
- study limitations
- recommendations for further investigation
- conclusions.

CHAPTER OUTLINE: INTERPRETIVE/CRITICAL APPROACH

Qualitative research provides more flexibility in writing up than quantitative approaches. Nevertheless, a reader should be able to follow the decisions made during the process of research. A good qualitative report will contain all of the features of a good quantitative one in terms of attention to the preliminaries, such as the title page and the research summary and abstract. It will also pay the same attention to clarity of presentation and thoroughness in that it sets out carefully all of the history and outcomes of the study.

Unlike theses that report quantitative studies, reports of qualitative data analysis do not have a 'typical' structure. Typically they can be structured according to the orientation of the researcher, however they do still require essential inclusions. Each thesis does have its own structural peculiarity. Since theses do vary in structure—in chapter organisation and chapter contents—the most appropriate structure for any particular thesis will be developed in consultation with the student's supervisor. In the case of a philosophical thesis, for example, the structure will be determined primarily by the nature of the argument being developed and the major consideration will be that it is presented in a clear, systematic and sequential manner.

A possible thesis structure follows.

CHAPTER 1. INTRODUCTION

The introduction is concerned with identifying the purpose/rationale of the study. The introductory chapter should state the nature of the issue that you are investigating, how this fits into the current research on this topic, and how you intend to go about answering it.

The subheadings of this chapter may include the following:

- introductory paragraph
- context of the study (specific succinct outline of the research topic/area)
- statement of the research problem
- purpose of the study and any specific aims and objectives
- statement of the research question/s
- significance of the study
- assumptions
- definitions of terms
- summary of the thesis—a succinct outline of the content of each chapter

- conclusion/summary of the chapter.

CHAPTER 2. LITERATURE REVIEW

In the thesis the literature review must be tightly organised. It should not be a loosely related supplement or an uncritical listing of others' results. The purpose of the review is to fit the particular study into a broad scheme or framework, enabling the reader to see its importance and relationship to other studies. In other words, the student should so organise the previous findings that the reader can see, if it is a question arising from the literature, why the study is important and it is worthwhile and justifiable or, if it is a question arising from practice, where the literature does not provide adequate answers but does provide indicators towards fruitful investigation. Include only references relevant to the topic statement and the research questions that surround it. Use sub-headings to facilitate organisation and meaning. Summarise the conclusions or trends evident from the literature reviewed under each sub-heading and relate them to the thesis topic and research questions and identify existing gaps in the literature.

In theses reporting qualitative data a literature review may not be confined to only one chapter. Depending on the subject and structure of the thesis, it may be appropriate to refer to relevant literature in several chapters; the researcher may choose to 'dialogue' with the literature throughout the thesis.

CHAPTER 3. METHODOLOGY

In this chapter you describe the methodology on which the study is based; the methods used; the processes followed; and how data were analysed. In some theses, these may be separated out into different chapters and in some theses the methodology, methods and data analysis are best presented and illustrated in the course of discussing the data. In others, a whole chapter may be devoted to methodology itself. However, it is usually useful to set out clearly the approach taken and to show clearly your understanding of the intellectual positions and research traditions that inform your research. You need to clearly justify why you have chosen this methodology as a framework for your research.

Some questions to answer when writing this chapter for an interpretive/critical thesis may include the following:

- what theoretical assumptions about the way knowledge is generated underlie the methods?
- what is the basic nature and intent of the chosen methodology?
- how did the methodology relate to this project?
- what were the main references to the methodological literature?

At this point you may also choose to insert a small section that outlines some key assumptions of qualitative research approaches.

CHAPTER 4. METHODS

The actual methods and processes used in the research must be reported. This should present information on all major study elements, including a description of the types of participants, inclusion/exclusion criteria, recruitment strategies, study setting and outcomes

The thesis should address the following ethical issues:

- from which committees was ethical clearance obtained?
- what were the ethical considerations?
- how were informed consent, privacy, and anonymity maintained?
- storage of the data.

A description of the data collection technique(s) should be outlined. This may include a description of the interview technique (structured or unstructured, focus group or individual), the observation process or discourse/documentation review.

The techniques used to analyse the data should also be described. This may be presented within the methods chapter or within a discrete chapter of its own (see below).

CHAPTER 5. ANALYSIS

Through presentation of text the data are reported and analysed. This part of the report may differ depending on the particular worldview/paradigm you used to approach the study (i.e. as separate chapters or the analysis techniques incorporated into the 'methods' chapter with the interpretation/findings as a separate chapter). The reader must be able to see how you went about organising and making sense of the data.

CHAPTERS 6 ONWARDS. INTERPRETATION

In this chapter (or chapters) the results of the data analysis are reported. The structure here depends largely on the nature of your work and this should be developed in consultation with your supervisor.

FINAL CHAPTER. DISCUSSION

The final chapter should outline what you now know as a result of carrying out your research and what still needs to be done. It is the point where you stand back from the work and reflect on the project in its entirety, and make some comments on what you think could be concluded and learnt from your study. It must include a section on the implications of the findings on clinical practice.

This chapter may include the following headings:

- introductory paragraph
- restatement of the problem
- summary description of procedures (briefly stated)
- major findings and their significance to clinical practice
- study limitations
- recommendations for further investigation
- conclusions.

For an excellent summary of qualitative data reporting and from which some of the material above is drawn, refer:

Roberts, K & Taylor, B 1997, *Nursing research processes: an Australian perspective*, Nelson ITP, Melbourne.

SYSTEMATIC REVIEW

The following is a guide to the structure and contents of a systematic review thesis. This information is to be read in conjunction with the *Student Handbook and Style Guide* of the Discipline of Nursing, The University of Adelaide.

CHAPTER 1. INTRODUCTION

This section introduces the topic for the systematic review and may address:

- focus of review
- brief summary of major issues
- scope of review.

CHAPTER 2. BACKGROUND

This section provides the background to the review topic. The aim of this section is to demonstrate the student has a good understanding of the review topic. While contents will vary depending on the topic, it may address:

- what the initial review of the literature identified
- description of topic and issues of importance
- key concepts may need to be defined
- what research has been undertaken
- contradictions in the literature
- what populations and interventions have been studied
- what outcomes have been used
- why a systematic review is needed.

CHAPTER 3. METHODOLOGY

This section provides a detailed description of the systematic review methodology. The aim of this section is to demonstrate a good understanding of systematic reviews. Areas to be addressed include:

- systematic review protocol
- review question or objectives
- inclusion criteria
- search strategy

- critical appraisal
- data collection
- data synthesis.

CHAPTER 4. METHOD

The method outlines how the review was conducted and its aim is to demonstrate the student's ability to develop a systematic review protocol and will include:

- review question / objectives
 - review questions or objectives clearly stated
- inclusion criteria
 - the details of what studies were included in the review in terms of the population, intervention and outcome measures
 - what study designs were included
- any exclusions
- search strategy
 - what terms were used
 - what databases were searched
 - what journals were hand searched
 - any experts were contacted
 - conference proceedings searched
 - may be necessary to include greater details of search results in appendix
- critical appraisal
 - how were studies appraised
 - include any appraisal tools in appendix
- data collection
 - how data were collected
 - what steps were taken to minimise transcription error
 - include any data collection tools in appendix
- data synthesis
 - how studies were synthesised
 - how heterogeneity was addressed
 - what statistical approaches to meta-analysis were used
 - what steps were taken to minimise data entry errors
 - were any sensitivity analyses undertaken
 - studies characteristics may also be included in appendix as summary tables.

CHAPTER 5. RESULTS

The results section presents the findings of the systematic review and demonstrates the student's ability to conduct a review and ability to communicate its findings. This section adheres strictly to the focus of the review as described in the review question / objectives, and may include:

- what was found
 - number of RCTs
 - what other types of studies (if relevant)
 - how many studies met inclusion criteria
- details of studies
 - populations studied
 - the intervention and variations in its administration / delivery
 - outcome measures used, variations in measurements, what tools were used
- critical appraisal
 - what studies were excluded (if any)
 - why were studies excluded
- presentation of results
 - addressing each review question / objective
 - support results with tables and graphs if appropriate.

CHAPTER 6. DISCUSSION

This section provides a discussion of issues arising from the findings of the review. The aim of this section is to demonstrate an understanding of the significance of the review findings, and of the implications for practice and research. This section may include:

- what is the available evidence on the effectiveness of the intervention
- issues related to the quality of research
- other issues of relevance
- implications for practice
- recommendations for future research
- conclusion.

REFERENCES

All references cited in thesis must be listed according to details outlined in the *Student Handbook and Style Guide*.

APPENDICES

Appendices may be needed and may include:

- detailed search strategy
- inclusion criteria appraisal tool
- critical appraisal tool
- data collection tool
- summary table of included studies
- summary table of excluded studies.

Note: the remaining components of the thesis will be similar regardless of methodological approach

REFERENCES

References are arranged in alphabetical order (for Harvard system), the family name of the author listed first, then initials and the year of publication. References are numbered consecutively for Vancouver referencing styles. Consult the Discipline of Nursing *Student Handbook and Style Guide* for additional details on systems for documenting references. It is acceptable to use the Vancouver referencing system for empirical and analytical research or systematic reviews and the Harvard referencing system for interpretive and critical research. Each entry should be placed flush with the left-hand margin of the page, and subsequent lines are indented 0.5cms and single-spaced. Note that some word processing packages have facilities for storing references. Reference management software (e.g. Endnote) facilitates citations in the text and reference list.

APPENDICES

An appendix contains supplementary material that the author considers necessary to the interpretation of the text itself. Any supporting information such as Information sheets, consent forms, support letters and data collection tools are included in the appendices.

The question of what material should be included in the text and what material should be placed in an appendix is at the discretion of the writer. However, caution should be exercised to guard against the abuse of appendices, particularly against using them as a refuge for everything that could not be squeezed into the thesis. (Appendices are not included in the maximum word totals for the thesis.)

Tables and data which are important but not essential to the understanding of the thesis, copies of covering letters, printed forms and data collection tools may be placed in an appendix. Each separate entry heading is listed as APPENDIX I, APPENDIX II, etc.

TYPING

A thesis should normally be produced on size A4 white paper, in a clear and legible font (e.g. Times 12 or Geneva 10) using a Laser Writer, or some other printing device that gives a clear, legible result. If the type is unbroken and easy to read, it is acceptable. The font colour should be black. The text material should be typed with double or one and a half spacing between the lines. The items of the reference list and the footnotes may be single-spaced, but larger spacing should be used between separate footnotes and between individual references in the reference list. Normally typing should be on one side of the page only but where paper of high opacity to prevent 'show-through' is used, printing on both sides is acceptable.

MARGINS

The top margin of the first page and of the first page of each succeeding chapter should be 4cm. Other top margins, the right side and bottom margins should be a minimum of 2cm in size. If printing on both sides is intended, a right hand margin of approximately 3cm would be needed to allow space for binding. Three or four spaces are allowed between a chapter heading and the text below it. Centred headings and illustrations are set off with three or four spaces above and below, to make them stand out from the text.

PAGE NUMBERING

Beginning with the first page of Chapter 1, pages are to be numbered consecutively in Arabic numerals. Small Roman numerals should be used for all preceding pages, with the exception of the title page, which is unnumbered.

DIAGRAMS AND FIGURES

The following are general suggestions for normal practice, but they may be varied in special cases.

Tables, figures and/or diagrams should be sequentially numbered throughout the thesis and listed within the table of contents. Diagrams and figures etc should be preferably drawn or photographed on size A4 paper and bound in the appropriate place in the text.

Tables and figures should either be inserted at an appropriate place in the text, or form a separate page. Tables are labelled in number order and this, plus the table title, is usually placed above the table. In similar fashion, figures are labelled and titled but these are placed either above or below the figure itself.

Folded diagrams, maps, tables etc, should read as right-hand pages when open. Supplementary material, such as folded maps and other large folded

sheets and primary data on microfiche may be placed in a pocket inside the back cover of the bound thesis.

BINDING

Soft-binding of thesis for examination

A higher degree candidate should submit his/her thesis in soft bound form initially for examination purposes.

It is the candidate's responsibility to bear all costs incurred in the soft binding of his/her thesis as well as in the subsequent hard binding.

When the examination process (including the completion of any required amendments) is complete, it is an obligation of the candidate to submit the two hard-bound copies of his/her thesis and one copy on Disk or CD-ROM to the Discipline Secretary before a degree can be conferred. The disk copy will be saved as a .pdf file so that other students may view the thesis.

Hard-binding

The thesis must be sewn and bound with cloth on stiff covers. (A spring-type or screw-type binder is unacceptable. Stapling and plastic or 'perfect' binding without sewing are also unacceptable.) During binding the edges should be trimmed.

On the spine of the thesis should be given, in gold lettering of suitable size, normally reading from the top to the bottom, the candidates initials and surname, title of the thesis, shortened if necessary, followed by the year of completion. The colour of the copy to be retained by the Discipline should be navy blue for MNSc and purple for BHSc (Hons). If bound in another colour to that specified, students may be requested to resubmit an appropriate coloured thesis.

Examiners expect that the candidate has done them the courtesy of proofreading the thesis. Therefore allow yourself adequate time to go through the manuscript word by word, line by line and page by page, ensuring that all typographical and other errors are removed. (Many candidates do this poorly because they do not plan properly and are rushed for time at the end.) Do this yourself; then do it with another person; then, if possible, get a third person to proof-read it once more. You will still find errors remaining, but at least most will have been eliminated.

Many examiners check references and quotations to see whether they are accurate. Some examiners can be extremely searching, so be warned. Check these things before your original copy is duplicated. Format, design, and typographical layout constitute an integral part of a thesis. Consistency is vital. Faulty, inconsistent or inaccurate bibliographical references are often regarded as an indication of mediocre, if not inferior work in the manuscript as a whole. Inconsistencies of spelling, capitalisation, the use of quotation marks, margins, headings and page numbering detract from the worth of the

work done. Inconsistency, even in minor details, will harm an otherwise authoritative text. The responsibility for attention to such detail rests squarely on you.

CHECKLIST TO EVALUATE THE THESIS BEFORE FINAL SUBMISSION

The following checklist may be useful in making judgements about the quality of your thesis before final submission.

CONTENT

Purpose of study

- purpose is clearly indicated in a problem statement whose main thrust (towards a particular area in nursing) is recognised
- a problem/main question is formulated as a number of questions or hypotheses that the researcher intends to examine.

Definitions

- key terms are defined in the appropriate sections of the thesis (preferably in the introduction)
- definitions have a basis in the literature
- abbreviations are kept to a minimum and defined on first use.

Background or context of the study

- is clearly described
- is related to the relevant literature
- literature review is comprehensive, well organised and critically discussed (literature pertinent to various aspects of the study are not neglected).

Significance of the study

- the topic selected is shown to be researchable and its importance for the area chosen is indicated.

Research methods

- methodology used is explained in detail
- the types of data (evidence, framework, and argument) to be collected (or presented or developed) are appropriate and justified.

Description and analysis of data

- description and analysis are thorough and detailed

- description and analysis are clear and concise
- relationships or arguments are logical and perceptive.

Assumptions and limitations

- assumptions and limitations are recognised and stated.

Conclusions

- relationships and/or arguments are justifiable and related to main findings
- effort is made to draw together arguments and findings
- practical implications, if any, are identified
- implications for further research or problems the study has generated are indicated.

PRESENTATION

Organisation

- order of chapters (and sub-sections within them) is appropriate and logical.

Style of writing

- style is simple, clear and readable
- the text has been checked for spelling errors
- arguments are logical
- assertions and/or generalisations (if appropriate) are well founded and supported by evidence
- title of thesis and chapter titles are appropriate and succinctly stated
- sources of information or ideas are acknowledged with appropriate references.

Technicalities

- all sources referred to in the text are noted in the reference list
- the reference list includes all the required details and is in the appropriate format
- abstract is comprehensive but concise
- grammar, punctuation, spelling are correct
- figures and tables are clear and appropriate
- table of contents indicates pagination correctly.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

- Campbell, WG 1969, *Form and style in thesis writing*, 3rd edn, Houghton Mifflin, New York.
- Eunson, B 1994, *Writing skills*, Wiley and Sons, Brisbane.
- Evans, D 1995, *How to write a better thesis or report*, Melbourne University Press, Melbourne.
- Lawler, J 1995, *Guidelines for structuring a treatise based on qualitative research*, Faculty of Nursing, University of Sydney, Sydney.
- Roberts, K & Taylor, B 1997, *Nursing research processes: an Australian perspective*, Nelson ITP, Melbourne.
- Snooks, & Co. 2002, *Style manual*, 6th edn, Wiley and Sons, Australia.
- Thomas, SA 2000, *How to write health sciences papers, dissertations and theses*, Churchill Livingstone, London.