

# A DESCRIPTION OF WSU RESEARCH REQUIREMENT FOR SHS GRADUATE STUDENTS

Revised Policy Adopted by the SHS Faculty October 28, 2020

All students in the SHS graduate program must demonstrate knowledge of the principles and practices of research within the discipline. This is partially accomplished by the student completing a research project. There are two options for completing the research experience, non-thesis and thesis.

The non-thesis option is intended to be a less formal undertaking (see non-thesis guidelines). There are two non-thesis options: (1) Non-thesis option-intensive case review or (2) Non-thesis option-research experience. Students should meet with their faculty sponsor (advisor, committee chair) make a decision on the thesis or type of non-thesis option as soon as possible in their graduate study, and not later than the beginning of spring semester of their first year of graduate school.

*Non-thesis option-intensive case review* involves the preparation and presentation of two clinical cases from the student's clinical, practicum, or internship experiences. For more information, see "SHS Final Oral Examination for SHS Graduate Students Non-Thesis Track/Intensive Case Reviews" guidelines. Non-thesis option research involves the preparation of a written document or poster. Both require an oral exam (i.e., final oral defense) in which students address committee questions concerning the content of the research project and general content of the discipline (e.g., KASA).

*Non-thesis option-research experience* requires the approval of a faculty sponsor (typically also the committee chair) who will direct the student's research. The research experience option can take any format that is acceptable to the student's research committee, which may include, but is not limited to, empirical studies, case studies (including intensive case examinations [ICE] of previous patient records), surveys, or discussion/position papers. The product of the non-thesis option is frequently a manuscript-length document written in a format acceptable for publication in a refereed professional journal or a poster addressing a specific research question. The literature review and other sections are written in a shorter and more concise manner as compared to a traditional thesis. This option requires an oral defense or examination. During the final oral examination, the student presents the project and fields questions from the committee, as well questions assessing the student's knowledge of the nine content areas addressed in the KASA.

The *thesis option* is intended to be a more rigorous, original, and theoretically grounded undertaking. This option must adhere to the policies and guidelines of the Graduate School. A thesis follows the form and rigors of empirical research. It is expected that the literature review for a thesis is comprehensive and extensive and leads to a number of specific research questions or hypotheses that can be tested empirically. Students must discuss and obtain approval from their research committee chair for this option. Only those students with strong writing and critical thinking skills will be considered for the thesis option. The research committee chair may ask the student for a writing sample and may consult with other faculty members before approving this option.

Students approved for the thesis option or non-thesis option-research experience may develop a research question that relates to current faculty research projects or seek assistance from a faculty member in developing his or her own research question or topic. In either case, the student should approach a faculty member who has expertise in the chosen area of research to serve as that student's research committee chair or faculty sponsor. Early in the discussions, the faculty member will advise the student as to which option (i.e., thesis or non-thesis) is more appropriate for the research question or topic chosen. Other members of the research committee are chosen by the student in consultation with the faculty research chair. The student then typically writes a short prospectus describing the research project and formally presents this prospectus to the research committee. Once the student has been granted clearance from the committee and received approval from the Institutional Review Board (IRB) (if necessary), the research project may begin. The student completes the research project and writes the research document under the guidance of the research committee chair. When, in the opinion of the research committee chair the student's research project is in final draft form, the manuscript is distributed to the other committee members and a final oral defense is scheduled. Upon passing the final oral defense and completing the final edits of the research document the research requirement is satisfied.

Students engaging in the non-thesis option-intensive case presentation are assigned a committee chair and two additional faculty members early in graduate school. The student then prepares two case studies of patients seen in clinic, on practicum, or during internship. The student should select dissimilar patients to demonstrate a wide variety of skills (e.g., pediatric autism, adult swallowing, adolescent TBI). At minimum, one case should be related to the student's primary area of interest and the population the student hopes to work with after graduate school. When, in the opinion of the committee chair, the student's case presentations are in final draft form, a final oral defense is scheduled. Upon passing the final oral defense the research requirement is satisfied.