



## Purpose

This document provides students enrolled in Masters, DNP and PhD programs with information about writing competencies and expectations in the College of Nursing. It includes information that will assist students in locating resources and improving technical writing skills.

This document incorporates elements from a variety of sources including articles, WSU and College of Nursing resources, and publications from the American Association for Colleges of Nursing including the *Essentials of Master's Education for Advanced Practice Nursing*, and the *Essentials of Doctoral Education for Advanced Nursing Practice*.

## Graduate Student Writing Competencies

While students may have mastered the knowledge and skills required to write papers in an undergraduate program to demonstrate mastery of concepts and present opinions, writing at the graduate level demands the development of new and more comprehensive academic and professional research writing.

Graduate-level writing requires that students develop high-level skills and abilities in reading comprehension, critical thinking, and the synthesis of literature. Students must learn to appropriately represent and cite the work of others and to label their own papers and electronic files in a manner that protects their own intellectual property. Students must master the process of collaboration in writing, the use of technology, and the ability to communicate effectively to interprofessional and academic audiences.

## Content

The responsibility for developing clear and effective writing skills lies primarily with the student, although faculty will provide direction, assistance, and feedback as part of all courses. In working to develop academic and professional writing, students will need to consult a variety of resources and may need to participate in a writing course, invite peer feedback from classmates, or engage in a writing Performance Improvement Plan developed by the student and appropriate faculty. They will also need to practice writing and incorporate feedback from reviews of their writing.

In addition, the College of Nursing makes the following recommendations about the content and style of student writing:

Students should pursue academic writing in a manner that is consistent with the standards of academic integrity adopted by Washington State University (<https://communitystandards.wsu.edu/policies-and-reporting/academic-integrity-policy/>). College of Nursing course syllabi include these standards. All written materials must be scrutinized to assure that authors, sources and websites are properly cited in your papers.

Students should adhere to appropriate guidelines in all writing. Faculty are available for consultation about appropriate guidelines for use in preparing various assignments and writing projects.

- Doctoral dissertations, DNP projects, master's theses, and master's clinical projects should be prepared in accordance with WSU guidelines described in the appendices of the Graduate Student Handbook & Technical Standards MN, DNP and PhD students.

Students should anticipate that faculty will use an anti-plagiarism tool, such as Canvas's TurnItIn tool, to evaluate assignments for originality. TurnItIn compares a student's submission to sources of information to detect the possibility of plagiarism. Faculty may set up TurnItIn to allow students to view the result.



Students are to refrain from citing internet sites that are intended for a lay audience, such as Wikipedia, or for health care consumers, unless appropriate for specific purposes such as for a patient education assignment. The primary function of these sites is the marketing of products. Their references are less rigorously reviewed for scientific merit.

Definitions of terms should come from scientific sources rather than lay dictionaries.

Students should provide thoughtful responses that demonstrate reflective thinking, reasoning and judgment when responding to specific questions and assignments such as patient education, journaling, and peer evaluations.

## Format

All documents prepared by graduate students must conform to established standards for document preparation, style, grammar, punctuation, and spacing. In the College of Nursing graduate program, all written assignments must be prepared according to the most current guidelines published by the American Psychological Association. These are referred to by faculty as “the APA guidelines,” or “APA formatting” or “APA mechanics of style.” Students should purchase the most recent edition of the *APA Publication Manual*. Although some online sources provide credible APA formatting guidelines, one should not rely on the use of online resources alone.

## Technical Issues

Faculty who teach in the MN, DNP and PhD courses may have different expectations for the format of written papers and final project papers. These expectations will be explained in class and in the course syllabus.

All papers are to be saved and submitted as an MS Word document.

Papers are to be submitted electronically as email attachments or uploaded to Canvas as specified by individual faculty.

APA guidelines require the use of Times New Roman 12-point font, 1” margins all-around, double-spaced text, and page numbers in the upper right corner. The format for levels of headings and basic citation styles are found in the *APA Publication Manual*. Faculty may assign the use of different font styles.

Papers and electronic files are considered the intellectual property of the author. It is essential that all electronic files be properly labeled in the event you are ever asked to prove ownership of your original ideas or prove how your written papers progressed over time. Electronic files must be labeled with:

- Student’s first initial of first name\_last name\_course number\_assignment\_submission date (year-month-day)
- Example: RSmith\_N565\_white paper\_2020-02-23

Edits and revisions to the paper should be added to a new version of the paper. Use the “SAVE AS” file command and change the date to reflect the most recent version. Changing the date in the file name should be done each time the file is prepared for re-submission or re-review. This is a professional courtesy. This procedure allows you and the reviewer to maintain a record of every shared version of a paper from the first draft to final version. This is important for proving intellectual property, should you be asked. Students should implement a sustained practice of backing-up files. Your primary method of backing up files should be your free WSU Office365 which allows cloud storage of your documents in OneDrive. Other back-up options you could consider are Google Drive, Dropbox, Box, a back-up hard drive or thumb drive.



## Resources

The single most important resource available to graduate students as they develop new and improved writing skills is the most recent version of the *Publication Manual of the American Psychological Association*.

Students are encouraged to read Chapters 1, 2, and 3 of the manual before submitting their first paper in the program and again after receiving feedback from faculty about documents submitted for classes. These chapters include useful information about how to write clearly, concisely, and with proper grammar and punctuation. The remainder of the manual includes essential information about document formatting, in-text citations, and referencing the work of other scholars.

## Faculty Options

It is appropriate for faculty in the WSU College of Nursing to:

Request students obtain a peer review by a classmate that includes editing the paper in MS Word Track Changes, followed by a revision of the paper before submission to faculty for grading.

Return to the student *ungraded* OR *assign a lower grade* for any assignment that:

- is submitted after the due date and time
- does not meet the writing standards that are described in this document and/or in the course syllabus
- does not follow the directions for the assignment

Require that students seek writing assistance from a WSU Writing Center or recommend a writing improvement program or course. In this case, the student and faculty will complete a [Performance Improvement Plan](#). Faculty are encouraged to include in the PIP a requirement that the student obtain writing assistance in order to pass a course and/or pass a writing assignment. This form requires signatures from the faculty member and student. The faculty member and MN/DNP or PhD staff coordinator will track the completion of the activity by the specified end date. Copies of the completed form are kept in the student's permanent record.



Policy Title	Graduate Student Writing Expectations
Policy Inception Date	06/2022
Policy Applicable Party	College of Nursing Graduate Students
Date of Last Change	03/2023
Responsible Party, Level I (to create and review)	Center for Student Excellence
Responsible Party, Level II (to approve)	CON Faculty & DNP Program Director
Responsible Party, Level III (to implement)	Center for Student Excellence