

**Leading with Purpose.**



# GRADUATE SUPERVISION MANUAL

A guide for faculty and students

August, 2023

### **Faculty of Nursing – Vision**

To be the world-renowned academic and influential voice in professional nursing.

### **Faculty of Nursing – Mission**

To promote health, equity, and quality of life for the public good by creating vibrant and supportive environments, advancing health science, and developing nurse leaders.

### **Faculty of Nursing - Values**

The Faculty of Nursing embraces:

- Learner-centred teaching and learning
- Cutting-edge research
- Ethical behaviours, relationships, and partnerships
- Inclusive approaches to health, equity, global health, and well-being

\*Shaping Tomorrow's Leaders: Faculty of Nursing Strategic Plan 2018-2023, (p.3)

## Introduction

The purpose of this document is to highlight policies and procedures guiding graduate supervision and supervisory relationships in order to create a context for exceptional graduate learning experiences and to facilitate the student's timely progress through the Master of Nursing or PhD in Nursing program.

### **Message to students:**

*The relationship between students and supervisors/advisors is one of the most important relationships you will develop during your program of studies. It must be recognized that supervisory relationships are influenced by differential power positions, and diverse cultural and professional experiences that influence faculty and student perspectives and expectations. It is anticipated that scholarly inquiry typically thrives under circumstances of mutual respect, open questioning and dialogue, and academic integrity in the conduct of scholarly work. Faculty, staff, and students share responsibility for creating a safe and respectful environment for teaching and learning.*

*Your faculty supervisor/advisor will offer guidance on course selection and program planning, scholarships, research training, career development, and professional networking. Faculty members and graduate students share responsibility for developing a productive and rewarding relationship by negotiating clear expectations for how you will work together. The following document includes many helpful suggestions for both thesis and course-based students to consider your respective roles and responsibilities, and effective ways to communicate with your supervisor and supervisory committee.*

## Guiding Principles

There are several basic principles that underlie nursing graduate supervision:

- All graduate student supervision in the Faculty of Nursing is carried out within the context of the vision and mission of the University of Alberta, the Faculty of Graduate Studies and Research (FGSR) and the Faculty of Nursing itself;
- The University Calendar is the official source for information regarding program information; any discrepancy found between this handbook and the calendar will be resolved according to the University Calendar;
- The FGSR provides leadership and policy around all areas pertaining to graduate studies, including student supervision (some sections of this document are taken directly from the FGSR manual);
- Faculty and students share responsibility for maintaining open and ongoing communication.

## **Role of the Nursing Graduate Studies Office**

The Faculty of Nursing Graduate Office and the Faculty of Graduate Studies and Research (FGSR) work collaboratively with all faculty and graduate students to provide accurate and timely information to ensure progression through the graduate program. On admission, all graduate students will be provided an orientation to the Faculty and to graduate studies. The Associate Dean, Nursing Graduate Studies, provides support and consultation to students and faculty regarding program planning, course availability, course selection, student feedback, graduate supervisory conflict, and other issues on an as-needed basis.

Overall, the Graduate Office is responsible for the general administration of the graduate program in the Faculty of Nursing, including the following:

- processing applicant files and recommending admission to FGSR;
- maintaining student records;
- preparing, organizing and monitoring graduate documents (ie. awards, examinations);
- liaising with FGSR;
- providing information and consultation to current and prospective students as well as the Faculty and the public; and
- developing, organizing and providing graduate courses (including registration, timetabling, wait-listing, etc.).

## **Graduate Student Supervision in the Faculty of Nursing**

### **The Academic Advisor (MN students only)**

The Associate Dean, Nursing Graduate Studies, assigns all newly admitted MN students an academic advisor taking into account the student's selected area of study and faculty workload.

The Advisor:

- encourages the student to be aware of all program requirements and regulations;
- assists with the selection of courses which meet program requirements and the interests and needs of the student;
- assists with any concerns which may arise during the program of studies;
- provides preliminary guidance as required in the selection of a thesis/capstone project area of investigation;
- assists in the selection of a Thesis/Capstone Project supervisor, preferably by December of the first year of the program for full time students (or by end of second year Fall term for part-time students).

## **The Supervisor (MN & PhD students)**

In addition to the above, the supervisor:

- provides guidance to MN or PhD students as required in refining the topic and research methodology of a thesis or dissertation;
- assists the student with scholarship/grant applications;
- submits annual progress report with student
- completes and submits program completion form when student has met all program requirements

NOTE: PhD students require a confirmed supervisor before an offer of admission will be made.

Please see the [FGSR Graduate Manual](#) for a full listing and description of supervision as it pertains to a graduate program.

Development of graduate research and capstone projects occurs through a process of collaboration and negotiation between the supervisor and the student. As registered nurses, graduate students may intend to pursue questions that have emerged from their clinical practice, or may be keen to gain research training experience. Faculty supervisors have expertise with particular populations, health issues, health systems, and research methods and will seek to align student projects within their own programs of research and scholarship. Graduate students and faculty members must collaborate to develop mutually beneficial areas of inquiry, or to locate appropriate supervision with another faculty member as needed.

## **Changing advisor or supervisor**

A student may request a change of academic advisor/supervisor at any time by approaching the Associate Dean, Nursing Graduate Studies. This may be due to a conflict between the advisor/supervisor and the student or simply a better fit between a student and faculty member. It is expected that the student will first discuss this request with the assigned Advisor/supervisor. Academic advisors may also request that the Associate Dean reassign the student to another Advisor or Supervisor. It is expected that the academic advisor will first discuss this request with the advisee. In exceptional circumstances, students may seek direction from the Associate Dean prior to speaking to the assigned advisor/supervisor.

Where a student feels the need to change his/her supervisor, it is important to adhere to the following guidelines:

- ensure that there has been attempted communication with the supervisor;
- document conversations and emails with the supervisor (i.e. date, content of discussion, agreements made, etc.);

- meet with the Associate Dean, Nursing Graduate Studies to discuss issues and concerns;
- if not satisfied with the result of the conversation with the Associate Dean, consider meeting with the Ombuds ([Ombuds@ualberta.ca](mailto:Ombuds@ualberta.ca)) for advice/consultation, or request a meeting with the Associate Dean FGSR ([FGSR Advisor](#))

Where a student changes from an academic advisor to a supervisor when planning an Capstone Project:

- the academic advisor is to email the Graduate Services Office ([nursing.graduate@ualberta.ca](mailto:nursing.graduate@ualberta.ca)) with this information (and cc the student and supervisor.)

### **Problem solving and conflict resolution**

When conflicts arise in a student and supervisor relationship, the first step is to open a discussion to try and resolve the issue(s). Students may request a consultation with the Associate Dean Graduate Studies (Nursing) or with the student Ombuds. If necessary, formal steps to be taken for various disputes and resolutions are described in the [FGSR Graduate Manual](#)

## **Supervision**

### **For faculty members considering graduate supervision**

The following can be considered when receiving a request for supervision:

- How many MN and PhD students do I currently have? Are they full-time or part-time?
- Where are my current students in their program?
- What feedback am I currently getting from students (i.e. need additional time, not getting the support they need, etc.)
- Do I have availability to provide regular supervision?
- Will I be away for extended periods of planned absences in the foreseeable future (e.g. sabbatical leave)?
- Is the student's intended research project aligned with my program of research/scholarship? Can I support the research topic and methods that the student intends to develop for their project?
- Will the student reach their academic goals under my supervision?

### **Eligibility, workload, and other considerations for faculty members**

New faculty members will be assigned as faculty advisor for new course-based MN students. Newly appointed faculty members are enrolled in the FGSR development

program for graduate supervision and will receive thesis supervisory status as “adjunct faculty” with FGSR when this has been completed.

It is strongly recommended that all new faculty members initially should co-supervise at least one doctoral student with an experienced faculty member to support supervisory modeling and mentorship. Co-supervision may also be utilized by experienced faculty in order to provide the student with expertise in complementary areas (i.e. research methods or substantive content areas).

The [authority for appointment of supervisors](#) rests with the Dean of the Faculty of Nursing, and such decisions are final and non-appealable. If a faculty member plans to be away on an approved leave, “It is the responsibility of supervisors to make adequate provision for supervision of their graduate students during their leave.” If the period of absence exceeds 2 months, it is the supervisor’s responsibility to inform the student and the Faculty of Nursing of their plan for supervisory coverage in writing at the time the leave is approved.

Graduate supervisors who are retiring or leaving employment at the University of Alberta should consult with the Associate Dean Graduate Studies (Nursing) as soon as possible to plan for reassignment of graduate students to ensure continuity in supervision that is in the student’s best interests. The primary supervisor for graduate students must be an employee of the University of Alberta. A departing faculty member may not be the primary supervisor, but may continue as a supervisory committee member. If the faculty member was co-supervising a graduate student, the co-supervisory partner will assume supervision of the student. If the student is nearing completion of their program, the Associate Dean Graduate Studies (Nursing) may approve alternative supervisory arrangements outside the above guidelines.

All tenure-track faculty members are ambassadors for recruitment of highly qualified doctoral students. Faculty members often nurture and support the academic development of talented honors and master’s students that they are encouraging to pursue doctoral studies. Doctoral applicants may also be actively recruited through the faculty member’s formal and informal academic networks, as potential prospects may be engaged on research teams or encountered at academic conferences and meetings. Interested applicants may also contact prospective supervisors based on information available on the Faculty’s web site. Alignment of the research topic and methodological expertise of the faculty member and the prospective student’s intended thesis topic are a primary consideration in the review by the Faculty of Nursing Graduate Admissions Committee.

### **What is a reasonable supervision load?**

The following suggestions are guidelines only and will vary based on the faculty member’s workload, administrative role, research profile, and their experience as a faculty member. The ultimate goal of supervision is to provide the student with an

optimum graduate experience. Faculty member's have considerable discretion in admission and supervision of thesis students.

The number of graduate Nursing students supervised typically increases across the ranks (i.e. assistant professors will supervise fewer trainees than associate professors, and full professors are more likely to carry the highest number of trainees). Assistant professors will supervise/co-supervise 3 to 5 graduate students (mostly master's course-based and thesis students); Associate professors will normally supervise/co-supervise 5 to 8 graduate students (including master's course-based and master's and doctoral thesis students); Full professors may supervise up to 8 to 10 graduate students across all programs. Consideration should be given to the balance between MN and PhD students; year of program for each graduate student; periods of course work and dissertation development, anticipated oral exam preparation and other milestones, and anticipated convocation year.

### **For graduate students considering a supervisor**

Consider the following when choosing a supervisor:

- What topic am I interested in exploring for my capstone or thesis project?
- What are various faculty's interests, areas of expertise, and perceived supervisory capacity?
- How many students does the faculty member currently supervise?
- Do other students report getting a timely response from their supervisor?
- Do other students report having papers reviewed and returned in a timely manner?
- Do I want to publish a manuscript from my capstone/thesis project, and what are the faculty member's preferences, expectations, or recommendations regarding publication?
- Does the faculty member have research projects where I can gain experience as a research trainee?
- Does the faculty member have a funded program of research that could support applications for competitive external studentship awards?

## **Specific Responsibilities of Faculty members and Students**

### **Faculty Responsibilities:**

- Be clear about expectations and document meetings with students (i.e. content of conversation, goals or expectations agreed to, etc.).
- Complete student's progress report (thesis-based) or annual report (course-based) with the student
  - o Course-based annual reports: template ([Forms & Guidelines – Forms – MN Forms](#)) and a reminder is sent to the student by the Nursing Graduate Office in early May



- o Thesis-based progress reports: online form and a reminder is sent to the student by FGSR in early May
- Follow up on student issues promptly; if necessary seek advice from the Associate Dean Graduate Studies (Nursing) and / or inform the Graduate Office.
- Review level of commitment with students (i.e. be clear about how much support you are able / willing to provide).
- For MN students, in January following completion of NURS 589, if in the role of an academic advisor, advise the Graduate Office about “turning over” or transfers to the supervisor.
- Advise the Graduate Office of changes in name as well as changes to supervisor or supervisory committee.
- Establish membership of thesis supervisory committees in a timely manner (within the first year of the student’s program). Consider the rank and experience of prospective supervisory committee members, and the subject and methodological expertise needed for guidance of the thesis project. Also consider potential conflicts of interest between supervisory committee members, and between the student and supervisory committee members.
- Ensure that the supervisory committee meets regularly with the student, and at least once each year.
- Inform supervisory committee members and the Graduate Office of changes in supervisory committee membership.
- Negotiate timelines for giving feedback on submitted work (i.e. could be 1 month for major documents).
- Respond to students (i.e. phone or email messages) in a timely manner.
- Communicate clearly with students regarding supervisor absences that may impact work or communication schedule
- Make adequate provision of supervision for supervision of graduate students during extended absences. Please see the [FGSR Graduate Manual](#) for more information on taking leave and faculty supervision responsibilities

### **Student Responsibilities:**

- Utilize the ualberta.ca email account assigned to them at the beginning of their program for all correspondence with the Graduate Office and their advisor/supervisor.
- Adhere to the University of Alberta [Calendar](#) deadlines and all rules for program completion.
- Attend orientation (mandatory for new students).
- Contact academic advisor or graduate supervisor when beginning program (as assigned or at registration)
- Contact the Graduate Office if no communication has occurred with their advisor / supervisor within one week for general questions and / or within a month for assignment / paper feedback (this is not applicable if the faculty member has indicated through communication or a message that they are away)

- Collaborate with supervisor to develop the thesis/capstone project and establish a plan for completion of thesis or capstone.
- Advise the Graduate Office of changes in name. It is important that office records are current when information is being submitted for items such as clinical placements, awards and nursing registration forms.
- Clearly negotiate expectations for feedback on assignments/papers to ensure enough time for supervisor/committee members to read documents.
- Complete FGSR's [Ethics and Academic Citizenship Requirement](#) during the first semester of the program of studies.
  - **all** graduate students must complete online coursework (zero credit, no tuition, self-paced) to ensure that graduate students are aware of their rights, responsibilities and obligations. Includes automatic registration in INT D 710 Ethics and Academic Citizenship (both MN & PhD) and INT D 720 Advanced Ethics & Academic Citizenship (PhD only). PhD students must take both INT D 710 and INT D 720.
  - New students will automatically be registered in their respective courses at the start of each term. Students starting in Fall who wish to begin the courses early (August) will need to self register in Bear Tracks.
- Complete FGSR's [Professional Development Requirement](#) and submit [Professional Development Completion Form](#) to the Graduate Office.
- Attend learning opportunities provided by the Graduate Office and Faculty of Nursing, including regular TAGS sessions (Thursday Afternoons in Graduate Studies) on topics that support academic success and enhance graduate student experience.
- Complete annual progress report with supervisor every year (usually due in June)
  - Course-based annual reports: template ([Forms & Guidelines](#) – *Forms – MN Forms*) and a reminder is sent to the student by the Nursing Graduate Office in early May
  - Thesis-based progress reports: online form and a reminder is sent to students by FGSR in early May
- Ensure the completion of course work required to resolve an 'IN' (incomplete grade) in a timely manner. The Nursing Graduate Office will submit a Change of Grade request to FGSR once the instructor confirms that a grade has been assigned.
- Ensure that the registration requirement is maintained for the duration of the program.
- Engagement in online / hybrid learning means that you are physically and cognitively present. This means that students' cameras are turned on, and that they engage in discussion either verbally or via chat (or both). If a camera cannot be on for a period of time, let the instructor and colleagues know why. These expectations are intended to support students in developing relationships with their peers and cohort. Out of respect for colleagues, guest speakers, and instructors, it is the students' professional responsibility to be present and fully engaged in online / hybrid learning.

Students are to familiarize themselves with the rules and regulations pertaining to degree requirements, specifically regarding the thesis project.

It is also important that each student be knowledgeable about [Intellectual Property Guidelines for Graduate Students and Supervisors at the University of Alberta](#).

The students' fundamental responsibilities include ensuring that their registration is accurate and does not lapse, submitting appropriate forms to the department for signature and processing, and paying all fees required by the deadline dates set out in the Calendar.

Students should familiarize themselves with the [Graduate Manual](#) and refer to it regularly throughout their program to ensure all policies and procedures are followed.

## Supervisory Committees

### **Thesis-based master's students:**

The supervisory committee consists of 2 or 3 faculty members who are also ex-officio members of the master's final examining committee. Attention should be paid to the qualifications of the committee members as examiners to ensure the composition and size of the examination committee will be appropriate ([Examining Committee Membership Checklist](#)).

### **Doctoral students:**

A doctoral supervisory committee must have at least three members.

The department should ensure that the members of a supervisory committee are sufficiently competent and experienced to serve at the required level, and meet [eligibility criteria](#) for appointment as graduate supervisory committee members (holding appropriate academic appointment; active in the area of the student's research; demonstrate continuing original scholarly/creative activity; and hold a degree equivalent to or higher than that for which the student is a candidate).

In forming a supervisory committee, the department should consider the rank and experience of the prospective members, their publications and other demonstrations of competence in the subject area or field of specialization, and the prospective members' experience in graduate supervision.

Attention should be paid to the qualifications of the committee members as examiners to ensure the composition of the examination committee will be appropriate as they are ex-officio members of doctoral examining committees ([Examining Committee Membership Checklist](#)).

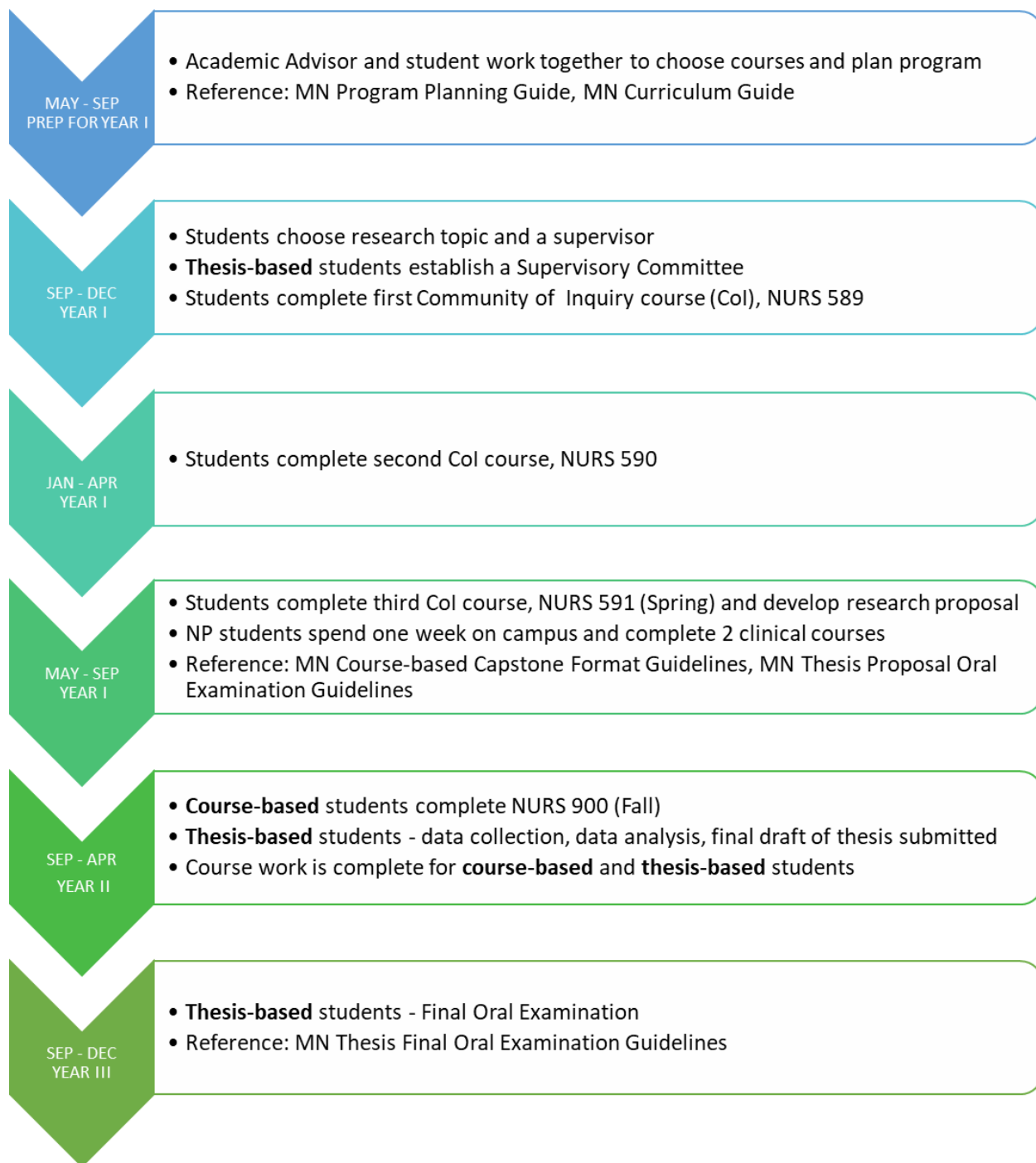
Compliance with the University of Alberta's Conflict Policy - Conflict of Interest and Commitment, and Institutional Conflict is mandatory.

The supervisor is responsible for ensuring committee meetings are held and making arrangements. The committee shall have a formal regular meeting with the student at least once a year. The department should maintain a record of meetings that have occurred and when students who are not on an approved leave fail to respond to requests to schedule a committee meeting.

For doctoral students, the department shall appoint the supervisory committee well in advance of the [candidacy examination](#). ([Final Doctoral Examination Timeline](#))

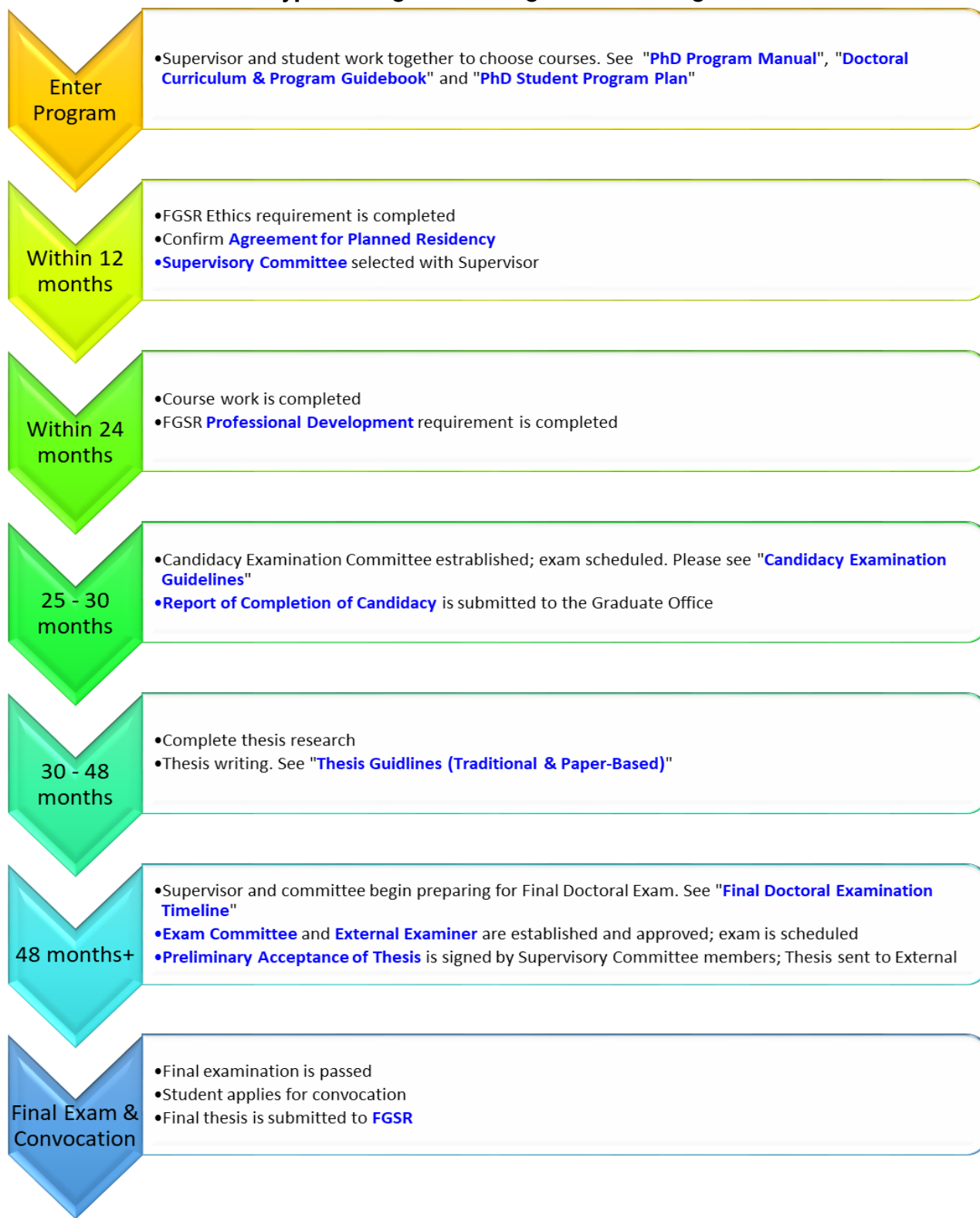
## MASTER OF NURSING

### Typical Progress Through the Master of Nursing Program (Thesis or Course Based)



Reference documents are available on the [Faculty of Nursing's Forms and Guidelines page](#)  
(Nursing -- Programs -- Graduate Student Resources and Services -- Forms and Guidelines)

## PhD Program Timeline Typical Progress Through the PhD Program



Full document with links available on the [Forms & Guidelines](#) page>Guidelines, Policies, & Information>PhD Program