

Academic Advisor Guide

2011 - 2012

**Graduate Programs
School of Nursing**

**Faculty of Health Sciences
University of Ottawa**

Revised August 2011

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1. ASSIGNING ACADEMIC ADVISORS

The assignment of academic advisors is done according to the number of students that professors already have under their responsibility and the student's language preference. Students are assigned academic advisors based on the information the School has on hand. The number of students assigned to each professor usually varies between five and ten. The School ensures that the student load is distributed fairly among professors.

Once the process of assigning academic advisors is complete, each professor is sent a list of the names of the students they have been assigned. Students then receive a letter notifying them of their academic advisor's name and contact information. The letter also includes specific instructions regarding students' responsibilities in scheduling and preparing for their first meeting with their academic advisor.

2. STUDENT RESPONSIBILITIES

Student success and a smooth-running program of study greatly depend on students' **responsibility** toward their graduate studies. Academic advisors must stress the importance of being responsible to their students.

Students must first **prepare for their initial meeting and make an appointment** with their academic advisor before beginning the program.

Students must **submit to the academic advisor a copy of their program plan and an up-to-date CV**. The students are responsible for contacting their academic advisor if they need information or guidance.

3. GENERAL INFORMATION

The role of the academic advisor is to **guide students academically**. To fulfill this role, the academic advisor must possess a basic knowledge of the various aspects of graduate programs at the School of Nursing such as program descriptions, course information, student program plans as well as an overall understanding of the *Student Guide*.

3.1 Program descriptions

Graduate programs are described on the School of Nursing Graduate Programs website under "Graduate Studies in Nursing" on the following link: <http://www.health.uottawa.ca/sn/pro/grad.htm>. To successfully fulfill their role and meet their responsibilities, academic advisors must have knowledge of **the goal, objectives, degree requirements and areas of concentration** of the master's degree program as well as **general information** about the program. This information is also available on the Faculty of Health Sciences "Student Corner" website <http://www.health.uottawa.ca/asg/index.htm>. General information and degree requirements are not included in the Student Guide.

Academic Advisors must also be aware that students have the option to register in one of the School's collaborative programs, that is, the Specialization in Women's Studies and the Diploma in Health Services and Policy Research. Information on collaborative programs can be found at <http://www.health.uottawa.ca/asg/pos.htm>. However, for more detailed information on these programs, follow the hyperlinks to the FGPS Web site.

3.2 Student Guide

The "*Student Guide*" provides summary descriptions of programs at the School of Nursing and a host of other useful information for both students and faculty.

We strongly recommend that each student own a paper copy of the *Student Guide* which is available as a "pdf" document at <http://www.health.uottawa.ca/sn/stu/documents/guideanglo2010.pdf>. We also ask academic advisors to remind students to access and print the guide. Advisors are advised to read the *Student Guide* and keep a printed version on hand when meeting with their students.

3.3 Courses

3.3.1 Description

The list of core and elective courses can be found on the following web site: <http://www.health.uottawa.ca/sn/stu/mysg.htm>.

3.3.2 Course Equivalence

The Assistant Director of Graduate Programs studies and approves equivalences for courses that were taken before admission to the program. Course equivalence is not part of the academic advisor's responsibilities. If a student is uncertain of the status of a course, please refer the student to the Academic Administrative Officer. The Academic Administrative Officer will be able to inform the student whether the course is recognized or not.

3.3.3 Core Courses

The list of core courses can be found on the website at <http://www.health.uottawa.ca/asg/dreq.htm> "Degree Requirements". The core course descriptions can be found at <http://www.health.uottawa.ca/sn/stu/mysg.htm>. Courses preceded by an asterisk indicate clinical courses. Students must comply with the Faculty of Health Sciences' immunization policy to register for a clinical course. The policy can be found at the following site: <http://www.uottawa.ca/services/ehss/CPRM.html>. Students are responsible for reading the policy and taking the necessary action to meet the registration requirements for clinical courses. The academic advisor can remind students to consult the policy. Please note that NSG 5210 and NSG 5220 include a clinical placement of 117 hours in a healthcare setting. Students must therefore plan the necessary time to complete the placement.

3.3.4. Elective Courses

Course descriptions for electives can be found at <http://www.health.uottawa.ca/sn/stu/cd.htm>. Only elective courses offered by the School of Nursing, that is those with an "NSG" course code are included in the course descriptions. We recommend that students choose elective courses that are offered by the School of Nursing. We therefore ask advisors to encourage students to choose courses with an "NSG" course code as electives. The following address http://www.health.uottawa.ca/pdf/NSG_6999E.pdf - "Policy and Procedures, Registration Requirements" must be consulted before registering for NSG 6999 – Directed Study course. Furthermore, given that this course has a direct consequence on a professor's course load, academic advisors must first consult the Director of the School before a student may register for a directed study course.

Students may also take one or more courses outside the School of Nursing or the University of Ottawa if no elective courses offered at the School or the University meet their academic needs. Students who wish to

take courses outside the program must gather the necessary information on the course or courses in question and share the information with their academic administrative officer and the academic advisor, who will decide, with the student, on the appropriateness of the course choice. The student is also responsible for ensuring that the course is accessible and that it can be integrated into the program plan.

3.3.5 Timetable

Core courses are offered every year, but not necessarily every semester. It is therefore important that students follow the recommended standard program plan as they may not otherwise be able to complete the degree requirements within the FGPS time limits. The specific schedule for core courses are indicated in the recommended program plan.

Elective courses are not necessarily offered every year unless enough students are registered (usually, a minimum of six students). The list of elective courses that are offered from session to session is available about six months before the semester begins.

3.3.6 Registration

As an academic advisor, you have fulfilled your responsibilities once you have met the student for the first time and guided the student academically. Responsibility for course registration lies with the student. All information regarding registration (modifications to or cancellations of) can be found at the following web address: <http://www.grad.uottawa.ca/Default.aspx?tabid=1613>. The courses indicated on the program plan must correspond to the courses for which the student will register. If any difficulties arise at the time of registration, the Academic Administrative Officer is available to help and inform the students.

The School's Assistant Director, Graduate Programs, is also available to help you should you have any questions after reading the information presented in the Web documents above.

3.4 Student Program Plan

As mentioned above, the role of the academic advisor is to **guide the student academically**. The inherent responsibilities of this role include **ensuring that the student is registered in the appropriate concentration** (primary or tertiary health care), **choose an option** (thesis or clinical), **choose courses** and, if needed, **choose a thesis supervisor**.

3.4.1 Academic Advisor – Thesis Supervisor

Although students are given a standard program plan for each of the master's program options, the majority of students have difficulty choosing their courses and need to be guided academically. Students who are registered in the thesis option automatically have access to an "academic advisor" through their thesis supervisor. Implementing a support system by assigning an academic advisor to students who are registered in the clinical option was therefore found to be very useful in providing supervision and guidance.

3.4.2 Goals and Frequency of Meetings

The goal of the first meeting between students and academic advisors is twofold: (1) to meet each other and develop a climate in which students feel supported and at ease in communicating and (2) to submit or complete the program plan. Subsequent meetings essentially ensure that students progress in their academic training. Consultation meetings may be initiated by the student or by the academic advisor

preferably every year. Students who have specific difficulties should be referred to the appropriate resources. (See Section 4.)

3.4.3 Concentration – Primary or Tertiary Health Care

When applying for admission to one of our master's programs, students must choose a concentration while taking into account their area of specialization or clinical experience. Academic advisors must remind students that the goal of our master's program is to prepare registered nurses for an advanced practice role. Nurses must therefore already have acquired basic experience in their chosen area of concentration before beginning master's studies and working in an advanced practice role. Therefore, students who work in tertiary health care must register in the "Tertiary Health Care" concentration and should not register in the "Primary Health Care" concentration simply because they want to change career paths. The academic advisors must consult each student's *Curriculum Vitae*, discuss their specializations with them and thus ensure that they are registered in the appropriate concentration.

3.4.4 Full Time – Part Time

Students may choose to pursue their master's studies on a full-time or part-time basis. Whether to study full time or part time is a personal choice. Full-time students must complete the master's program in 24 months; part-time students must complete the program over a maximum period of four years. Some students may be undecided as to whether to study on a full-time or part-time basis. In such cases, the academic advisor may wish to discuss the advantages and disadvantages of full or part-time study. Reminding students that scholarship programs are offered for full-time study may help them in their decision-making process. For more information on scholarship programs, consult the FGPS Web site at <http://www.etudesup.uottawa.ca/Default.aspx?tabid=1459>.

3.4.5. Option – Thesis or Clinical (Course Based)

Choosing one option over another is a very personal matter and depends on various factors such as the student's motivation, personal situation, research interests and aptitudes. Many students are confused about which option to choose and need to discuss it with their academic advisor. The availability of a thesis supervisor is clearly an important factor to consider when making this decision.

3.4.6 Completing an Individual Program Plan

As stated previously, we strongly recommend that all master's students follow the standard program plan to the extent possible. Doing so will provide numerous advantages to students and will greatly simplify your job as an academic advisor as well as that of our Academic Administrative Officer. Students who do not follow the standard program plan may face negative consequences such as graduating at a later date or having to withdraw from the program. Furthermore, it is often impossible to follow the standard program to the letter such as when the student has already completed certain courses before being admitted into the program or when the student is absent due to personal reasons such as illness.

The program plan template is available at the following Internet address: http://www.health.uottawa.ca/pdf/template_test.pdf. The program plan may be completed on line and then printed and signed. We ask that academic advisors and students take advantage of this feature since the program plan will then be easier to read.

3.4.7 Distance Students

Academic advisors also support distance students. Some distance students travel to Ottawa to meet their academic advisor before beginning their program. Students who cannot travel to Ottawa must send the documents required for the first meeting electronically, and schedule a teleconference via email. Subsequent "meetings" between the academic advisor and the distance student can then be held via email or telephone. Distance students who wish to write a thesis must travel to the campus to meet their academic advisor.

3.4.8 Changing Academic Advisors or Thesis Supervisors

If the thesis supervisor and the academic advisor who was initially assigned at the time of admission are not the same or if the student changes academic advisor for one reason or another, the Academic Secretariat must be formally notified. To do this, the "Designation Change of Academic Advisor or Thesis Supervisor" form must be completed. The form is available at <http://www.health.uottawa.ca/sn/stu/index.htm> and click on "Guidelines and Forms". The form must be submitted to the Academic Administrative Officer (Room RGN 2016).

4. OTHER RESOURCES

4.1. Pedagogical and Administrative Resources

4.1.1. The School of Nursing Graduate Programs Website

The School of Nursing Graduate Programs Website provides students with a vital source of information on our programs. Academic advisors and thesis supervisors should have a very thorough knowledge of the site and its content. More specifically, "The Thesis – 13 Steps to Follow," which is found by clicking on the following link, <http://www.health.uottawa.ca/sn/stu/theres.htm>. It is an important tool to successfully complete a thesis and ensure that the student complies with the FPGS regulations.

Relevant information for FGPS regulations are available on the Faculty of Health Sciences website: <http://www.health.uottawa.ca/asg/index.htm>.

4.1.2 Minutes of Meeting of the Graduate Programs Committee and School Council

All major amendments to graduate programs are submitted to School Council for approval. The minutes of meetings of the School Council and the Graduate Program Committee are available on the virtual campus via WebCT; academic advisors can therefore be apprised of any changes to our programs.

4.1.3. General Regulations of the FGPS

The general regulations of the Faculty of Graduate and Postdoctoral Studies can be found at the following address: <http://www.etudesup.uottawa.ca/Default.aspx?tabid=1807>. The table of contents includes the following : A) Admission; B) Program Requirements; C) Registration ; D) Supervision of Students; E) Examinations and Grading; F) Time Limits; G) Thesis Regulations; H) Graduation; I) Fees; J) Preparation for University Teaching; K) Scholarships and Financial Support; L) Guidebooks and; M) University Facilities.

4.2 Student Services

4.2.1. Student Academic Success Service (SASS)

This website provides numerous services that graduate students will find useful, including help with writing assignments at the graduate level. For more information, please go to <http://www.sass.uottawa.ca/welcome.php>.

APPENDIX 1

Interview guide for the Academic Advisor

Student name: _____

Contacts: Telephone: Home : _____ Work : _____

E-mail : _____

Status :

Concentration :

Option :

Part-time

Primary care

Thesis

Full-time

Tertiary care

Clinical

PHCNP

Scholarship:

No

Yes →

Si yes, specify _____

Topic of interest: _____

Employment in Nursing:

Agency: _____

Working hours/Week: _____

Date of the first meeting: _____

In person
by phone

Discussion topics:

**Subsequent meetings
(date and discussion topics)**

Date

1. _____

Date

2. _____

Date

3. _____

Date

4. _____

