Emphasized Writing Skills and Typical Assignments

Most nursing papers involve literature reviews. Students must gather and synthesize information, analyze it, and determine its practice implications. Other necessary writing skills include introducing their papers and summarizing.

Some Key Questions to Guide Writing

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Preferred Patterns of Organization and Use of Headings

Most nursing papers follow the introduction, body, conclusion format. The papers should use APA (6th edition) style headings and subheadings, following the topics outlined in the thesis statement. Each section should contain transitions between paragraphs and a summary paragraph. Paragraphs should also be properly organized, containing topic and summary sentences.

Preferred Style or Tone

Nursing students should write formal papers. Most assignments, especially scientific papers, should be written in third-person. Reflective papers and those written from the unitary paradigm may be written in first-person, but should still be formal. Some APA standards include:

- APA writers should use the active voice and only sparingly use first-person, if necessary, but should be careful that first-person statements do not interfere with their objectivity.
- Previous research should be discussed in past or present perfect tense (have/has + verb form, e.g., “Smith’s study has changed perceptions”).
- Results should be discussed in present tense (e.g. “the results of the experiment indicate that”).
Important Notes about Terminology

Terminology varies depending on the theoretical and methodological frameworks students utilize. Qualitative researchers tend to describe results as “supporting” a theory or providing more understanding of a topic. In quantitative research, more statistical terms are used, such as “support/reject,” “fail to support,” “refute,” “reject,” “fail to reject,” and “null hypothesis.” Students should not use the terms “prove” or “disprove.” APA currently refers to humans as “participants” in studies and to animals as “subjects.”

Favored Research Methodologies

Empirical investigations using both qualitative and quantitative methodologies are employed in the nursing field.

Authoritative Sources/Evidence

Scholarly articles from peer reviewed journals are the most authoritative sources in the nursing program.

Documentation Style

APA (American Psychological Association) 6th edition

Master’s Level Writing

Graduate nursing students’ writing should demonstrate depth of analysis and ability to synthesize.

Samples of nursing assignments are available for review in the Writing Center.