

Honors Health Policy and Leadership Thesis

With the University and School of Nursing commitment to health policy and leadership, this thesis option is for undergraduate honors students interested in pursuing health policy and leadership initiatives toward improving the health of populations and healthcare delivery systems as a pathway to meet the academic, engagement and research requisites of a UConn Honors Scholar degree. The proposal outlines eligibility, processes, curricula and how to effectively guide the student through a rigorous, evidence-based process based in health policy and leadership theory concepts, methodologies, and applications to influence healthcare systems and public policy on quality health care for all populations.

As a member of the University of Connecticut Honors Program, students will actively participate in academics and co-curricular activities. Students will comply with the Honors Program requirements according to their year of entry into the University of Connecticut. <https://honors.uconn.edu/requirements/>

In order to prepare Honors nursing students for a rigorous Health Policy and Leadership Project and Thesis, while meeting the Honors Program Requirements, the curriculum would include five sequential parts (Part I – Part V). Ideally, Honors nursing students would select the Health Policy and Leadership option as early as possible in their nursing curriculum, preferably no later than second semester of the sophomore year. Students must opt in by the start of the fall semester of their junior year. The timeline is established to provide nursing honors students with ample time to explore research goals and interests and to participate in meaningful research activities, while gaining valuable experience alongside a mentor or mentors.

Part I: Nursing Honors Health Policy and Leadership Proposal Submission from Student (Spring, Sophomore year)

Honors research is an intellectual process, starting with an inquiry or question. Prospective Honors students are encouraged to peruse faculty webpages to learn about health policy and leadership issues being addressed in the School of Nursing. Another resource for research ideas is the American Hospital Association <https://www.aha.org/advocacy/nurse-leaders> website. Students may also identify an issue they are eager to address through their experience in clinical or didactic course work. Once a student has a topic in mind, they can then reach out to a potential Honors Thesis Advisor to address the topic of interest.

To be considered for the Health Policy and Leadership Honors Thesis, nursing students would then prepare a one-page executive summary about the issue they intend to study. This should also include a description of prior leadership experience, which is a prerequisite for this thesis option. The student and Honors Thesis Advisor would develop an Honors Preliminary Plan of Study that will

guide the student honors project. The nursing Honors Health Policy and Leadership Honors project may be considered a foundation toward graduate education. Ideally, the submission of the one-page executive summary of issue to study occurs in the second semester of sophomore year.

Prerequisite: NURS 1131 **Introduction to the Discipline of Nursing**

Part II: Nursing Health Policy and/or Leadership Problem Identification (Fall, Junior year)

A: Enroll in *NURS 5240: Nursing Leadership Foundations (3 credits) (Junior year fall semester)* and *NURS 5870: Health Policy and Advocacy for the Scholarship of Application (3 credits) (Junior year spring semester)*. These courses are online and may be taken during the summer with credit allotted the following semester. Graduate course work is inherently considered Honors work for the students' plans of study. The course work will meet a 6-credit UConn related content Honors requirement and support the knowledge development for the Nursing Health Policy and Leadership Honors Thesis.

B. Enroll in NURS 4299 – Begin Proposal, version 1 (*1-3 credits*):

1. The nursing Honors student will complete a written synthesized literature review of the identified health policy or leadership issue related to an identified target population (e.g., patients, families, communities, nurses, healthcare professionals, etc.). The literature review will provide the evidence on an unmet need for that population of users and begin to propose the need solution in the context of an identified quality metric (e.g., safety, efficiency, effectiveness, equitable, timely, and/or patient-centered). Citations and references will be in APA 7th Edition format in the final product.
2. During the policy/leadership problem identification, the nursing Honors student will need to:
 - a. define the issue, its significance and impact, who does it affect, and why
 - b. identify stakeholders
 - c. discuss system barriers to change
 - d. discuss system strengths to foster change
 - e. identify project evaluation criteria for self, stakeholders, and Honors mentor feasibility

C. Scheduled mentoring sessions with Honors Thesis Advisor to support the literature review development.

D. The nursing Honors student with approval of Honors Thesis Advisor will identify all project-related elective courses to be taken during Junior and Senior year.

E. Introduction to the University of Connecticut Library Services and how to use databases to find empirical data.

Part III: Nursing Health Policy and/or Leadership Project Development (Spring, Junior, year)

- A.** For the Honors thesis, nursing honors students will describe a selected health policy or leadership theory from NURS 5870 *Health Policy and Advocacy for the Scholarship of Application* or NURS 5240 *Nursing Leadership Foundations* to explain the solution and use the methodology selected to develop the proposed health policy or leadership project (NURS 5870 and NURS 5240 = 6 credits). By the end of these courses, students will have developed a second version of the Project Proposal.
- B.** The nursing honors student as an engagement in major field activity will prepare a 10-minute presentation at the completion of NURS 5240 and NURS 5870 introducing their healthcare policy or leadership project (based on the premise of the Honors submitted proposal) to their Honors Thesis Advisor.
- C.** Scheduled Mentoring sessions with Honors Thesis Advisor to support Nursing Health Policy and/or Leadership Project Development.

Part IV: Nursing Health Policy/Leadership Project Implementation (Fall, Senior year)

- A.** Implement project.
- B.** Attendance at leadership association or health policy event as an engagement in major field activity. Identify the leadership style based on the knowledge gained in both the health policy and leadership courses. This is the integration of both health policy and leadership concepts and theories.
- B.** Scheduled mentoring sessions with Honors Thesis Advisor to support Nursing Health Policy and/or Leadership Project Implementation
- C.** Introduction to appropriate UConn and/or health policy leaders and UConn interprofessional schools (e.g., School of Business, School of Social Work) as needed depending on the nursing health policy/leadership issue of interest.

Part V: Nursing Health Policy/Leadership Evaluation (Spring, Senior year)

- A.** The nursing honors student will enroll in NURS 4597W.
- B.** The nursing honors student will complete a written summative evaluation including impact of project on population of interest as a component for their nursing honors thesis. Citations and references will be in APA 7th Edition format in the final product.
- C.** Scheduled mentoring sessions with Honors Thesis Advisor to support nursing health policy/leadership evaluation.
- D.** Participate in pre-determined engagement in major field activity.