

MPH Capstone Manual



2017-2018

Effective August 15, 2017

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Introduction

This document is a guide to the process and conceptualization of the integrated learning experience, or capstone, within the MPH program, which is linked with and subordinate to applicable college and university-wide policies and procedures governing these activities.

This manual will aid students to understand the differences between the three capstone options, so that you can choose knowledgeably. The document also provides evaluation and presentation criteria for the capstone oral and written products.

The overarching objectives of the capstone experience regardless of format are for each student to:

- Demonstrate substantive knowledge addressing, at a minimum, the core competencies/disciplines of public health and utilizing an appropriate paradigm/conceptual framework;
- Interpret data in the support of a decision or conclusion;
- Demonstrate oral and written communication and presentation skills;
- Justify the methods and conclusions when critiqued by an appropriate audience;
- Demonstrate *practical* considerations of conducting public health projects or activities.

The capstone experience is designed to:

- Accommodate the diverse interests, backgrounds, and capabilities of students and faculty;
- Provide flexible guidelines to enable creativity;
- Use existing course content and materials where possible; and
- Ensure that there are sufficient resources available and in place to complete the activity.

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Overview

The completion of the capstone experience demonstrates the student's mastery of core competencies through the successful application of core knowledge and principles, and critical thinking and analytic reasoning skills. MPH students have 3 options for completing their capstone experience:

- ◆ The capstone class (HLTH 6219; 3 credits),
- ◆ A community-based project (HLTH 6901; 3 credits), or
- ◆ An independent thesis (HLTH 6900; 6 credits).

Regardless of the capstone option, the capstone experience culminates in:

1. A written integrated product,
2. A public oral presentation,
3. Question and answer session with Capstone instructors or Committee members.

Choosing your capstone option

Students must select between completing a 3 credit capstone class, a 3 credit project (which both require students to complete an additional 3 credit elective) or a 6 credit thesis. The class, project and thesis are equivalent capstone experiences, which demonstrate mastery and application of core competencies in a professionally relevant format. The student is evaluated based on their performance in these activities as well as their mastery of the MPH core, interdisciplinary and concentration specific competencies. This overall assessment is important to ensure that MPH graduates are competent public health professionals when they enter the workforce.

The Capstone Course (HLTH 6219; 3 credits) is a face-to-face course designed to strengthen students' public health practice and professional development skills. Students complete an oral poster presentation and develop a community-based grant proposal on a topic of their choice. In both cases, 3 reviewer/instructors provide critical, developmental feedback. As part of their professional development, students create a professional social media profile, engage in networking, conduct a mock interview, and prepare and execute their job search. This course is designed for students who will be public health practitioners and who need a timely completion of their degree. This course follows a standard letter grade system and is offered in spring semester.

The Capstone Project (HLTH 6901; 3 credits) is more appropriate for those students intending to work in a practice setting where they already have an established relationship with a community partner/agency and an identified project. The Capstone Project will aid students to gain confidence in their ability to critically apply existing knowledge and methods to the solution of a problem. The Capstone Project option requires the student to assemble a 3 person committee including a faculty member as Chair, a community partner from the relevant

agency, and another faculty member with related content or methods background. The project option is a student-guided activity with the close supervision of the Chair. Students are largely responsible for initiating actions, moving the process forward, and ensuring timelines are met and deliverables are provided. Committee members provide mentoring and critical guidance, while also serving to critique and evaluate student performance. Capstone Projects are rarely completed in a single semester and are graded on a pass/fail basis.

The Thesis option (HLTH 6900; 6 credits) requires the generation of new knowledge through the comprehensive application of the research process. The thesis option is a better choice for students who intend to pursue doctoral study, who see themselves as working in an academic setting, or who desire to gain confidence in their ability to plan, conduct, and write-up research. The Capstone Thesis option requires the student to assemble a 3 person committee including a faculty member as Chair, and two other faculty members with related content or methods background. The Thesis option is a student-guided activity with the close supervision of the Chair. Students are largely responsible for initiating actions, moving the process forward, and ensuring timelines are met and deliverables are provided. Committee members provide mentoring and critical guidance, while also serving to critique and evaluate student performance. The Thesis option spans at least two semesters and is graded on a pass/fail basis.

The Department strongly recommends that students select the Capstone Course as their integrated learning experience. This facilitates timely completion of degree and minimizes financial costs to students.

Students who select the Capstone Course can ignore the rest of this manual, which solely pertains to the Project and Thesis Options. Students should contact the MPH Program Director for a permit to enroll in HLTH 6219. Students enrolled in the Capstone Course must meet all graded requirements as outlined in the HLTH 6219 syllabus.

Other considerations for projects versus thesis.

While there are no clear cut distinctions as to where a project ends and a thesis begins along this continuum, some considerations and generalizations about the differences include:

- While the thesis and project are conceptually equivalent, they involve differential application and differential intensity/depth of skills. A thesis inherently spans the entire range of the research process, while a project may emphasize only a limited segment of the research process.
- The thesis is in the form of a peer-reviewed, publishable manuscript while a project may take other professionally relevant forms (such as a grant proposal or consultant report). Technical and procedural distinctions include that **a thesis is more tightly regulated by the Graduate School in terms of format, style, procedures and deadlines.**
- A thesis is inherently hypothesis-based (or research question-based) while a project usually involves the evidence-based application of theory and empirical evidence to a practical situation/problem.
- Given the inherent complexity of activities and time demands, 6 credit hours of research are required for a thesis (HLTH 6900). For a project, 3 credit hours of project work (HLTH 6901) are required and students must take an additional 3 credit hour elective course to fulfill the required 45 credit hours.

The determination as to capstone option best conforms to a student's needs and professional aspirations is best addressed in consultation with the student's academic advisor or the MPH Program Director.

Choosing a Project/Thesis Topic Area

Students should begin thinking about their project/thesis topic area in the second semester of their first year. An initial topic area might be related to a particular health outcome (e.g. unplanned pregnancy), a social determinant (e.g. socioeconomic status), a preventive behavior (i.e. sedentary lifestyle or condom usage), a population (e.g. older adults), or a broader emphasis on a specific public health discipline. We strongly encourage you to consider topic areas that are aligned with PHS faculty research interests. Many faculty members will have data related to their areas of interest that can be analyzed; this will facilitate timely completion of the project/thesis. Some students develop ideas for their project/thesis based on their internship experience; an agency may have data or projects that lend themselves to a capstone project or thesis.

The student is advised to select a thesis/project that best matches his/her interests and most emphasizes the development/demonstration of skills consistent with the student's professional aspirations. Consult Appendix 1 for descriptions, outlines, and evaluation rubrics for the thesis, for the project frameworks, and for the assessment of presentation skills. Students are also encouraged to explore options for finding synergies/efficiencies between their coursework, their internship, and their project/thesis experience.

Advising and Committee

Students are advised to plan ahead for each step. The project/thesis requires a 3 person committee. The **Project/thesis Committee** (whether thesis or project) consists of the **Chair**, a regular member of the graduate faculty whose primary appointment is in the Department of Public Health Sciences, and at least two other **Committee Members**, drawn from the UNC Charlotte graduate faculty. Preferably all members' expertise and/or interests are related to the content and/or methodological area of the thesis/project.

Notes:

- 1) *Students are encouraged early on in the MPH Program to begin exploring and discussing topic options and a possible Chair with their academic advisor. (The thesis chair need not be the academic advisor.)*
- 2) *Under some circumstances, a Chair who is a regular member of the graduate faculty but does not hold a primary appointment may be permitted under two conditions. First, the proposed Chair has adequate familiarity with the program requirements. Second, one other member of the committee is a regular member of the graduate faculty and holds a primary appointment in the Department of Public Health Sciences and agrees to act as a surrogate chair. Prior approval from the MPH Director is required.*
- 3) *Students engaged in a practice setting may wish to include a preceptor from the practice site as a committee member. It may be possible to arrange for special appointments to the graduate faculty for preceptors holding at least a master's degree in a field relevant to public health (doctorate preferred). Such discussions should occur with the MPH Director well in advance of forming the committee.*

Chair. The **Chair** agrees to be the student's principal advisor and mentor for the project/thesis experience. (The MPH Director remains as the overall academic advisor.) The Chair will (1) assist the student in identifying other Committee Members; (2) ensure the student complies with department, college, and university policies and procedures related to the thesis/project; (3) work with the student to reconcile and address critical feedback from the committee members; and (4) facilitate the defense and revision processes.

Committee. The two **Committee Members** will support the student and the Chair throughout the process, providing critical insight and constructive feedback, and ensuring that substantive concerns are brought to both the student's and the Chair's immediate attention. These **Committee Members** must be selected with the prior approval of the project/thesis Chair.

The same **Project/thesis Committee** will be used for both the proposal and final defense. The Committee should optimally be formed at least one month in advance of the proposal defense. While the Chair will provide direct mentoring, the student must consult the Committee at least once during the drafting of the proposal and once during the writing of the thesis (with requests for additional consultations at the discretion of the student and committee members) prior to the defense. As noted above, the committee must be provided the written proposal/thesis/project report at least 7 days in advance of the scheduled defense. [Members of the Committee may choose – *at their discretion* – to waive or shorten this requirement.]

Project/Thesis Requirements

Student Responsibilities. The **Student** has primary responsibility for complying with the process and product guidelines set forth in this manual and with the policies and standards of the Graduate School and UNC Charlotte. These responsibilities include:

- Recruiting a Project or Thesis Chair and notifying the MPH Director of the Chair and the planned project/thesis topic
- Selecting, in consultation with the Chair, two Committee Members
- Writing and presenting a preliminary proposal (proposal defense)
- Writing and presenting the final text (final defense)
- Coordinating a time for the proposal and final defenses that is acceptable to all members
 - Ensuring a room is reserved (typically the PHS Conference room, CHHS 426 is used); see our program administrative support associate to reserve a room
 - Arranging for any needed audio-visual support
 - Ensuring that the committee members are notified of the location of the defense
 - Ensuring that the MPH Director is informed of the time, location, and outcome of the defense *at least one week in advance*.
- Ensuring that the committee has been provided a copy of the proposal/thesis/project report, approved by the **Chair**, at least 7 days in advance of the defense
- Ensuring that the **Chair** has reported the results of the defense to the MPH Director
- **For thesis only, ensuring all requisite forms and documents are submitted to the Graduate School within the deadlines stipulated for graduation.**

Proof of IRB Training. Furthermore, ALL students must provide proof to the Chair of their successful completion of an approved IRB training course or equivalent (e.g., UNCC's online course operated by the CITI consortium found at <https://www.citiprogram.org/>) prior to scheduling the proposal defense. [In most cases, students will have completed this requirement as part of HLTH 6204 Public Health Research Methods.] This condition applies whether the student is pursuing a thesis or a project and whether or not the activity is considered IRB exempt. If a thesis or project is deemed to require formal IRB approval, work cannot begin until such approval has been secured.

Registration for 6900/6901. Students are encouraged to register for up to 3 credits of thesis or 1 credit of project work during the proposal writing phase (ideally the summer and/or fall between year 1 and year 2). Generally, students will not be allowed to register for a total exceeding 3 credits of thesis or 1 credit of project work until after the proposal defense has been successfully completed (or at least scheduled). Students do not need to be registered for HLTH 6900 or HLTH 6901 to prepare or defend a proposal.

Registration for HLTH 6900 Thesis and HLTH 6901 Project are by permission of the MPH Director, who acts as the instructor of record. After discussion with your Project/thesis Chair, students wishing to register for the 1-3 credits of preliminary work to develop the proposal should send an email request to the MPH Director indicating:

- The other members of the Project/thesis Committee (if identified)

- The number and type of credits either Thesis (HLTH 6900), maximum of two credits prior to defending proposal* or Project (HLTH 6901), maximum of one credit prior to defending proposal
- A working title or brief description of the planned focus of the project/thesis.

Please copy your Project/thesis Chair on this email.

**Students in their intended last semester may be permitted to register for all 6 credits of HLTH 6900 Thesis or 3 credits of HLTH 6901 Project provided they have consulted with the MPH Director in advance and have either completed or scheduled their proposal defense.*

Thesis Option

Students pursuing the thesis option are advised to plan early and thoroughly to facilitate a timely completion of their program. Full-time students are encouraged to plan a thesis topic prior to the start of their second academic year. Students should have completed or be concurrently completing HLTH 6201-6205 by the time they begin their thesis work and have completed or be concurrently completing HLTH 6206 and HLTH 6207 prior to scheduling the final defense.

The selection of topic and approach must be reviewed and approved by the Thesis Committee (the proposal defense) and IRB approval received (if needed) before research/active project work can begin.

Proposal Outline

The proposal submitted for a thesis should follow the outline listed below. The outline corresponds to the major chapters expected in a thesis. Deviations from the content in this outline should be discussed and approved by the Chair (and Committee) in advance of submitting the proposal for the defense. The organization/presentation of the items may be sequenced in alternate rational formats for clarity of presentation.

1. Introduction
 - a. Establish importance of topic
 - b. Discuss conceptual model/relationship of independent and dependent variables
 - c. Summarize of what is/is not known
 - d. Identify what gap the study is filling
 - e. State research purpose(s)
2. Literature Review
 - a. Provide a general overview/development of literature in the content and/or methodological area
 - b. Discuss/explain the underlying theoretical models/conceptual frameworks
 - c. Describe the relationships among variables
 - d. Refer to other relevant literature
 - e. Summarize, draw conclusions, and discuss implications
3. Hypotheses and Specific Aims (or research questions)
4. Methods
 - a. Study design
 - b. Study population
 - i. Sampling methods
 - ii. Sample size/power
 - iii. Sample recruitment
 - c. Measurement issues
 - i. Variables (level of data)
 - ii. Measurement

1. Instruments*
2. Standards
3. Reliability
4. Validity

**include copies of relevant instruments (surveys, etc.) as appendices*

- d. Data analysis plan (including dummy tables if applicable)
5. Study Limitations
6. Ethical Issue/ Human Subject Protection
7. Significance

NOTE: the proposal should be written in the future tense, describing the research process and methods that the student will conduct in the future if the proposal is approved (e.g. "The proposed study will contribute to the literature....").

Suggested Timeline

Ideally, students should plan on defending their proposal early in the fall semester of their second year. For theses that include *primary data collection* activities, students should be prepared to defend their proposal in September so they can begin data collection as soon as possible in their second year of study (more or less time may be required depending on the nature of the data collection design). Primary data collection will most likely require a more lengthy IRB approval process, which may extend the timeline. Similarly, students using *secondary data sets* may also require additional time depending upon if the data owner requires an approved proposal or a data use agreement before releasing a copy of the data. Please discuss these possibilities with your Chair. Thesis proposals typically represent 50-60% of the content of the completed thesis, generally chapters 1-3.

The written thesis builds upon the proposal, revising the existing chapters and adding chapters for results, discussion, and conclusions/recommendations. Once the thesis is prepared and approved by your thesis Chair, an oral defense is scheduled, typically in spring of year 2. The oral defense is when the Thesis Committee completes a formal review to ensure that core competencies are adequately addressed and other relevant competencies are appropriately executed. Unless there are extenuating circumstances, the Thesis committee shall be the same three faculty members who reviewed the proposal. See "Evaluation of the Thesis Proposal/Final Defense" for further details of the process and the relevant evaluation tools.

IRB Approval. Thesis research in public health generally involves the use of human subjects. In ALL cases, proposals involving human subjects must be reviewed and approved (or declared exempt) by the UNC Charlotte IRB. The Thesis Chair may use the decision rubric prepared by the IRB to determine if the thesis constitutes human subjects research. In ALL cases, protocols involving human subjects must be reviewed/approved by the UNC Charlotte IRB (or documented as being IRB exempt) in accordance with UNC Charlotte policies and procedures. The Capstone Chair is listed as the PI for the protocol and the thesis student as the

student investigator. Depending on their level of involvement, the other committee members can be listed as co-investigators.

The IRB meets monthly during the academic year but rarely during the summer months. Proposals are reviewed for exemption throughout the year, generally receiving an answer within two weeks. If a proposal is deemed to need a full IRB review, it must be received by the committee at least one week in advance of the meeting where it will be discussed. The schedule and due dates are found at <http://research.uncc.edu/compliance-ethics/human-subjects/irb-schedule-meetings>. Often further revisions and, sometimes, resubmission and review at the next meeting are required possibly delaying the start of your project. **Thus, the IRB process needs to be accounted for in planning your timeline.**

Sequence of Events. This outline summarizes the sequence of events leading to a completed thesis. It highlights the key steps and suggested timeline for action. The specific sequence and timing should be discussed in consultation with the Thesis Chair. Adjustments may need to be made to accommodate changes in university or college policy and the specifics of the chosen thesis.

- Spring 1: Begin thesis planning: focus on a thesis topic and select a Thesis Chair
- Summer 1: Form Committee; register for proposal writing thesis credit (and/or in fall), draft and revise proposal with Chair
- Fall 2: Finalize proposal
 Provide proof of IRB training to Chair
 Schedule proposal defense; inform MPH Director
 Meet with committee members at least once
 Submit proposal 7 days in advance of defense
 Defend proposal
 Report approval of topic to Graduate School* (via MPH Director)
 Register for Thesis credits for spring /Begin Data collection/analysis
- Spring 2: **Apply for candidacy and graduation PRIOR to end of ADD/DROP period -**
<http://graduateschool.uncc.edu/current-students/graduation/masters-checklist>
 Complete thesis
 Meet with Committee members at least once
 More than 7 days in advance: schedule defense, inform MPH Director
 Submit thesis to committee at least 7 days in advance of defense
 Hold formatting meeting with Graduate School
 Defend thesis**
 [Have 1 copy of the title page – printed on acid free paper – signed at defense]
 Revise as needed
 Submit defense form (via MPH Director)
 Submit ETD form to Graduate School -

Submit electronic thesis to Graduate School **PRIOR TO DEADLINE FOR THESES.**

Provide Director an electronic copy of the completed project/thesis (word or PDF)

**Once a topic approval form has been submitted, students must be enrolled every fall and spring semester (e.g. "maintain residency") until completing the degree. Students must be in residence during the semester in which they defend their theses and graduate. For further details on residency, consult the MPH student handbook and the Graduate School website.*

***Given the number of students completing each semester and the number of faculty serving on multiple thesis and project committees, a) students cannot wait until the deadlines to complete their defenses and revisions and b) given multiple completing priorities, it is unreasonable to expect faculty to turn-around revisions overnight. Plan accordingly.*

Thesis Outline

The Graduate School has final authority to review the thesis manuscript for adherence to formatting and printing guidelines. The Graduate School provides a detailed manual outlining the specific formatting guidelines for preparing and printing a thesis (<http://graduateschool.uncc.edu/current-students/graduation/submit-your-etd/steps-submitting-etd>). These forms as well as process guidelines for submitting the approved thesis for review and binding are found on the Graduate School website (see <http://graduateschool.uncc.edu/current-students/forms>).

NOTE: The Graduate School requires a formal review of the thesis for format compliance. This review must be scheduled –in advance – with the Graduate School. Students may schedule this review once they have submitted their thesis to the committee for the final defense (students need not wait until after the final defense). The end of the semester is quite hectic for the Graduate School and review slots near the submission deadline are limited. Please plan accordingly.

Until the Graduate School has approved the thesis formatting, received all required forms, and related payments (e.g. copyright registration), the student will not be cleared for graduation.

Project Option

Full-time students are encouraged to plan their project topic prior to the start of their second academic year or early in the fall semester of the 2nd year. Students should have completed or be concurrently completing HLTH 6201-6205 by the time they begin their project work and have completed or be concurrently completing HLTH 6206 and HLTH 6207 prior to scheduling the final defense. The selection of topic and approach must be reviewed and approved by the Project Committee (during the proposal defense) before work on the project may begin.

Proposal Outline

The Capstone Project will follow 1 of 3 frameworks (e.g., grant proposal [community service or research], or consultant's report), the specific structure of the project proposal will vary accordingly. In general, the project proposal is in the form of a detailed work plan; describing the detailed methods/tasks that will be undertaken to produce the final product. A timeline with intermediate task completion dates should also be included. The project proposal should be structured according to the framework outline the student has selected for his/her project. The literature review for a project is narrowly focused on the evidence-based literature relevant to the particular public health problem and process identified. The selection of topic and approach must be reviewed and approved by a Capstone Committee (the proposal defense) before research/active project work can begin. NOTE: the proposal should be written in the future tense, describing the tasks that the student will perform in the future if the proposal is approved.

Students pursuing the project option are advised to plan early and thoroughly to facilitate a timely completion of their project.

Suggested Timeline

Given the variable nature of projects, students should allow adequate time to complete all project tasks, including IRB approval/exemption and implementation/evaluation of an activity, following their proposal defense. Project proposals are generally very brief and usually only comprise 20-30% of the final project. Unlike the thesis, most project work is completed after the project proposal. Be advised that projects that are reliant on outside organizations or that are dependent upon the organization completing certain tasks, hiring certain individuals, or collecting needed data, will have increased risks of delays, which are outside of the student's control. The Capstone Chair can advise on appropriate modifications or risk reduction activities to minimize these effects. The Chair can advise a reasonable time line.

The written project builds upon the proposal, revising the existing text and adding sections specific to the framework selected. Once the project report is prepared and approved by the Chair, a defense is scheduled. The formal review by the Project Committee ensures that the student has adequately addressed the MPH competencies for graduation. Unless there are extenuating circumstances, the Project Committee shall be the same three faculty members

who reviewed the proposal. The Capstone Defense process is described in detail in the next section. Appendix 1 presents the assessment tools that the committee will use to evaluate the Capstone project.

IRB Approval. Projects typically do not involve human subjects research data per se and may be IRB exempt. In ALL cases, project proposals involving human subjects must be reviewed and approved (or declared exempt) by the UNC Charlotte IRB. The Project Chair may use the decision rubric prepared by the IRB to determine if the project constitutes human subject research.

The IRB meets monthly during the academic year but rarely during the summer months. Proposals are reviewed for exemption throughout the year, generally receiving an answer within two weeks. If a proposal is deemed to need a full IRB review, it must be received by the committee at least one week in advance of the meeting where it will be discussed. The schedule and due dates are found at <http://research.uncc.edu/compliance-ethics/human-subjects/irb-schedule-meetings>. Often further revisions and, sometimes, resubmission and review at the next meeting are required possibly delaying the start of your project. Thus, the IRB process needs to be accounted for in planning your timeline.

Sequence of Events. This outline summarizes the sequence of events leading to a completed project. It highlights the key steps and suggested timeline for action. The specific sequence and timing should be discussed in consultation with the Project Chair. Adjustments may need to be made to accommodate changes in university or college policy and the specifics of the chosen project.

- Spring 1: Begin Project planning: focus on a topic and select a Project Chair
 Notify the MPH Director of your topic and Chair
- Summer 1: Form Committee; register for project credit (or in fall); draft and revise proposal with Chair
- Fall 2: Finalize proposal
 Meet with committee members at least once
 Provide proof of IRB training to Chair
 Schedule proposal defense; inform MPH Director of date/time/topic
 Submit proposal 7 days in advance of defense
 Defend proposal
 Report approval of topic to graduate school* (via MPH Director)
 Register for project credits for spring/Begin project work (or defer to Spring 2)
- Spring2: **Apply for graduation PRIOR to end of ADD/DROP period**
 Complete project
 Meet with Committee members at least once

More than 7 days in advance: schedule defense, inform MPH Director
Submit project to committee at least 7 days in advance of defense
Defend project**
[Optional: have 1 copy of the title page – printed on acid-free paper – signed at defense]
Revise as needed
Submit defense form (via MPH Director) **BY THE LAST DAY OF EXAMS**
Provide Director an electronic copy of the complete project (word or PDF)

**Once a topic approval form has been submitted, students must maintain "residency," (e.g., be enrolled each fall and spring semester) until completing the degree. Students must be in residence during the semester in which they defend their projects and graduate. For further details on residency, consult the MPH student handbook and the Graduate School website.*

***Given the number of students completing each semester and the number of faculty serving on multiple thesis and project committees, a) students cannot wait until the deadlines to complete their defenses and revisions and b) given multiple completing priorities, it is unreasonable to expect faculty to turn-around revisions overnight. Plan accordingly.*

Project Outline

Unlike a thesis, which has a format prescribed by the Graduate School, the project can take one of several professionally relevant formats. For the MPH program, the formats can include: a grant proposal (focused on either community service or research), or a consultancy report (other frameworks may be added). See Appendix 1 for specific details.

NOTE: The electronic copy of the project will be archived in the department directory along with copies of MPH student theses.

Project/Thesis Defense Process

The capstone proposal and final defenses should be scheduled in advance (as described above). A minimum of 90 minutes should be allotted for the oral defense, but scheduling a two-hour block is recommended.

Public and Closed Portions

MPH proposal defenses (thesis or project) are closed; only the student and the Project/Thesis committee are present. For training or quality assurance purposes, the MPH Director or other faculty designees may observe. Additional observers may be permitted, subject to the advance concurrence of the student and the Project/Thesis Chair. Any such non-faculty observers shall be excused from the room during the committee's examination and deliberation.

MPH final Project/Thesis defense presentations are open to the university community (e.g., faculty and students of the department or from the college or related academic programs having a legitimate interest) and members of agencies associated with the thesis or project. Any such observers shall be excused from the room during the committee's examination and deliberation. For training or quality assurance purposes, the MPH Director may attend the examination and/or designate other graduate faculty to observe the examination.

Sequence of Events

The defense begins with administrative/introductory remarks by the Chair who will review the process and procedures for the defense, including any ground rules set forth for the specific defense. (The student and/or observers may be excused briefly prior to the start of the defense while the committee organizes its approach to the defense.) At this time, the Chair will announce whether questions may be asked during the presentation or held to the end. Normally, clarifying questions will be permitted during the presentation with probing/analytic questions following the presentation. The student will then make a prepared 15-30 minute, formal PowerPoint presentation which summarizes the proposal/thesis/project. The length of the presentation is set by the Chair.

Following the formal presentation and clarifying questions, any observers are permitted to ask questions and then non-faculty observers are excused. Questioning/critiquing of the student by the Committee then begins. For the proposal defense, emphasis is on the suitability and feasibility of the proposed research/project and the design/methods/analytic plan/approach. For the final defense, emphasis is on the results, lessons learned, and implications. In both cases, questions related to mastery/application of core competencies may be asked, even if they are tangential to the proposal/thesis/project under review. The formal examination concludes when the Committee has finished its questioning. The student will then be excused from the room while the Project/Thesis Committee deliberates. During this time, the

committee completes the relevant MPH Culminating Capstone forms (see Appendix 1) and determines the final outcome. The student is then invited to return and to receive the Committee's findings, concluding the defense. The Chair and the student will then meet to review any needed revisions.

Evaluation of the Capstone Proposal/Final Defense

The Proposal Defense. Following a successful proposal defense, the Committee signs the Graduate School's Topic Approval form (Appendix 3). This form is routed to the MPH Director who will then sign, forward as needed, and retain a copy for the student's file. The Committee also completes the relevant evaluation forms (see details below). Copies of both forms are added to the student's file and a copy is provided to the student. If the student defense was not successful, the assessment form and documentation of specific deficiencies are brought to the MPH Director for remediation and further action.

The Final Defense. Following the final defense, the committee completes the Graduate School Report of Defense form (Appendix 4), the framework specific and competency evaluation instruments, the Electronic Thesis Defense (ETD) form, and the presentation assessment form and submits them to the MPH Director for processing and submission to the Graduate School, if appropriate. Following the defense, the student completes any required revisions and, after consulting the Chair, submits an electronic version of the final capstone manuscript and the ETD form (if thesis) to the Graduate School and to the MPH Director. The Graduate School requires a signed title page for all theses.

If the defense was not successful, the assessment form and documentation of specific deficiencies are brought to the MPH Director for remediation and further action.

Assessments. During the proposal and final defense, 3 evaluations are completed by the Capstone Committee:

1. Capstone Evaluation Score Sheet specific to the chosen Capstone format
2. Capstone Oral Presentation Score Sheet
3. MPH Individual Competency Assessment form

All 3 of these forms are presented in Appendix 1. During the proposal defense, the assessment will be used to advise the student of perceived strengths and weaknesses and recommended actions to ensure a strong presentation during the final defense (diagnostic). For the final defense, the committee will formally assess the student's presentation/oral communication skills (evaluative). Successful mastery of the communication skills (minimum score of 3 in each category or justification by the committee) is a requisite for passing the defense.

Effective presentation and oral communication skills are core competencies expected of MPH graduates. Consequently, separate from the content assessment of the defense, the Committee will evaluate the student's presentation skills including use of visuals, organization of content, and oral delivery and interaction with the audience.

Outcomes

Defenses (be it proposal or final) result in 4 possible outcomes: unconditional pass, conditional (minor) pass; conditional (major) pass, or fail.

- **Unconditional Pass** is associated with consensus scores of 3 (fully met) or more in all areas. It may, however, include requests for minor revisions, which are reviewed and accepted by the Chair on behalf of the Committee.
- **Conditional Pass** is associated with a score of 2 (partially met) or less in one or more areas where the shortcomings may range from being technical in nature, easily corrected, and/or for which the student demonstrates understanding during the defense (e.g., **minor**) to more substantive issues ranging from general weakness to a critical weakness in a specific area (e.g., **major**). The student works with the Chair to correct the deficiencies identified by the Committee. It is at the committee's discretion to determine whether the Chair or the full committee will have the responsibility to review and accept the revisions.
- **Fail** is associated with poor performance (multiple scores below 3) and evidence of gaps in knowledge and critical reasoning skills during the defense. The deficiencies are such that the Committee wishes to see a re-defense of the revised proposal/final product or consider the student for dismissal. Should the student's defense be deemed substandard but correctable, the Committee Chair will convey the specific remediation required prior to a subsequent defense or refer the matter to the MPH Director or Department Chair for further review and action, as consistent with University, Graduate School, College, Department, and MPH Program policies.
 - Students work with their Committee and the MPH Director to correct any deficiencies in the proposal/manuscript and other areas as needed prior to scheduling a re-defense.
 - Students are permitted only one re-defense. A subsequent failure is grounds for academic dismissal from the program.

Should the Committee recommend dismissal without a re-defense, the Chair will confer with the Program Director and Department Chair to determine the course of action.

This decision will then be conveyed to the student and the Graduate School.

NOTE: No MPH student has yet failed a proposal or final defense. To ensure that you are not the first, you are strongly encouraged to obtain the approval of your Capstone Chair before scheduling a defense or sending a capstone proposal/thesis/project to your Committee for review. Your Chair will decide when you are ready, which is to say "passable." **DO NOT CIRCUMVENT THE JUDGEMENT OF YOUR CHAIR.**

Ethical Conduct and Academic Integrity

Ethical conduct and integrity are intrinsic to the professional practice of public health. Within the MPH program, ethical conduct takes on three dimensions. First is the commitment of a practitioner to fair and honest dealings with peers, the community, and the faculty (see code of ethics for a health educators in the MPH Student Manual). Second is the commitment of a

student to academic integrity inherent in being a student at UNC Charlotte (see policy on academic integrity, especially with regard to cheating and plagiarism). Third is the commitment of a scholar to the ethical conduct of research. Consistent with university and subordinate unit policies, violations of these ethical obligations may result in punishments ranging from counseling to censure/reprimand, to loss of grade, failure of a course or defense, and suspension or dismissal from the program.

Appendix 1. Thesis & Project Framework Guidelines

The thesis or project manuscript is evaluated to ensure adequate demonstration of core competencies and the correct application of a specific set of competencies to the research of a public health problem.

At a minimum, the manuscript will demonstrate the appropriate and sufficiently thorough application or consideration of each of the core area competencies in relation to the problem under analysis and the framework selected. Each of the acceptable frameworks detailed below include specific associated evaluation considerations to guide student preparation and faculty evaluations.

The manuscript *may* build upon work previously submitted for other courses or for professional practice, but must have been prepared since matriculating as an MPH student. While the student may build upon prior work, the project must reflect substantial new effort. The distinction of what constitutes new work should be clarified with the Chair or MPH Director in advance of the proposal defense.

Critical use of references is required. References must be consistently cited in accordance with a referencing style consistent with the discipline from which the thesis or project is drawn or an intended journal for publication (the AMA or APA styles are recommended). Students are advised to consider the distinction between advocacy documents (now easily accessible on the World Wide Web) and peer-reviewed literature. Use of reference management software (such as Endnote, available at UNC Charlotte) is strongly encouraged.

Similarities & Differences

The objective of the proposal defense is to ensure the student has sufficient mastery of core competencies and sufficient understanding of the research/practice process and adequate support to successfully complete the thesis or project. The objective of the final defense is to ensure that the student completed the agreed upon tasks and has effectively analyzed/synthesized those findings and experiences from engaging in the process into his/her professional practice.

Thesis proposals are usually more developed and detailed than a project proposal, especially the methods section and analysis plans.

Unlike thesis proposals, the methods section of project proposals outlined the proposed work plan and required resources to produce the proposed deliverables.

The methods and analysis sections of proposals are written in the future tense (what you plan to do). These sections are updated and changed to the past tense (what you did do) for the final defense. Results are written in the present tense.

Given the differing levels of detail and planning needed at the proposal, students typically find the thesis proposal more challenging and daunting than the final defense, but the converse true for projects.

Style guidelines

Theses. The Graduate School establishes formatting and style guides for theses (see Appendices 2 and 3 or the Graduate School website).

Projects. The Department proscribes guidelines for projects. Other than the exceptions noted below, the style and formatting guidelines for theses apply to projects. Like a thesis, the length and content will vary with the specific purpose. In general, projects will be a minimum of 20 typed, double-spaced body pages using Times New Roman 12 point font or Arial 11 point font. The project paper will summarize a student's investigation into a public health problem of professional relevance and interest. The project manuscript will be presented in accordance with one of several prescribed formats found latter in this appendix. Project reports will include cover page, an abstract or executive summary, a table of contents, references, tables, and figures, using the style guides for a thesis.

Demonstration of Core and Concentration Competencies

The primary educational objective of the capstone thesis or project is to demonstrate appropriate consideration and application of core concepts, skills, and knowledge in researching a public health problem AND concentration specific competencies. Core and concentration competencies must be appropriately addressed in each thesis. (See MPH Student Manual for a full depiction and explanation of core and concentration-specific MPH competencies.

Core competencies will cut across the chapters identified for the thesis. For example, quantitative competence may be demonstrated in the literature review and/or methodology section and/or results and/or discussion section.

Note: Beyond demonstrating minimum competence, theses and projects are held accountable to a level of competence consistent with the problem, approach, and analytic techniques employed by the student. For example, when a student uses an advanced statistical analysis, that student is accountable to correctly describe and apply it, even if that statistical test exceeds the minimum competence expected of an MPH graduate.

In addition, the student's completion of required IRB (CITI) training is noted here as is the proposal's conformity with technical/formatting requirements (e.g., title page, abstract/executive summary, table of contents, references, appendices).

Thesis: Evaluation Guidelines

Thesis manuscripts are evaluated along a number of dimensions using the 4-point scale described below. The basis for the evaluation will be the level of competence expected of an MPH graduate within the context of the framework and problem/topic selected by the student. The ratings with respect to expectations are as follows:

- 1 (not met/missing) the element was omitted or not adequately addressed
- 2 (partially met) the element was addressed, but not to the level expected
- 3 (fully met) meets/exceeds expected level of competence
- 4 (exceptional) clearly exceeds the expected level of competence

In addition to assessing whether core competencies have been appropriately addressed, theses are evaluated along these 11 dimensions:

1. Importance of the problem to public health
 - a. Has the magnitude of the problem been characterized?
 - b. Is a case made for its importance?
2. Organization/ Presentation
 - a. Is it easy to read/understand?
 - b. Are the tables and figures informative and of quality?
 - c. Do the ideas progress logically?
 - d. Does it conform to guidelines of the target publication/standard format?
3. Abstract appropriately structured and an adequate reflection of paper's content
4. Introduction places the current study in the context of current knowledge
 - a. Is the literature review of thorough and of high quality?
 - b. Does the introduction demonstrate where this project 'fits in'?
5. Design appropriate to answer the question
 - a. Are consideration given to options?
 - b. Is a rationale given for choosing the design?
 - c. Are strengths and limitations inherent in design discussed (validity)?
 - d. Are strengths and weaknesses of measurements discussed (reliability)?
6. Population appropriate to answer the research question
 - a. Are considerations/advantages/disadvantages of choice discussed?
7. Analysis appropriate to answer the question
 - a. Are methods described; limitations noted?
 - b. Is the plan sufficient to address the research question?
 - c. Is the level of data collection/coding sufficient to answer the research question?
 - d. Are issues of power sample size addressed?
8. Plausibility of results appropriately addressed
9. Public health implications appropriately addressed
10. References complete and adequately reflecting current literature on the topic; peer-reviewed sources provide adequate support for assumptions or background information.
11. Overall scientific merit
 - a. Is the study design appropriate to the stated objectives?

- b. Is the appropriate level of data used?
- c. Has an appropriate literature review been included?
- d. Does the project increase our understanding or to replicate inconclusive/controversial findings?

Thesis Framework

A thesis is organized in chapters. For a thesis proposal, generally chapters I-IV are what is required. ***The following is a generic outline frequently used in our department.*** Please consult your thesis Chair and the Graduate School for additional guidelines and requirements.

- I. **Introduction** [approximately 2 to 6 pages]
 - A. Background of the problem – Develop a case for the importance of your topic from a public health perspective; cite statistics (incidence, prevalence, costs); describe the consequences if the condition is not abated or eliminated (morbidity, mortality, disability, etc...); link to HP 2020 objectives or goals.
 - B. Purpose – State the aim of your study.
 - C. Significance – Tell the reader what your study will contribute to the existing body of literature on this topic.

- II. **Literature Review** – Describe previous studies on this topic [approximately 3-12 pages].
 - A. Concepts – define your concepts (e.g. the health outcome and your exposure/predictor/factor of interest)
 - B. Summarize the available research on the factor and the outcome. This should be a synthesis of the articles not an annotated bibliography. Note: Some thesis Chairs prefer an annotated bibliography.
 - C. Theory – If the study will use a particular theory or conceptual model, explain it and why it is relevant.

- III. **Hypotheses** - Provide specific research question(s) and/or hypotheses that you will examine [1 page]

- IV. **Methods** – Describe what you will do to answer the research question/hypothesis [approximately 3-10 pages].
 - A. Design – Describe the study design and the data source.
 - B. Measures – Indicate how your outcome (dependent variable) and your exposure (independent variable) were assessed. Be specific as to how they are coded. Provide a rationale for the categories you've chosen. Describe all variables and measures.
 - C. Sampling frame and recruitment strategy, if needed
 - D. Sample characteristics – briefly describe the people, animals or organizations that participated.
 - E. Human Subjects Protection
 - F. Data analysis plan – Describe the specific statistical procedure you will run to answer the research questions or hypotheses. For epidemiology, this section is organized as univariate, bivariate, and multivariate analyses. If qualitative there will be other terms to use.

- G. Limitations and strengths – Issues such as how you got your sample, lots of missing data, sample attrition, etc... If this is an epidemiology study use language that indicates how the limitation would influence the true association.
- V. **Results** – summarize the data presented in the tables; typically in univariate, bivariate, and multivariate order [approximately 2-5 pages].
- VI. **Discussion** [3-6 pages]
 - A. Briefly summarize the results, with respect to the research questions/hypotheses
 - B. Review the results in relation to the existing literature
 - C. Limitations and strengths – revisit
 - D. Recommendations – Indicate what your results might suggest in terms of public health policy, research or practice.

VII. References

- VIII. **Tables** – for the proposal, insert dummy tables. All the variable labels are formatted just like in the thesis, but the cells are empty.

IX. Appendices

Thesis Evaluation Score Sheet [Rev 2016]

MPH Capstone Experience

____ Proposal Defense

____ Final Defense

Student Name: _____ Date: _____

Title: _____

A. Competencies Appropriately Demonstrated – Average Score _____

See MPH Individual Competency Assessment Form

Score: (4 = exceptional; 3 = fully met; 2 = partially met; 1 = not met/missing; NA = not applicable)

B. Thesis Framework specific criteria

- | | |
|--------------------------------------|--|
| 1. Public health importance: _____ | 7. Analysis appropriate to answer the question: _____ |
| 2. Organization/ presentation: _____ | 8. Plausibility of results: _____ |
| 3. Abstract: _____ | 9. Public health implications appropriately addressed: _____ |
| 4. Introduction: _____ | 10. References complete: _____ |
| 5. Design: _____ | 11. Overall Assessment: _____ |
| 6. Population: _____ | |

CITI training verified ___Yes___No

Result: _____ **Unconditional Pass** _____ **Conditional Pass** _____ **Fail**

Grad School Technical Requirements followed ___Yes ___Mostly ___No

Comments/specific instructions: _____

Signature of Committee: _____

(Chair)

Project: Evaluation Guidelines

The Committee for a project operates similarly to a Thesis Committee. Manuscripts are evaluated along a number of dimensions using the 4-point scale described below. The basis for the evaluation will be the level of competence expected of an MPH graduate within the context of the framework and problem/topic selected by the student.

The ratings with respect to expectations are as follows:

- 1 (not met/missing) the element was omitted or not adequately addressed
- 2 (partially met) the element was addressed, but not to the level expected
- 3 (fully met) meets/exceeds expected level of competence
- 4 (exceptional) clearly exceeds the expected level of competence

Each project format will have a minimum of 10 grading components.

Students receiving scores of 3 or 4 in all domains receive an unconditional pass. Students receiving scores less than 3 in any domain must address the deficiencies as specified by the Committee. [Minor changes can often be addressed in revisions; major changes may necessitate a subsequent defense.]

Project Framework: Grant Proposal

Grant Proposal Format Guidelines*

1. **Abstract/Executive Summary:** Describe the importance of the problem to public health and its magnitude; provide a brief summary / overview of the proposal and the methods that you will use [500 words/one page].
2. **Specific Aims/ Objectives:** State the aims and objectives of the proposal in measurable terms.
3. **Introduction:**
 - a. Background information including definition of the problem and/or situational analysis for the community of interest
 - b. Review of the public health literature regarding the topic
 - c. Critique of previous research studies or programs related to the problem
 - d. Recommendation for a course of action/research, including the rationale used to make this decision.
4. **Methodology**
 - a. Conceptual framework
 - b. Research/project plan synopsis (who, what, when, how)

- c. Evaluation plan synopsis (measurable objectives; time frame; methodologies; data sources needed)

5. Budget/Planning

6. Ethical Considerations, Community Support

- a. Indicate community acceptance/support of program
- b. Discuss ethical/human rights considerations
- c. Discuss linkages/integration of proposed program with existing community resources
- d. Discuss sustainability beyond funding period

7. References

**The format may be modified to comply with the specific requirements of the intended funding agency (i.e. NIH, private foundation, community grant). The specific evaluation criteria outlined for the grant proposal format, including demonstration of core competencies, must still be addressed. For those formats where the core competencies are not easily incorporated, an expanded background section is suggested.*

Grant Proposal Critique Guidelines

1. Importance of the problem to public health
 - Magnitude of the problem characterized
 - Case made for its importance
2. Feasibility of the overall proposal
 - Technical
 - Logistical
 - Administrative
 - Political
 - Financial
3. Presentation of the written product
 - Organization of material should follow grant mechanism format guidelines
 - Logical progression of ideas
 - Appropriate use of graphs/tables
 - Language understandable, simple
 - Able to complete within page limitations
 - Credible references are consistently cited
4. Design / conceptual framework appropriate to address the problem
 - Consideration given to options
 - Rationale given for choosing intervention
 - Strengths and limitations of approach are discussed
5. Logistics of implementation/conduct are adequately discussed
6. Integration/coordination with community partners
7. Evaluation/research plan is appropriate (with goals; methods used; data sources)
8. Budget appropriate and sufficiently detailed
9. Ethical issues adequately addressed.
10. Overall merit
 - Design appropriate to the stated objectives
 - Appropriate level of data used
 - Appropriate literature review included
 - Appropriately applies/translates existing knowledge

Grant Proposal Evaluation Score Sheet [Revised July 2015]
MPH Capstone Project

___ Proposal Defense

___ Final Defense

Student Name: _____ Date: _____

Title: _____

A. Competencies Appropriately Demonstrated – Average Score _____

See MPH Competency Assessment Form

Score: (4 = exceptional; 3 = fully met; 2 = partially met; 1 = not met/missing; NA = not applicable)

B. Framework specific criteria

- | | |
|---|--|
| 1. Public health importance: _____ | 6. Integration with community: _____ |
| 2. Feasibility of the proposal: _____ | 7. Evaluation/research plan is appropriate for question: _____ |
| 3. Presentation of written product: _____ | 8. Budget: _____ |
| 4. Design/conceptual framework: _____ | 9. Ethical concerns: _____ |
| 5. Logistics: _____ | 10. Overall merit: _____ |

CITI training verified ___Yes___No

Result: ___ Unconditional Pass ___ Conditional Pass ___ Fail

Grad School Technical Requirements followed ___Yes ___Mostly ___No

Comments/specific instructions: _____

Signature of Committee: _____
(Chair) _____

Project Framework: Consultancy Report

Consultancy Report Format Guidelines

Consultancy Reports are reports written to provide a specific 'deliverable' to a client (typically in response to a defined scope of work). As part of the proposal, the student should include a memorandum of understanding (MOU), in the form of a 1-2 page letter addressed to the client, briefly outlining what the consultant is charged with doing, the scope of work, and the deliverables that will be produced. The MOU is a *de facto* contract. Consultancy Reports can involve a variety of methods/content areas (e.g., needs assessments, formative research, synthesis of existing information, expert review/opinion, etc.). Consequently, there are a variety of appropriate structures. A student using this framework should use the following template as a guide for the content, but determine with the Chair an appropriate organizational structure.

1. Executive Summary
2. Memorandum of Understanding
3. Introduction
4. Background/context
5. Charge
6. Setting
7. Methods
8. Data Sources
9. Analysis
10. Discussion
11. Findings and Recommendations

Consultancy Report Critique Guidelines

1. Executive Summary
 - Identify charge
 - Summarizes context, methods, findings/recommendations (captures reader's interest)
2. Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) in appendix for final defense
 - The charge; scope of work; deliverables
3. Introduction
 - Define problem
 - State goals, relevance of project
4. Background
 - Review of literature (what is/what is not known)
 - Demonstrate where this project 'fits in'
5. Charge in detail
 - Specific question or product to be delivered
 - Conceptual framework described
6. Setting
 - Description of client/agency
 - Population identified consistent with charge including inclusion/exclusion criteria
 - Sampling frames, techniques for assignment provided
 - Considerations/advantages/disadvantages of choice discussed
7. Methods
 - Design identified; appropriate to answer question
 - Measurement; constructs; definition and other tools discussed (reliability)
8. Sources of data
 - Primary or secondary data, forms from which variables are derived described
 - Data collection/cleaning procedures described
 - Relevant documents (questionnaires, consent forms, etc.) attached
9. Analysis
 - Qualitative or quantitative analytic techniques identified; appropriate project
 - Methods described
 - Plan sufficient to address charge
 - Issues of power/sample size addressed; calculations shown
10. Discussion
 - Summary/synthesis of main points
 - Interpretation/comparison (to standard, to expected value, to conceptual model, etc.)
 - Limitations
11. Findings/Recommendations
 - Conclusions and recommendations that address the stated charge
 - Recommendations for additional action/work
12. Overall assessment.
 - Study design appropriate to the charges
 - Appropriate literature review been included
 - Analysis complete and recommendations/findings supported by data.

Consultancy Report Evaluation Score Sheet [Rev July 2015]
MPH Culminating Project

___ Proposal Defense

___ Final Defense

Student Name: _____ Date: _____

Title: _____

A. Competencies Appropriately Demonstrated – Average Score _____

See MPH Competency Assessment Form

Score: (4 = exceptional; 3 = fully met; 2 = partially met; 1 = not met/missing; NA = not applicable)

B. Framework specific criteria

- | | | | |
|-----------------------|-------|-------------------------------|-------|
| 1. Summary | _____ | 7. Methods: | _____ |
| 2. MOU | _____ | 8. Sources of data: | _____ |
| 3. Introduction: | _____ | 9. Analysis: | _____ |
| 4. Literature review: | _____ | 10. Discussion: | _____ |
| 5. Charge: | _____ | 11. Findings/Recommendations: | _____ |
| 6. Setting: | _____ | 12. Overall assessment: | _____ |

CITI training verified ___Yes___No

Result: ___ Unconditional Pass ___ Conditional Pass ___ Fail

Grad School Technical Requirements followed ___Yes ___Mostly ___No

Comments/specific instructions: _____

Signature of Committee: _____

(Chair)

MPH Capstone - Oral Presentation Critique Score Sheet

____ Proposal Defense

____ Final Defense

Student's Name: _____

Date: _____

Score: (4 = exceptional; 3 = fully met; 2 = partially met; 1 = not met/missing)

1. **Content** _____
 - Was the target audience identified?
 - Was the appropriate content presented?
 - Was the issue clearly identified and defined?
 - Was the presentation appropriate to the target audience?
 - Was sufficient supporting detail provided?
 - Were the recommendations/assertions supported?
2. **Organization** _____
 - Was the content organized and presented in a coherent manner?
 - Were new or unfamiliar terms explained?
 - Did the presentation of ideas flow smoothly?
3. **Style** _____
 - Did the speaker(s) hold your interest?
 - Was the speaker convincing/effective?
 - Was the speakers' voice loud enough? Understandable?
 - Did the speaker make eye contact with the audience?
4. **Audio-visuals** _____
 - Were visuals (graphics, transparencies/slides) used effectively?
 - Was the quality of the slides appropriate (readable, correct spelling, not cluttered)?
 - Was an appropriate number of visual aids used?
 - Were visuals clearly explained?
 - Did the visuals add to the presentation?
5. **Time Utilization** _____
 - Was the time appropriately allocated to the parts of the presentation?
 - Were the time constraints followed?
 - Did it appear that the presentation had been rehearsed?
6. **Questioning** _____
 - Were questions appropriately addressed? With confidence and knowledge?
 - Did the speaker interact with the audience?
7. **Overall Impression** _____
 - Was a compelling argument made?
 - Was the presentation convincing?
 - Was an understanding and application of core knowledge demonstrated?

Result: ____ **Unconditional Pass** ____ **Conditional Pass** ____ **Fail**

Comments/specific instructions: _____

Signature of Committee: _____

(Chair)

MPH Individual Competency Assessment Form

Student: _____

MPH Core Competencies: Biostatistics			Assessment Score			
	Terminal Course	Terminal Assessment Form	Exceptional 4	Fully Met 3	Partially Met 2	Not Met 1
1.	Describe basic concepts of probability, random variation, and commonly used statistical probability distributions.	HLTH 6203				
2.	Apply appropriate descriptive and inferential statistical techniques to answer questions related to public health practice and research.	HLTH 6203				

MPH Core Competencies: Environmental and Occupational Health Sciences			Assessment Score			
	Course		Exceptional 4	Fully Met 3	Partially Met 2	Not Met 1
3.	<i>Identify environmental influences linked to specific population health outcomes.</i>					
4.	Interpret key environmental health concepts for non-technically trained audiences.	HLTH 6205				
5.	Conduct an evaluation of environmental health quality based on credible sources.	HLTH 6205				

MPH Core Competencies: Epidemiology			Assessment Score			
			Exceptional 4	Fully Met 3	Partially Met 2	Not Met 1
6.	Calculate and interpret epidemiology measures to describe a public health problem in terms of magnitude, person, time, and place.	HLTH 6202				

MPH Core Competencies: Health Services Planning and Administration			Assessment Score			
	Course		Exceptional 4	Fully Met 3	Partially Met 2	Not Met 1
7.	Apply the principles of planning, design, development, budgeting, management and quality assessment to organizational and community initiatives.	HLTH 6206 HLTH 6207				
8.	Identify and analyze the main components and issues of public health systems, organization financing, and	HLTH 6206				

delivery of health services.

MPH Core Competencies: Social and Behavioral Sciences			Exceptional 4	Fully Met 3	Partially Met 2	Not Met 1
	Course					
9. Critique the role of social, cultural, political, and community factors in both the onset and solution of public health problems.	HLTH 6201	E				
10. Summarize basic theories, concepts, and models from a range of social and behavioral disciplines that are used in public health research and practice.	HLTH 6201	E				
11. Using the social ecological model, distinguish key partners, resources, and stakeholders involved in effective public health practice.	HLTH 6207	A				

MPH Core Competencies: Research and Evaluation Methods			Exceptional 4	Fully Met 3	Partially Met 2	Not Met 1
	Course					
12. Critique the design, strengths and weaknesses, analysis, and findings of published studies across the various public health disciplines.		C				
13. Prepare methodologically sound programming and evaluation plans and research proposals.		C				

Cross-cutting Competencies

Interdisciplinary and Cross-cutting Core MPH Competencies: Frameworks of Public Health Practice			Exceptional 4	Fully Met 3	Partially Met 2	Not Met 1
	Course					
14. Apply the core functions of assessment, policy development, and assurance in the analysis of public health problems and their solutions.	HLTH 6207	A				
15. Apply evidence-based principles and the scientific knowledge base to critical evaluation and decision-making across the public health core disciplines.	HLTH 6900/01	C				

Interdisciplinary and Cross-cutting Core MPH Competencies: Systems Thinking			Exceptional 4	Fully Met 3	Partially Met 2	Not Met 1
	Course					
16. <u>Analyze</u> inter-relationships among different components of systems that influence the quality of life of people in their communities.	HLTH 6207	A				

Interdisciplinary and Cross-cutting Core MPH Competencies: Leadership			Exceptional 4	Fully Met 3	Partially Met 2	Not Met 1
	Course					
17. Assess public health organizations in terms of their stated mission, set of core values, and vision.	HLTH 6471	I				
18. Demonstrate leadership through effective team building, negotiation, and conflict management skills.	HLTH 6471	I				

Interdisciplinary and Cross-cutting Core MPH Competencies: Communication and Advocacy			Exceptional 4	Fully Met 3	Partially Met 2	Not Met 1
	Course					
19. <i>Demonstrate effective written and oral skills for communicating public health concepts, data and solutions with diverse professional and lay audiences.</i>	HLTH 6900/01	C				

Interdisciplinary and Cross-cutting Core MPH Competencies: Ethics, Values, and Cultural Diversity			Exceptional 4	Fully Met 3	Partially Met 2	Not Met 1
	Course					
20. <i>Apply basic principles of ethical analysis to issues of public health data, practice, research and policy.</i>	HLTH 6900/01	C				
21. Develop public health programs and strategies responsive to the diverse cultural values and traditions of the communities being served.	HLTH 6207	A				
22. Promote high standards of personal and organizational integrity, compassion, honesty, and respect for all people.	HLTH 6471	I				

Specialty Area Competencies

MPH Specialty Areas Competencies: Community Health Practice/Health Promotion (<i>also Graduate Certificate in Community Health Promotion Competencies</i>)			Exceptional 4	Fully Met 3	Partially Met 2	Not Met 1
	Course					
23. Apply major concepts related to community health, health education, and health promotion.	HLTH 6221	A				
24. Practice methods utilized in completing a community diagnosis and needs assessment using vital statistics and public health records.	HLTH 6221	A				
25. Design theory-based health promotion interventions to improve community health outcomes.	HLTH 6220	A				
26. Apply knowledge of quantitative and qualitative research methods to the 4 core functions of public health.	HLTH 6222	A				

* Denotes mode of Terminal assessment for CEPH. These assessments have detailed rubrics. A=Assignment; E=Exam; I=Internship; C=Capstone
 Instructions: Competencies whose assessment is designated with "C" must be evaluated during the Capstone final defense. Other competencies may be evaluated during that time as specified by the Capstone Committee.

Appendix 2. Graduate School Thesis Procedures, Manual & Sample Pages

The Graduate School provides a style manual, sample pages, and several word document templates for aspects of the thesis/project document. Visit <http://graduateschool.uncc.edu/current-students/graduation/thesis-and-dissertation-manual> to access the most recent version (those effective as of August 2014 as of this writing).

MPH Students are advised to check the Graduate School website to ensure that they are in compliance with the style guide **in effect at the time of submitting their thesis** (not time of matriculation).

Appendix 3. Graduate School Proposal Defense

The Graduate School forms website contains the most current version of the Proposal Defense for Master's Thesis (please use this form for projects as well).

Please visit <http://graduateschool.uncc.edu/current-students/forms> to access the most recent version (May 2014 as of this writing).

Appendix 4. Graduate School Report of Defense

The Graduate School forms website contains the most current version of the Final Defense Report (please use this form for projects and theses). The site also contains important forms summarizing the thesis submission procedures that include helpful checklists and timelines.

Please visit <http://graduateschool.uncc.edu/current-students/forms> to access the most recent version (November 2015 as of this writing).