MPH Integrative Learning Experience
Thesis Instructions
PH 9020: 3 Credit hours

Course Objective: This course is designed for MPH students to complete their Culminating Experience (CE) for integrative learning using the Thesis paper format. The goal of the Thesis is to demonstrate your ability to synthesize and integrate your knowledge of the MPH foundational core and concentration competencies. Students in consultation with faculty will select foundational core and concentration-specific competencies appropriate to your educational and professional goals.

Final Product: Students are required to produce a high-quality written product using the Thesis paper format that is appropriate for your educational and professional objectives. Ideally, the Thesis product is developed and delivered in a manner that is useful to external stakeholders.

Course Registration: Students are eligible to register for the Thesis Culminating Experience course after (a) completing 50% (21 credit hours) of MPH coursework, (b) completing 20 hours of approved public health-related volunteer service, (c) attend every MPH seminar each semester, and (d) attend the final presentation seminar of their fellow peers’ practicum, capstone, and thesis projects at the end of each semester. Students completing a Thesis will demonstrate their ability to understand a problem, articulate solutions, think critically about public health issues, and demonstrate learning in both written form and oral presentation.

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Key steps to complete your Thesis:

(1) Thesis Project – Meet with MPH faculty or other researchers/practitioners to discuss your plans and identify a Thesis project.

(2) Thesis Committee – Identify and contact faculty to serve on your Thesis Committee as a chair or a member(s). If a committee member is not UC faculty or does not meet the criteria stated in the graduate school handbook, you must fill out an external committee form. If the member is not in the UC graduate school system you are required to write a brief statement and attach the member’s updated CV. The external committee form requires the signature of your committee chair and Dr. Mary Beth Genter. Forms should be turned in to Ms. Angie Riall for processing.

(3) Completion of IRB – Be sure to discuss with your committee members to determine whether IRB approval is needed. It is prudent to contact UC IRB to ask for guidance and to determine which type of IRB is best for your project. Be advised that IRB approval can take a lengthy amount of time. It is recommended that students who plan to complete a thesis project apply for IRB approval a few months prior to when they would like to register for PH9020.

(4) Thesis Registration – Turn in the permission to register for PH9020 form to Professor Charles Doarn, which details your thesis project, objectives, deliverables as well as your members of your committee. Identification of CE readers, committee chair, and primary advisor is required. Meet with Professor Doarn if you need further clarification of thesis requirements;

(5) Graduate School Requirements – Review and follow all UC Graduate School Guidelines for completion of a Thesis (https://grad.uc.edu/student-life/etd.html);

(6) Thesis Form & Proposal – At the beginning of the semester, submit the thesis form and proposal on BB by the designated due date. Indicate any changes that have been made to your thesis project’s goals, objectives, and deliverables.
(7) **Thesis Statement of Intent** – Statement of Intent (SOI) should be submitted to the Degrees Committee for approval through the DEH Graduate Studies Office and also through the student’s advisor early in the Thesis project timetable;

(8) **Thesis Presentation** – Present on your Thesis at the end of the semester and submit your PPT slides to Blackboard;

(9) **Thesis Paper/Report** – Submit your Thesis paper to Blackboard and a hard copy to the MPH director’s office library in end of the semester.

(10) **Thesis Committee Evaluation** – Submit your Thesis Committee’s Evaluation of your Thesis paper to Blackboard at the end of the semester.

**Thesis Committee:**
Students completing a Thesis for their Culminating Experience will form a committee to guide the preparation, conduct, and completion of their project. The committee should consist of:

- **One Committee Chair**, must be faculty from the MPH Program in your concentration
- **At least one Committee Member**, must be faculty from UC
- Additional Committee Members are not required but allowed as appropriate (e.g., local agency partner, health department employees, in-country partner, etc.)

***Per the UC Graduate School (see Grad School Handbook on MPH website), the committee must be composed of at least two full-time faculty members with professorial rank, at least one of whom is a member of the All-University Graduate Faculty. Typically, the Primary Academic Advisor is the Chair of the Thesis Committee. The advisor may act as chair, convener, and voting member of the Thesis Committee. This Committee will make the final judgment on acceptability of the Thesis by a unanimous vote if there are only two members or with no more than one dissenting vote if more than two members.***

**Evaluation** – All students will be evaluated by two committee members (CE Reader #1 and #2). The Committee Chair (CE Reader #1) and the Primary Advisor (CE Reader #2) will evaluate the Thesis paper and student performance using a standardized rubric to determine the final course grade. If the Committee Chair and the Primary Advisor are the same person, the second Committee Member will complete the evaluation.

**Timeline:**
*Due dates for required documents and assignments will be posted on Blackboard.***

**MPH required dates for Thesis Submission:**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Step</th>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Activity</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Step 1</td>
<td>Beginning of semester</td>
<td>Submit Capstone form and proposal.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Step 2</td>
<td>4 weeks before classes end</td>
<td>Student must submit first draft to Committee for review.</td>
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<td>Step 3</td>
<td>2 weeks before classes end</td>
<td>Committee returns to student for final revisions</td>
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<tr>
<td>Step 4</td>
<td>1 week before classes end</td>
<td>Student must submit final documents and grading rubric to Primary Advisor and Committee Chair for final evaluation and grading.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Step 5</td>
<td>Oral Presentation**</td>
<td>Student must <strong>attend</strong> the seminar, give a CE presentation and <strong>submit</strong> an e-copy of slides, final CE paper, and completed grading rubric with signature to Blackboard. The signed CE rubric indicates to the Program that all requirements have been met.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Step 6</td>
<td>Last day of semester</td>
<td>Student must submit a hard copy of CE with signature page to the Capstone Director, Professor Doarn.</td>
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**always on last day of classes prior to exam week**
UC GRADUATE SCHOOL REQUIREMENTS

***It is critical that students review and follow all of the UC Graduate School Guidelines for completion of their MPH Thesis (https://grad.uc.edu/student-life/etd.html).

Your ETD submission has specific requirements. You may need up to 6 weeks to prepare your thesis or dissertation for electronic submission.

- ETD submission deadlines are posted on the Graduation Deadlines page. A suggested schedule is available on the website.
- **If you miss the ETD deadline for your desired graduation term, you will NOT be able to graduate that term**, and you will have to submit another graduation application for the following term.
- Additional requirements are included in your Graduation Checklist. These may take several weeks and must be completed prior to submission of your Thesis, including:
  - Graduation Application
  - Verification of Committee by MPH Program Manager
  - Acquire Committee Signatures using UC Graduate School ETD Form
- For more information about preparing and submitting your ETD, please see the Required Page Order, Formatting Guidelines and ETD FAQ pages.

REQUIRED DOCUMENTS and ASSIGNMENTS

Culminating Experience Form:
Students must enter the details of their Culminating Experience project including their project title, Committee members, and MPH competencies in the form on Blackboard.

Thesis Proposal:
At the beginning of the semester, students should meet with their committee to discuss and create an outline and timeline for the Thesis project and paper. The approved outline will be submitted to Blackboard (Primary Advisor signature is required).
- See TEMPLATE on Blackboard.

Thesis Statement of Intent
The Statement of Intent (SOI) for the MPH Thesis should be submitted to the MPH Program Manager (Angie Glankler, riallad@ucmail.uc.edu) in the DEPHS Graduate Studies Office.
- The SOI should be addressed to the DEPHS Degrees Committee for approval. The SOI should be completed early in the Thesis project timetable (i.e., the Degrees Committee would like to review the Statement of Intent before the majority of the data are collected).
- The SOI must be approved by the Primary Advisor prior to submission. The Primary Advisor should be copied on the SOI submission. Students must meet with their advisor to create a timetable for project completion.
- MPH Statements of Intent can be submitted before all qualification requirements are met (i.e., IRB approval complete). Early submission of the SOI is critical as the Degrees Committee may prepare comments on the SOI, or return it with a request for modifications or more information.
- See TEMPLATE and sample on Blackboard.

The SOI should be a brief (not to exceed 3 single-spaced pages excluding references and time table) description of the proposed Thesis. The following headings should be used in the statement:
- Background
- Objectives
• Hypothesis
• Specific aims
• Methods
• Significance/Relevance to Environmental Health
• Time Table for Completion
• Note concerning Institutional Review Board (IRB) and Institutional Animal Care & Use Committee (IACUC) approval
• References

The statement should indicate that the work will demonstrate the student’s powers of critical evaluation. The student and advisor are to suggest names of those willing to serve as members of the Thesis Committee to the Degrees Committee.

**Thesis Interim Report:**
If the student plans to complete the Thesis over 2 semesters, an interim report needs to be submitted using the template on Blackboard.

- The report should be typed using 1.5-2.0 spacing and left margin justification, be a **minimum of 5 pages** (excluding cover page, table of contents, graphs, figures, tables, and references), and include a **minimum of 5 references**.
- Report should be reviewed and approved by the committee at the end of the first semester.
- Students will submit the report to Blackboard (Committee signatures are not required).
- See TEMPLATE on Blackboard.

**Thesis Paper:**
The final product of the Thesis is the final high-quality written document that is appropriate for your educational and professional objectives. **The final product must contain a Conclusion that includes an assessment of how the student integrated at least 3 MPH core competencies and 5 concentration competencies.**

The Thesis paper should contain the following:

1. Title page with project title, committee names, student’s name, and paper submission date,
2. Acknowledgement section,
3. Table of contents,
4. Abstract,
5. Introduction with literature review and background,
6. Materials and methods, including the analytical plan,
7. Results,
8. Discussion and public health implications,
9. Conclusion including assessment of MPH competencies,
10. References.

The Thesis committee may suggest a modified format in order to fit the specific needs of the research project and presentation. Students are advised to review sample Thesis papers that are available in the MPH director’s office.

**Paper Formatting:**

- Final paper should be typed using 1.5-2.0 spacing and left margin justification.
- Page numbers must be added in bottom right.
- Final paper should be a **minimum 15 pages** (excluding cover page, table of contents, graphs, figures, tables, and references). Exact length to be approved by Committee Chair.
- References should follow the APA style. Reference list should be typed using single spacing. Include only references cited in your paper. Include at least 10 references, but the exact number is to be approved by the Committee Chair.
Submission:
The Thesis paper must be submitted after approval of the committee. **Students must submit 2 copies: 1 copy as a PDF file to Blackboard and 1 copy as a bound hard copy for the MPH Library** (in Dr. Ying’s office suite). Traditionally, students may have multiple hard copies printed to give to the committee chair, members and family members.

Upon completion the MPH thesis will be submitted electronically through the student’s graduation checklist to ETD or the Electronic Theses and Dissertations Center (OhioLINK). ETD is a free online database of masters' theses and doctoral dissertations from graduate students in participating Ohio colleges and universities. It can take up to 6 weeks to prepare your thesis or dissertation for electronic submission. **Students should reference the ETD submission deadline dates, required page order, formatting guidelines, and ETD frequently asked question page on the UC Graduate School webpage often** (https://grad.uc.edu/student-life/etd.html).

University of Cincinnati Institutional Review Board (IRB)
All human research projects must be submitted to and approved by the University of Cincinnati Institutional Review Board (IRB). Projects originating in and/or involving other institutions (e.g., Children’s Hospital) must also have approval of that institution’s IRB. Other permissions may apply (e.g., animal care, radiation safety).

Thesis Committee Evaluation:
Two Thesis Committee Members must evaluate students’ final documents (Interim Report or Thesis Paper) using the **Culminating Experience Committee Evaluation Form** during each semester that they are registered for the Thesis course. Students are required to submit a PDF of their Committee’s Evaluation on Blackboard.

*It is the responsibility of the student to ensure completion, return and submission of the Culminating Experience Committee Evaluation Form. FAILURE TO SUBMIT THIS FORM WILL RESULT IN AN INCOMPLETE FINAL GRADE.*

Students are required to provide their Committee with a copy of the MPH Concentration Competencies for their selected MPH Concentration to complete the **Culminating Experience Committee Evaluation Form.** A list of MPH Concentration Competencies for all concentrations can be found on Blackboard.

PowerPoint Presentation:
Students are required to summarize their Thesis experience in a PowerPoint presentation at the end of the semester. If the student plans to complete the Capstone in two semesters, then a presentation will be required in each semester.

**Content** - Students should send their slides to their committee at least one week before the presentation to review and approve. **Students should invite their committee members to attend the presentation seminar.** It is up to the committee chair and member(s) to decide if they will attend the presentation.

**Delivery** - Students should practice their presentation to optimize their delivery, communication, and performance. Students should NOT read from their slides or directly from note cards (though note cards are permitted if desired as a prop). See presentation grading rubric for more information. **Students should bring PowerPoint files to the seminar loaded on a flash drive.**
The presentation slides should contain the following key information:

- Presentations should be 15 minutes long and no longer to allow time for Q&A
- Title of the Thesis
- Brief background on the public health issue addressed in the Thesis
- Overview of projects/studies/activities that the student was involved in through the Thesis
- Results of student’s contributions in Thesis projects/studies/activities
- Public health implications of the Thesis projects/studies/activities
- Evidence-based justification of how projects/studies/activities helped develop, integrate and synthesize MPH competencies*
- 1 acknowledgement slide to thank the Thesis committee

*See examples on Blackboard. It is not sufficient to simply list competencies. We want to know specific activities/roles/contributions in which you applied the competencies in the context of your project.

Thesis Grade:
A letter grade (A-F) will be provided for the Thesis course. The exact breakdown of the grade distribution may be found in the syllabus for the semester. Your grade will be determined by:

1. Recommendation of the Thesis Committee Chair/Primary Advisor.
2. Submission of the Thesis Committee’s Evaluation Form on Blackboard.
5. Presentation and submission of presentation slides on Blackboard.

***It is the responsibility of the student to ensure return and submission of the Evaluation Rubric via Blackboard. Students are held to the UC Code of Student Conduct in submitting the Evaluation Rubric without alteration of the Committee’s final evaluation.

***** SEE BELOW and MPH Handbook for additional Thesis details. *****

MPH Handbook – Additional Thesis Details
Additional information on the MPH Thesis is provided in the MPH Handbook and summarized here. See the MPH Handbook for a complete explanation.

Information concerning the Thesis form, submission deadline dates, and the mechanics of preparing the final draft and abstract can be located on-line at https://grad.uc.edu/student-life/etd.html

1. Thesis Research
   a. Thesis research may be part of the ongoing work of the Thesis laboratory but must be separately identifiable. The Thesis research should reflect advisor guidance but mainly be the independent work of the student.
   b. It is the responsibility of the student and the faculty advisor to see that a Thesis Committee is formed and that the research plan is finalized. The Thesis Committee must confirm that the student’s work is not, to a large extent, carried out by technical assistants or other personnel.
   c. A Thesis may be written in the form of a publishable research paper, conforming to the publication guidelines of the student’s journal of choice (e.g., JAMA, Pediatrics, AJE, etc.). This option must be approved by the student’s Thesis Advisor and Thesis Committee. The
research must be conducted while the student is enrolled in the program and the student must be the first author of the manuscript. The manuscript should not be submitted for publication until approval by the Thesis Committee. The student must place an embargo on the Thesis prior to submission of his or her manuscript for publication (see section 5 for further instructions).

d. After approval of the original topic by the Degrees Committee, any major change from one Thesis topic to another is not permitted until approval of the new Thesis topic is given by the Degrees Committee.

e. In agreement with the function of the Thesis Committee, as specified by the rules of the University of Cincinnati Graduate School, any decisions about the quantity and quality of the work done are the responsibility of the Thesis Committee.

f. After the student leaves the University the Thesis research results may be used as the basis for continuing investigations by the student and/or by the laboratory in which the Thesis research was done. The student and the laboratory are entitled to retain copies of the data and analyses for their use.

2. **Policy for External Thesis Research for Master’s Degree Program.**

Thesis research outside the department requires careful coordination between the department and the collaborating institution. There are circumstances where it is in the interest of the student, the department, and an outside laboratory of academic stature, such as elsewhere in the University, or at a Federal Agency, to permit pursuit of graduate Thesis research outside the department. The requirements of external Thesis research are:

a. Approval by the Department Degrees Committee based on a written statement of justification;

b. A departmental faculty advisor who has expertise in the field of Thesis research;

c. Appointment of the external supervisor to the Thesis Committee;

d. An explicit understanding that, as in the case for Thesis research carried out within the department, every effort will be made to ensure that the Thesis research, when initiated, will be supported to its conclusion;

e. Adherence to the same rules and governance procedures used for Thesis research within the department. These include the clear understanding that the results are available for publication as a Thesis and in the open literature, and it is the responsibility of the Thesis Advisory Committee to make final decisions about the direction and extent of work. Attention is also drawn to the requirement that the Thesis Advisory Committee meet at least twice each year;

f. The Degrees Committee shall receive and place into the student’s file a letter signed by the external supervisor, indicating understanding and acceptance of these guidelines.

3. **Guidance on UC Medical IRB Review of Graduate Student Activities that involve Human Subjects Research in the Department of Environmental and Public Health Sciences.**

a. The UC IRB must review and approve all theses or dissertation projects conducted to meet the requirements of a graduate degree that involve human subject’s research.

b. The UC IRB may accept CCHMC as the IRB of record for UC student projects that involve human subject’s research. In addition, UC has a MOU with CCHMC and CCHMC is listed on the UC FWA.
IRB Review and Approval Requirements of Student Projects that Involve Human Subjects

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<tr>
<th>Location of Research</th>
<th>IRB Approval Status</th>
<th>Required Action</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>UC or CCHMC</td>
<td>UC IRB Approved</td>
<td>Submit modification request to UC IRB to add student to the study as a sub-investigator.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CCHMC</td>
<td>Exempt</td>
<td>Complete and submit the “Determining Whether a Proposed Activity is Human Research According to DHHS or FDA Regulatory Definitions” form available at <a href="http://researchcompliance.uc.edu/irb">http://researchcompliance.uc.edu/irb</a> to seek CCHMC IRB approval.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CCHMC</td>
<td>CCHMC IRB Approved</td>
<td>Contact a CCHMC IRB staff member to request a “reliance review” from UC IRB. UC IRB will review the materials submitted to CCHMC and notify the student via email of its determination.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CCHMC</td>
<td>CCHMC IRB approved and accepted by the UC IRB as the IRB of record</td>
<td>Submit modification request to CCHMC IRB to add student to the study as a sub-investigator. Copy UC IRB on request. Does not require UC IRB approval.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>UC</td>
<td>none</td>
<td>Student must submit the project to UC IRB for review with their faculty advisor as a Co-Principal Investigator.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CCHMC</td>
<td>None</td>
<td>When the student submits materials to CCHMC IRB, also request a “reliance review” from UC IRB. CCHMC will be the IRB of record, but UC IRB will also notify the student via email of its determination.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
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4. Embargo of Thesis
You can request an embargo be placed on your thesis for two years initially, with the option of extending the embargo a third year. An embargo is simply a hold on publishing your thesis in OhioLINK. If you plan to submit your thesis in part or whole for publication it is vital that you embargo your work for a period of time. Some journals still consider a thesis that is published on the internet a “publication.” In order to avoid the fact or appearance of a “duplicate” publication it is important to embargo your document. You request an embargo electronically when you upload your thesis for final approval by your chairperson. As a further protection, you should acknowledge in any submitted manuscripts based upon your graduate research that the work was completed in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the MPH. See your advisor if you have any questions regarding the embargo of your work.

5. Submitting your Thesis
The University of Cincinnati Electronic Thesis or Dissertation (ETD) website has all the details you need to submit your final thesis: [http://grad.uc.edu/student-life/etd/](http://grad.uc.edu/student-life/etd/). In short, you will need to submit your full thesis in PDF form to OhioLINK following the directions on the ETD website, along with a scanned PDF of your fully signed Committee Approval form. If you publish part or all of your thesis, you should add the following acknowledgement to your publication: “This work was completed in partial fulfillment of the Master of Public Health in the Department of Environmental Health, Division of Public Health Sciences, University of Cincinnati College of Medicine. The advisor must approve a thesis after it is uploaded to ETD, so the student should submit early to allow the advisor time to submit approval.”