FHS GRADUATE PROGRAM IN MASTER OF PUBLIC HEALTH (MPH)

Program Handbook
Approved September 1, 2023

McMASTER UNIVERSITY
HAMILTON, ONTARIO, CANADA

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McMaster University

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Welcome to the MPH Program at McMaster.

This guide outlines the policies and procedures followed by the Master of Public Health (MPH) Graduate Program, which operates within the Faculty of Health Sciences at McMaster University. The program is governed by the policies and procedures, as described in the current **SCHOOL OF GRADUATE STUDIES CALENDAR**, supplemented by the program-specific policies and procedures that are described in this handbook. As the MPH handbook is a supplement to the SGS Calendar, it **does not provide a comprehensive set of binding regulations or replicate or modify the information found in the School of Graduate Studies (SGS) Calendar** (available at https://academiccalendars.romcmaster.ca/index.php) **If there is any discrepancy between this handbook and the SGS Calendar, then the School of Graduate Studies Calendar shall prevail.** Students and faculty are encouraged to look at the SGS Calendar for information about:

- Graduate study at McMaster
- School of Graduate Studies general regulations
- University regulations
- Graduate fees and financial assistance
- University regulations affecting graduate students
- University services
- Fellowships, scholarships, bursaries and other awards
- University governing bodies
- Student appeals
- Degree programs (including degree requirements)

Updates, along with, news and announcements are also posted on the MPH website. Please check the website regularly for new information at https://healthsci.mcmaster.ca/hei-mph

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Our Mission

McMaster University's Master of Public Health program prepares future public health leaders to apply evidence informed thinking to address emerging population and public health challenges and pursue health equity locally, nationally and internationally.

Core Values

- Health equity and social responsibility
- Interdisciplinary
- Evidence informed thinking
- Collaboration
- Community and partner engagement
- Sustainability/Accountability
- Innovation
- Integrity

About the program

Drawing on the world-renowned strengths of the HEI Department in evidence-based decision-making, health research methodology, policy analysis, and epidemiology, the Master of Public Health (MPH) program was created in 2015 to bolster the public health workforce's knowledge and skills for response to future health challenges. The program is unique in Canada, as a leading generalist program that provides learners with a broad foundation in public health science, research methodology, and the choice of one of two-degree track options - thesis or practicum. The McMaster MPH program is also situated in a vibrant environment of students, community members, faculty, staff, influential public health organizations and research groups, and community that allows for a dynamic setting that prepares public health leaders to address health challenges in a meaningful, responsible and equitable way.

The Department

A Note on the Historical Development of the Department of Health Research Methods, Evidence, and Impact
Prepared for the Departmental Ad Hoc Committee by Dr. D.L. Sackett September 1987 and revised January 1988

The Department of CE&B was formed in November 1967 for the purpose of developing a focus of applied research methodological expertise that would carry out independent and collaborative research, education and methodological services in the new Faculty of Medicine (later the FHS) of McMaster University. Its formation drew upon the definition of clinical epidemiology and biostatistics developed by its first chair: the application of epidemiological and biometric methods to the study of the diagnostic and

therapeutic process in order to effect improvement in health. Its initial staffing (3 members – 2 clinical epidemiologists and 1 biostatistician, for the period of 1967-1975) was based on its anticipated impact and the projected calls on its expertise by the programs under development at that time. Recognizing that the CE&B name captured only some of the depth and breadth of disciplines and expertise now in the department, we formally changed its name to the Department of Health Research Methods, Evidence, and Impact, effective January 1, 2017.

The subsequent growth and development of the Department have demonstrated that these initial plans required major quantitative and qualitative changes if the Department (and the Faculty of Health Sciences - FHS) were to achieve their mission.

In quantitative terms, within 18 months of its formation, it became clear that both the Department's opportunities for independent research and education and the calls on the Department's expertise were far greater than anticipated at the time of its inception, and at the direction of Faculty Council, its growth has proceeded at ten times the original estimate. [The Design, Measurement and Evaluation Program, the forerunner to the Health Research Methodology Program, was designed and initiated in 1969.]

In qualitative terms, it became clear that the achievement of the ultimate mission, "to effect an improvement in health", required expertise in areas beyond clinical epidemiology and biostatistics. Although these initial disciplines continue to be highly successful in research, education and methodological service related to the validation of the clinical examination and other diagnostic tests and the determination of the efficacy of preventive, therapeutic and rehabilitative regimens, programs, and health professionals, it has become apparent that additional areas of expertise are essential to this ultimate mission, and these areas have been added to the Department. These areas are described in terms of functions, rather than people, since most departmental members wear several hats and contribute to more than one area (e.g., the biostatisticians contribute to all).

1. **Health Economics**: recognized as essential for quantifying the cost-effectiveness and cost-utility of validated interventions and for analyzing the efficiency of alternative methods of financing and organizing health care systems as well as delivering specific services, this area has both flourished and has pointed out the need for additional developments in the Department (see #3).

2. **Public Health Epidemiology and Public Health**: recognized as essential for determining the distribution and determinants of disease (including occupational and environmental causes of human illness), this area has flourished and has added a key dimension to the graduate programs as the latter has attracted a broader array of applicants. The Public Health and Preventive Medicine Residency Program has existed in the Department since the early 1980s.

3. **Medical Informatics and Knowledge Transfer**: recognized as essential for making validated, efficacious interventions accessible to, frontline clinicians, this new area has in part developed as a natural extension of the Department's long-standing involvement in educational research (including collaboration with the Program for Educational Development) and is rapidly developing both local and international programs. The eHealth and Health Education Masters programs have grown out of this expertise and interest.

4. **Health Services Research and Policy**: recognized as essential for understanding health service delivery and effecting the translation of validated, effective findings into professional and

governmental policy, this area of the Department is seen as an essential element in the sequence of events that can most successfully be achieved if this information is to reach those who can benefit from it.

The Department has displayed the awareness, openness, and innovation necessary to identify and act upon the need for these quantitative and qualitative changes, and the Faculty of Health Sciences (FHS) has provided the encouragement and support for this growth and maturation. There is no doubt that the future will call for additional change, and the Department therefore must ensure the continuation of the awareness, openness, and inventiveness that brought it to its present level of maturity.

Editorial Note

Dave Sackett left McMaster in 1994 to found the international [Centre for Evidence-Based Medicine](#) at the University of Oxford in England. He officially retired from academia and clinical practice in 1999 and returned to Canada to establish a research and education centre about clinical trials. Dr. Sackett died at the age of 80 in the spring of 2015.

As a professor emeritus, he remained closely connected to McMaster's Department Health Research Methods, Evidence, and Impact, teaching seminars and courses and participating in the [research symposia](#) established in his honour.

MPH Program and Leadership

The Department of Health Research Methods, Evidence, and Impact (HEI) is the administrative and intellectual home of the Master of Public Health (MPH) program, although the MPH faculty come from across the Faculty of Health Sciences and the McMaster campus.

The MPH Program Director is a faculty member in the Department of Health Research Methods, Evidence, and Impact (HEI) who provides faculty-level leadership and oversight of the MPH program.

The MPH Program Administrator oversees the day-to-day management of the MPH program in supporting the Program Director, Program Committees, and admissions and selection process.

The MPH Curriculum Coordinator supports the faculty, core courses, practicum and thesis process, and provides elective options.

Getting Help.

- Questions about policies and procedures are best directed to the MPH Program Coordinator. MPH program staff will sometimes direct inquiries to the Program Director. MPH policies and procedures are summarized in this handbook and in the SGS Graduate Calendar. Forms and additional materials are available in Avenue to Learn and on the [School of Graduate Studies](#) website. Contacts for specific inquiries can be found on the MPH website, or students can contact askmph@mcmaster.ca for guidance.
- Students may consult the Program Director regarding a variety of matters beyond routine procedural inquiries. These may include interpreting the applicability of regulations and policies, concerns about supervision or personal problems affecting work, or if the student wishes to deviate from regulations in consideration of a particular circumstance. In such cases of petitions for special consideration, the Program Director is normally required to approve the student's

request, which is then adjudicated by the Associate Dean of Graduate Studies, Health Sciences. As such, the support of the Program Director does not guarantee that a request for special consideration will be approved.

The Areas of Focus

Students pursue a general MPH degree and can explore other areas, such as health policy and management, epidemiology, health economics, research methods, public health, health informatics, environmental health or health ethics

Selection of the Thesis or Practicum Option

MPH students must choose one of two tracks: 1) practicum or 2) thesis. MPH students will be expected to pick one of these two options by the end of their first term in consultation with the Program Director. Students must indicate their choice of track by the end of the fall term of first year in the Microsoft Teams MPH Thesis & Practicum platform . Further detail and instruction will be provided in PUBHLTH 712, Professional Development Studio I. The deadline for practicum and thesis site and supervisor confirmation is May 1. Degree requirements for both options are listed below in Table 1. An overview of the practicum and thesis options is provided in the corresponding supplementary sections at the end of this handbook, entitled the 'MPH Practicum Manual and the MPH Thesis Manual'. Please refer to these two separate manuals for specific information related to a practicum or thesis within the MPH program.

Table 1 Degree requirements

	MPH (Thesis based)	MPH (Practicum based)
Number of Core Courses	8	8
Number of electives A list of suggested electives will be posted on Avenue to Learn each term for the following term.	None Required. Thesis students may choose 1-2 optional electives	5 Note: A second part-time practicum can take the place of 2 electives
Capstone Paper – within PUBHLTH 708 Professional Studio II		√
Thesis protocol, implementation, and defense	√	

Electives are a unique feature of the MPH program. Additional electives will be circulated by the Curriculum Coordinator each term for electives held in the following term via the MPH listserv and the university's learning/course management platform. Electives that are not on the list must be reviewed and approved by SGS on the recommendation of the director. Please refer to the Graduate Calendar for a course list.

Students can work with MPH faculty to develop an independent study course. The MPH Independent Study Application form is available on Avenue to Learn. This form must be reviewed and approved by the Program Director at least six weeks prior to the start of the term.

Note: Water Without Borders **courses are non-credit courses and cannot be counted as electives.**

1.0 Faculty Advisor and Student Relationship

The School of Graduate Studies website outlines the responsibilities of graduate students, their supervisors, and the expectations of a graduate student-supervisor relationship.

https://gs.mcmaster.ca/app/uploads/2020/02/Getting-Supervisory-Relationship-Off-to-Good-Start-updated-May-2022.pdf

1.1 General Objectives

The MPH Program Director and core faculty will provide advice to all students in the MPH program. As appropriate, mentors and additional faculty supports may be identified.

The Program Director will be the initial contact person for the MPH students and acts as the student's primary representative to the faculty in all aspects of the student's goals within the program including funding requests for student related activities. The students' responsibility is to keep the Program Director informed about their direction and progress in the program.

1.2 Specific Objectives

The specific objectives of the Program Director-student relationship include the following:

- The Program Director ensures the student feels welcome from the beginning of the student's enrolment in the program through the Professional Development Studio, a two-part course series
- The Program Director and the student should meet regularly, on a one-on-one basis, to discuss progress through the program and evaluations that have been received.
- The Program Director and student will discuss the thesis/practicum options early in their meetings to decide the option that best meets the student's learning objectives.
- The student will keep the Program Director informed about project activities in courses.
- The Program Director assists the student in the selection of appropriate courses to optimize their education in the elective portion of the program.
- The Program Director may act as the thesis supervisor on agreed upon thesis topic.

It is expected that students avail themselves of a variety of opportunities during their MPH Program. The Program Director will assist the student in contacting other faculty members who might act as resources for MPH activities such as course projects and thesis. The initiative should usually come from the student in specifying the type of resources required; input from the Program Director is helpful in identifying faculty members with the most appropriate skills and interests. While students may, in principle, contact any individual for help during their program, they should realize that only faculty members associated with the Department of HEI are eligible to assume roles where formal academic credit is required.

The specific objectives of the Thesis Supervisor-student relationship include the following:

- The Supervisor must be a McMaster Faculty member. In consultation with the Program Director, if needed, the supervisor will direct students to identify a suitable thesis committee, consisting of two additional committee members, one of whom could be external to McMaster (all committee

members, including external members, must be approved as soon as their willingness to sit on the students' committee has been determined. The External Reader must be approved in advance of the scheduled defense date). The external reader should be arms-length and not have direct involvement in the student's thesis. The thesis committee will meet to ensure the student is progressing. It is also the student's responsibility to work with the MPH Program Office and inform the Curriculum Coordinator so that a room or virtual meeting room (i.e. Zoom room) is booked for the defense. The student must provide all readers with a copy of the thesis in sufficient (at least 4 weeks) time before the defense itself. The thesis should not be sent to the external reader before all of the internal committee members have read it and provided feedback. Failure to carry out any of these steps may result in postponement of the defense or partial or complete disapproval of the thesis. Refer to the MPH Thesis Manual for complete details concerning the thesis. The thesis supervisor is required to have a formal appointment in the School of Graduate Studies.

A change of supervisor for students in the thesis option must be negotiated with the approval of the MPH Program Director. In the circumstance of a breakdown of a Supervisor student match, the Program Director is contacted in order to help remedy the situation. Under exceptional circumstances, a student may be allowed to select a new supervisor. A change in supervision or thesis project requires the student to submit a revised education plan. Note, a change in thesis Supervisor is not the norm and students and supervisors should refer to:

School of Graduate Studies Graduate Calendar> General Regulations of the Graduate School> section 2.7 Supervision for procedures regarding a request to change a member of the supervisory committee: http://academiccalendars.romcmaster.ca/content.php?catoid=25&navoid=4667

1.3 Organization

Beginning in September of each academic year, incoming students are welcomed by the MPH Program Director, the Program staff and core faculty at the orientation day. Afterwards, the frequency of meetings should be negotiated, but it is suggested that they occur at least once per term. Subsequent meetings may be needed at certain times during the student's program; when the student is new to the program and during the time the student is selecting a thesis or practicum.

2.0 MPH Program Requirements

2.1 Requirements for a Thesis-based MPH Degree

For full-time students, the expected time for completion is two years from initial registration in the program, not less than 16 months of continuous, full-time study. Students may be allowed to continue for a maximum of three years.

    i)   Successful completion of eight core MPH 3-unit courses:
- a. PUBHLTH 700 Foundations of Population and Public Health Practice
- b. PUBHLTH 701 Population and Public Health Epidemiology
- c. HRM 702 Biostatistics
- d. PUBHLTH 703 Public Health Policy

e. PUBHLTH 704 Population and Public Health Research Methods (Prerequisite: PUBHLTH 701 Population and Public Health Epidemiology or permission of the instructor)
f. PUBHLTH 708 Leadership & Applied Public Health
g. PUBHLTH 712 Professional Development Studio I
h. PUBHLTH 713 Professional Development Studio II

ii) Optional one-two electives relevant to student's thesis, area of focus or interest
iii) Thesis students present their updated progress in PUBHLTH 708, the Leadership & Applied Course
Submission and successful defense of their thesis

Table 2 Thesis Schedule Full-time

	Fall Term	Winter Term	Summer Term
Year 1	**PUBHLTH 700** Foundations of Population and Public Health Practice **PUBHLTH 712** Professional Development Studio I **HRM 702** Introduction to Biostatistics **PUBHLTH 701** Population and Public Health Epidemiology	**PUBHLTH 703** Public Health Policy **PUBHLTH 704** Population and Public Health Research Methods (Prerequisite: PUBHLTH 701) **PUBHLTH 713** Professional Development Studio II	**Thesis Work**
Year 2	**PUBHLTH 708** Leadership & Applied Public Health **Thesis Work**	**Thesis Work**	**Thesis Defense**

2.2 Requirements for a Practicum-based MPH Degree

The practicum track requires completion of core and electives courses as well as a full-time practicum. For full-time study it takes approximately 16 months to complete the degree.

i) Successful completion of eight core MPH 3-unit courses:
a. PUBHLTH 700 Foundations of Population and Public Health Practice
b. PUBHLTH 701 Population and Public Health Epidemiology
c. HRM 702 Biostatistics
d. PUBHLTH 703 Public Health Policy
e. PUBHLTH 704 Population and Public Health Research Methods (Prerequisite: PUBHLTH 701 Population and Public Health Epidemiology or permission of the instructor)
f. PUBHLTH 708 Leadership & Applied Public Health
g. PUBHLTH 712 Professional Development Studio I

h. PUBHLTH 713 Professional Development Studio II (Prerequisite: PUBHLTH 712 Professional Development Studio II)
This course includes an MPH Capstone Report: A capstone paper relevant to the student's practicum experience or a public health issue of interest is written in the fall term of second year for full-time students and after the completion of the practicum for part-time students. Capstone papers not related to the practicum can be requested by students in discussion with the Program Director.

Note: Full-time students need 16 months to complete the degree requirements. Part-time students can take up to four years (maximum) to complete all degree requirements.

i) Five electives relevant to the student's area of focus or interest are required. An additional part-time practicum (17.5 hours per week for 16 weeks) can take the place of 2 electives in the fall term of the second year.

The MPH Program offers the following elective courses, all available to our students:

PUBHLTH 706 - Introduction to Health and Public Health Economics – Winter Term
PUBHLTH 707 - Implications of Infectious Diseases - Winter Term
PUBHLTH 709 - Theories of Health Behaviour – Summer Term
PUBHLTH 710 - Introduction to Knowledge Synthesis and Guidelines – Fall Term
PUBHLTH 711 - Program Evaluation in Public Health – Winter Term
PUBHLTH 714 - Communicable Disease Prevention, Epidemiology and Control – Fall Term
PUBHLTH 715 - Advanced Topics in Epidemiology – Winter Term
PUBHLTH 716 - The Science and Practice of Knowledge Translation: Foundations – Winter Term
PUBHLTH 721 – Fundamentals of Environmental Health and Health Impacts of Climate Change – Fall Term

In addition to MPH electives, there are also opportunities to take electives from other programs within McMaster. MPH elective enrollment takes place the term prior to the course being offered. A list of approved electives will be circulated to students by the Curriculum Coordinator each term for the following term. Electives not on the list must be approved by the Program Director. Students can work with MPH faculty to develop an independent study course. The MPH Independent Study Application form is available on Avenue to Learn. This form must be reviewed and approved by the Program Director at least six weeks prior to the start of the term. *Note: Water Without Borders* **courses are non-credit courses and cannot be counted as electives.**

Completion of a sixteen-week full-time (35 hours per week) practicum. The practicum is typically done during the spring/summer term of the first year of study.

Table 3 Practicum Schedule Full-time

	Fall Term	Winter Term	Summer Term
Year 1	**PUBHLTH 700** Foundations of Population and Public Health Practice **PUBHLTH 712** Professional Development Studio I	**PUBHLTH 703** Public Health Policy **PUBHLTH 704** Population and Public Health Research Methods (Prerequisite: PUBHLTH 701)	**Full-Time Practicum** (mandatory) **Elective*** (optional)

	HRM 702 Introduction to Biostatistics PUBHLTH 701 Population and Public Health Epidemiology	PUBHLTH 713 Professional Development Studio II Elective(s)*	
Year 2	**PUBHLTH 708** Leadership & Applied Public Health **Elective(s)*** **Part-Time Practicum** (optional)*Students complete program in December*		

2.3 SGS 101 & SGS 201 Requirement

All graduate students are required to successfully complete SGS 101 Academic Research Integrity and Ethics and SGS 201 Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act (AODA) during their first year of study. Information regarding registration will be circulated each term by the School of Graduate Studies. Students will be able to register through MOSAIC, the University's online portal, and complete the courses online. Completion of SGS 101 / 201 will appear in the Student Centre in MOSAIC.

2.4 Declaration of Thesis or Practicum Option

Declaration of option (thesis or practicum) is typically completed in the program no later than the end of the first term. Student selection must be indicated in Microsoft Teams the program's practicum and thesis management by the end of 1st year winter term. A change in status requires the permission of the thesis supervisor and the Program Director and will have implications for financial support. Thesis/practicum students who change their status after May 1st may be subject to repayment of thesis stipend.

3.0 Evaluation

3.1 Student Evaluation in the MPH Program

There are several components of evaluation in the MPH Program. They are course work and practicum report/final capstone paper (practicum-based Master's) or thesis (thesis-based Master's).

3.2 Course Work

Each course has its own approved criteria that are usually based on assignments, papers and class participation. A letter grade is awarded by the course instructor. Late assignments will be penalized unless the student has been given an extension in writing from the course instructors. Specific details will be clearly stated in the course outlines.

The grading system is outlined below:

A+	=	90 to 100
A	=	85 to 89
A-	=	80 to 83
B+	=	77 to 79
B	=	73 to 76
B-	=	70 to 72
F	=	failure

If a student receives a course grade below B-, remediation will be required and a recommendation may be made for the student to withdraw from the program.

Courses are a minimum of 12 weeks in length. Classes generally conclude by the following dates for each term; December 15 for Fall Term, April 15 for Winter Term, August 15 for Spring/Summer Term. Students are expected to consult final dates with course instructors. Final grades are to be submitted by the following dates for each term; December 31 for Fall Term, early May for Winter Term, August 31 for Spring/Summer Term. Classes will run during reading week(s) at the discretion of the course instructor; students must contact their course instructor to confirm.

3.3 Practicum

Students and their supervisors meet together and discuss the objectives of the practicum prior to and at the beginning of the practicum, meet to discuss progress during the practicum, and meet to provide input for a pass/fail grade at the end.

It is the responsibility of the student to submit the learning contract within the first week to 10 days following the start of the practicum in the Microsoft Teams MPH Practicum Group. It is recommended that the student and practicum supervisor develop the learning contract together prior to submission. The learning contract should be approved by the supervisor. The mid-term evaluation is due at the end of the second month (mid-way) of your practicum and final evaluation is due at the end of your practicum. Please ensure that the practicum evaluations are submitted in the Microsoft Teams MPH Practicum Group files in a timely manner. In the event that all practicum documents are not received, a milestone indicating completion will be not recorded with the School of Graduate Studies. Practicum milestone/s are required for program completion. The Program Director will assign pass/fail based on the evaluation feedback provided by the practicum supervisor.

3.4 Thesis

The final evaluation for thesis-based MPH students is the written and oral defense of a thesis before a thesis examination committee. The thesis is simply graded as pass/fail. Both components, oral and written, have to be successfully completed. If a student fails either part of the thesis, the curriculum and thesis examination committees will decide if the student may retry the defense. See MPH Thesis Manual for the requirements for a thesis and thesis defense.

3.5 Capstone Paper

The evaluation for practicum-based MPH students is a written paper, completed during the Leadership & Applied Public Health course in the fall of second year. See MPH Practicum Manual section 5.0 for requirements of this paper.

4.0 Policy RE: Overlap in MPH Program

This policy is intended to clarify the Master of Public Health program regarding the overlap between topics used in course assignments, theses and Capstone papers.

The MPH program adopts the principle that students avoid duplication, but overlap (methodological or content area) in courses and theses is allowed; however, in accordance with the McMaster policy on academic integrity "the submission of work that is not one's own or for which other credit has been obtained" is considered academic dishonesty and must be avoided. Adjudication is the responsibility of the student's Supervisory Committee for thesis students or by the Program Director for practicum students.

5.0 Policy RE: Attendance in the MPH Program

Illness or Unavoidable Absence During Course Work:

If a student is ill or legitimately absent (e.g. personal reasons) prior to an examination or course deadline, the student must email the Course Instructor and copy the Curriculum Coordinator as early as possible, so that arrangements can be made for an extension or deferral.

The MPH Program Attendance Policy is as follows:

- Any absence must be due to a reasonable excuse that is exceptional and out of the control to some extent of the student (illness, death in family, special exams etc.).
- The specific requirements for absence notices will be posted on Avenue to Learn.
- One absence from a tutorial or class with a legitimate excuse is reasonable, two may be acceptable, but three missed tutorials/class will result in the student NOT receiving credit for the course.
- If the student is absent, they will receive a "0" participation grade on that day.
- In the event of greater than two absences, the student will be required to meet with the Program Director. If the absence is deemed not 'acceptable' (and the prior expectation is that most would not be), the student will be asked to withdraw from the course.
- Students must inform course instructors about any absences, whenever possible, before the class for which they are absent.

Please note, students should consult the course material for the specific attendance policy as the above policy is the minimum requirement and each course may have additional requirements for attendance and participation.

6.0 Policy RE: Appeals and Petitions for Special Consideration

For information regarding the Appeals and Petitions for Special Considerations regulations and requests for leave of absence, please refer to the Graduate School Calendar, Section 2.5.9, here: http://academiccalendars.romcmaster.ca/content.php?catoid=20&navoid=3572&hl=%22Accommodation%22&returnto=search#2-5-9_appeals_and_petitions_for_special_consideration

The appropriate form is available on the School of Graduate Studies website here:

https://gs.mcmaster.ca/current-students/forms-and-policies-for-graduate-students-staff-and-faculty/

7.0 Policy RE: Accommodations

Please refer to McMaster University's Accommodations policies for information, found here: http://www.mcmaster.ca/policy/Students-AcademicStudies/

8.0 Policy RE: Special Petition Requests for Alternate Course

If a student has taken a graduate level course that is the equivalent of an MPH course, the student can submit a special petition to request approval that the equivalent course requirement has been completed. **Please note, the special petition request is not to reduce the number of MPH courses a student is required to complete for the MPH degree.** This process is typically initiated by students who have completed similar courses at other institutions and would like to count previously completed coursework towards the prerequisites allowing the student to register for other, more advanced course(s). This is determined on a case-by-case basis and supporting documentation (i.e. course syllabus and signed petition form) must be provided. The special petition form is available from the School of Graduate Studies website:

https://gs.mcmaster.ca/current-students/forms-and-policies-for-graduate-students-staff-and-faculty/

9.0 Academic Integrity Policy & Generative AI

Academic Integrity

According to McMaster's Academic Integrity Policy, "Academic dishonesty is to knowingly act or fail to act in a way that results or could result in unearned academic credit or advantage. Students must understand what academic dishonesty is by reviewing the Academic Integrity policy.

Use of Generative Artificial Intelligence (AI)

While we acknowledge that the use of Generative AI, such as ChatGPT, may be helpful to your learning, we require you to act with academic integrity when being assessed. Currently, MPH assessments have

not been designed with Generative AI tools in mind and using them threatens the integrity of the assessment.

The main purpose of a university is the pursuit of knowledge and scholarship. As a student at McMaster University, you are expected to practice intellectual honesty and to fully acknowledge the work of others by providing appropriate references in your scholarly work. You must not take credit for work that is not your own. Please note that the McMaster University Academic Integrity policy states under item 18(c) that "It shall be an offence knowingly to … submit academic work for assessment that was purchased or acquired from another source".

Please check with your course coordinator and the course outline for each MPH and elective course, as course coordinators will provide additional guidance for specific assessments. In general, the direct use of text originating from a Generative AI tool, beyond using the tool to correct grammar/spelling, should be included in quotation marks or equivalent and cited using a citation style appropriate for the context. Should the use of an AI assistant like ChatGPT be permitted for a particular assessment, you must be transparent by including a Generative AI statement as an appendix. This statement needs to declare the specific Generative AI tool used, the prompts used to create the submitted content, and for which sections/tasks in the assessment you used the tool. If you use Generative AI but do not declare this, the Course Coordinator will refer the case to the Office of Academic Integrity.

10.0 HEI Department Special Events

HEI presents "Special Events" such as rounds, lectures, research days, workshops, and symposia. Students will receive advance notice of these events via McMaster email. For students wishing to receive email notifications when an announcement has been posted on Avenue can set this up using the instructions via the following link: https://avenuehelp.mcmaster.ca/exec/avenue-mail/. Special events are also listed on the HEI website at: http://www.fhs.mcmaster.ca/ceb/events_upcoming.htm. Please check this website periodically in order to keep up-to-date on departmental events.
All students are expected to attend these department events. These will be very beneficial to students as methodological issues are discussed in the context of a wide variety of research questions.

In addition, individual research units may hold their own rounds. If your Supervisor belongs to one of these units, you are expected to attend these as well.

10.0 Helpful Resources

Student Accessibility Services

SAS assists with academic and disability-related needs. This support is available to students who have been diagnosed with a disability or disorder. Contact information: Gilmour Hall, Room B110, (905) 525-9140 ext. 28652; http://sas.mcmaster.ca/; sas@mcmaster.ca

Student Wellness

The Student Wellness Centre offers various services. Contact information: McMaster Student Centre (MUSC) B101; http://wellness.mcmaster.ca

Student Success Centre

Provides support in the areas of student orientation, academic skills, leadership, service-learning, volunteerism, educational planning, employment and career transition. Contact information: Gilmour Hall 110; http://studentsuccess.mcmaster.ca/index.php; studentsuccess@mcmaster.ca

Indigenous Student Services

Indigenous Student Services was created in order to support First Nations, Inuit, and Métis students attending McMaster. Contact information: L.R. Wilson Hall; ex.27426; https://indigservices.mcmaster.ca/; indigenous.admin@mcmaster.ca. The Indigenous Students Health Sciences Office provides services and supports for all First Nations, Inuit, and Métis students who study within in the Faculty of Health Sciences. Contact information: HSC 2A1E; ex.23935; https://ishs.mcmaster.ca; ishs@mcmaster.ca

International Student Services (ISS)

ISS offers information and services for International Students in a variety of areas, including immigration matters, University Health Insurance Plan (UHIP), work/study abroad, and more. Contact information: Gilmour Hall, Room 104; (905) 525-9140 ext. 24748; https://iss.mcmaster.ca/; iss@mcmaster.ca

Master of Public Health Information for students, faculty and staff, including: Degree requirements, course listing, faculty information, news & announcements www.fhs.mcmaster.ca/ceb/mph	**Health Sciences Graduate Programs** Information for students, faculty and staff: FHS Research Plenary http://fhs.mcmaster.ca/grad/index.html
Department of Health Research Methods, Evidence, and Impact Information for students, faculty and staff, including: Faculty listing, research groups, key contact people in HEI, upcoming events http://www.fhs.mcmaster.ca/ceb/	**The School of Graduate Studies** Information for current students including: Scholarships, forms, guidelines, graduate calendars, health plan and dental plan information, payroll information, thesis regulations https://gs.mcmaster.ca/

Academic Grievances

Students who have academic grievances and wish to make an appeal should see the Senate Policy Statement: Student Appeal Procedures, available here: http://www.mcmaster.ca/policy/Students-AcademicStudies/

**FHS GRADUATE PROGRAM IN MASTER
OF PUBLIC HEALTH (MPH)**

MPH Student Thesis Manual

Supplement to the MPH Handbook

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1.1 Guidelines

The School of Graduate Studies provides a number of options for the completion of requirements for a Master's degree. One option requires the writing and defense of a thesis. The thesis offers students the opportunity to undertake a major piece of investigation on a topic of their own choosing, and thus constitutes, for many students, their first piece of independent professional work. It is a useful training experience for people who plan research careers and may help them launch their career.

1.2 Thesis Proposal Instructions

With guidance from the thesis supervisor, the proposal should be limited to two pages, single spaced, and should include the following:

- Title.
- One-sentence statement of the question to be posed in the thesis.
- The most important part of this submission should list and briefly describe the methodological or analytic problems which the student thinks they may encounter and will have to solve in the execution of their thesis.
- A statement of why the student selected this topic.
- A brief statement of the implications of this work to population and public health.
- List of the thesis committee members.
- Draft schedule for thesis completion including timeline and anticipated outcomes.
- Ensure that all signatures are in place.

1.3 Thesis Proposal Approval Process

Once a student has a confirmed thesis supervisor, usually the idea for the thesis proposal has already been discussed and accepted in principle. The student drafts the proposal and gives it to their thesis supervisor initially for comments before distributing it to the remainder of the committee.

After the final draft of the proposal is ready, the student distributes the thesis proposal to their committee members. The student is responsible for setting up a meeting which must be attended by the student, thesis supervisor, and the internal MPH faculty readers. The meeting should be held within one month of distribution of the final proposal draft. The meeting itself is actually a mini-defense of the thesis proposal. Each committee member becomes aware of exactly what the other members of the committee expect of the student and has the opportunity to become involved in the whole process at the onset. Questions or issues can be answered and sorted out to everyone's satisfaction. Also, at this time the committee negotiates how it will work together and assist the student during the development of the thesis.

The proposal will be circulated to the Program Director by the Curriculum Coordinator via email after the supervisor has approved and signed. If a concern arises, the Program Director approaches the thesis supervisor directly for clarification. Unless objections are raised that indicate the proposal needs to be revised and resubmitted, two weeks after distribution, the thesis proposal is deemed acceptable by the MPH Program. If the student subsequently does what is proposed, the effect of the faculty approval is that the faculty will subsequently raise no objection as to the legitimacy of the topic as a thesis subject.

Please refer to the MPH Thesis Guidance Document and Checklist on page 27.

1.4 Ethics Section of Thesis Proposal

Each student will be expected to include in their graduate thesis a section (of varying length according to the research) addressing the ethical considerations associated with their project including ethical concerns about the hypothesis, question and findings, as well as the ethical issues related to the proposed methodologies.

MPH thesis students who require REB approval will follow the process as set out by the Hamilton Integrated Research Ethics Board (HIREB) http://fhs.mcmaster.ca/healthresearch/hireb.html.

2.0 Areas for Acceptable Thesis Topic

The master's degree must provide a demonstration of competence on the part of the student as an independent investigator. Students are required to explore a topic in considerable depth, to write up the findings, and to defend these findings in a public forum. To accomplish these goals, students may choose to design or execute a survey or trial of some population or policy study; they may undertake the definition and measurement of a phenomenon pertinent to population health, or public health services and policy research, public health education research or public health economics; they also may conduct secondary analysis of a dataset related to public health. Or they may engage in the evaluation or analysis of a prevention or screening procedure, or of a public health or healthy public policy.

The thesis will be a coherent document that provides a complete and systematic account of the research accomplished or designed by the writer. While a master's degree may advance our understanding, this is not a necessary condition that a master's thesis must meet.

3.0 Thesis Advisory Committee

3.1 The Selection of a Supervisory Committee

Thesis-based students are supervised by a committee. The supervisory committee is composed of a supervisor who must be a McMaster Graduate faculty and at least two other faculty members. The committee should be balanced in terms of background or expertise and include obvious content experts from the MPH Program. Students should consult their supervisor and program director as needed for committee member suggestions. Committee members should be approved by the supervisor.

An external examiner, at arms-length from the project (i.e. they should not be directly involved in the thesis work and/or the student and supervisor should not have active collaborations with the external member), will be added to the committee by the supervisor in consultation with the program director when the thesis draft is finalized for defense. The external examiner reviews the final written draft and participates in the defense, but is not involved in the ongoing supervision of the project.

The policy of the MPH Program is that students should choose supervisors and readers who will be most helpful to them in the preparation of their theses. While the supervisor takes on the main task of directing progress, it is important that readers have the opportunity to react early to major methodological decisions. This can be achieved through a supervisory committee meeting at the point when the main approach is clear. An oral defense can only be planned when the committee agrees that the written thesis is acceptable. The roles of the various members of the committee are described in detail below.

Note: A thesis committee can advise the student on the selection of elective courses, which may be appropriate to the thesis.

3.2 Faculty Available for MPH Thesis Supervision and Supervisory Committee Members

The MPH Program maintains an updated list of MPH faculty members who are available to serve as MPH thesis supervisors and members of a student's MPH Supervisory Committee. Note that the School of Graduate Studies requires all faculty members involved in graduate student supervision be approved by the Program, the applicant's respective faculty, and the Office of the Associate Dean of Graduate Studies and School of Graduate Studies in order to supervise MPH students. MPH supervisors and committee members can be HEI full-time, joint or associate faculty. Part-time HEI faculty and faculty outside of HEI can be considered for thesis roles on a case-by-case basis.

Please refer to the updated list of MPH faculty available to supervise MPH theses and sit on MPH supervisory committees. The list is updated as new faculty are approved and is available at www.fhs.mcmaster.ca/ceb/mph/MPH_faculty.htm.

3.3 The Supervisor

The supervisor (or first reader) of a MPH thesis must be an approved member of the MPH Graduate Faculty. If in doubt, please consult the curriculum coordinator and MPH Program Director. The supervisor assumes responsibility for the management of the thesis. Specifically, they are responsible for providing direction to the student, advice on data sources and potential avenues of approach, instructions on the proper content and form of the thesis, review of the student's progress, and serving as the first reader of the thesis. It is the responsibility of the supervisor to help the student think through methodological issues and to raise questions about possible methodological decisions faced/taken by the student. The supervisor is not eligible to be chair of the thesis defense examination.

A student selects a topic of their own choice along with their thesis supervisor, who helps the student select the remaining members of the supervisory committee. Students who receive stipends from a faculty research grant are typically expected to develop a thesis topic that relates to the supervisor's research.

The Program Director should discuss and offer suggestions about the appropriateness of not only the thesis supervisor but also of the other committee members. The supervisor typically has competence and interest in the area chosen. After the proposed supervisor has been approached and agreed to take on a student and their thesis, the student should discuss the remainder of the committee with their supervisor. Once a student has identified their supervisor, the information must be submitted to the Curriculum Coordinator. At that time, the Curriculum Coordinator will review the supervisor information. If the supervisor had not been previously approved by the Faculty of Health Sciences (FHS), specifically for MPH, the Curriculum Coordinator will begin the approval process and will work with the faculty member and FHS.

3.4 The Second Committee Member

The second reader must be selected from faculty with graduate faculty status in MPH. This faculty member should be chosen in consultation with the supervisor. The second reader is responsible for providing methodological advice and criticisms to the student during the preparation of the thesis, and when they read the thesis for approval. The second reader is eligible to be chair of the thesis defense examination.

3.5 The Third Reader

The criteria for selection of the third reader are usually the same as that for the second reader. The third reader may be a member of graduate faculty outside of HEI but within the University. The third reader is eligible to be chair of the thesis defense examination.

3.6 The External Reader

The external reader is contacted directly by the thesis supervisor and must be approved by the MPH Program Director in writing. The external reader must be approved by the Program Director and must provide their CV to the Curriculum Coordinator who will work with the Program Director in obtaining approval. The final draft of the thesis must be in the hands of the external reader at least one month before the defense. The external reader will generally be knowledgeable about some aspects of the population or public health aspects of the thesis topic (e.g. acts as a content expert). External readers are expected to send their thesis report to the MPH Program Office via the MPH Curriculum Coordinator before the thesis defense takes place if they do not attend the thesis defense. Email is acceptable. The email or letter should be copied to the thesis supervisor.

The supervisor must seek approval of the external reader from the MPH Program Director as well as the HEI Department, if required. The name and position of the proposed external reader should be sent to the Program Director along with his or her qualifications to act as an external reader. The external reviewers must be at arms-length from the project and not be involved in the supervision of the student until the end of the process, to review the final written document after the internal committee has approved it for defense.

Once a student has identified their committee members, the information must be submitted to the Curriculum Coordinator who will review the committee member information. If the committee member had not been previously approved by the Faculty of Health Sciences (FHS), specifically for MPH, the Curriculum Coordinator will begin the approval process and will work with the faculty member and FHS.

3.7 MPH Thesis Supervisory Committee Meetings

MPH thesis-based students should contact the Program Director in addition to meeting with their supervisor and other members of the supervisory committee *regularly (consult supervisor to determine regularity) to ensure that the student and their project is on track and they are able to complete their MPH degree within the maximum two- year timeframe*. The Program will monitor progress through the thesis with regular meetings of the student with the Program Director. All thesis forms are available on Avenue to Learn.

3.8 The Reading of the Thesis

The supervisor, second and third readers must read the thesis and each conclude that it is in an acceptable state to proceed to a defense. Typically, a student will provide each reader with a completed first draft.

The readers will make whatever recommendations they feel are necessary for revision so that subsequent drafts and the final draft will be acceptable. The external reader will not be involved at this point.

If necessary, it is the responsibility of the supervisor to get the readers and the student together to obtain a common understanding of what changes in the first draft are necessary for an acceptable subsequent document. If the recommendations for change are contentious or detailed, the student is entitled to a written statement from the committee outlining required revisions. When the student presents a final draft, which each of the inside readers concludes is an acceptable document, the committee will confirm this among themselves and then give the student permission to book a date for the thesis defense. The final draft must be in the hands of the committee, including the external reader, at least four weeks prior to the defense.

The external reader must be given a written copy of the thesis at least one month before the oral defense. The external reader's report will be taken into consideration during the defense if an external reader does not attend the defense. The MPH thesis defense, when decided, will then be set up by MPH Curriculum Coordinator.

4.0 Thesis Defense

4.1 Attendance at the Thesis Defense

Every effort should be made to have all thesis committee members present at the thesis defense. If circumstances dictate that a committee member absolutely cannot be present, then they must contact the MPH Program Office who, on advice of the MPH Program Director, will appoint a substitute examiner to attend the defense and present comments and questions on the written document. If the external reader cannot be present, no substitute member is required to attend, but the external reader's recommendation concerning the acceptability of the written document should be sent, in writing, to the MPH Curriculum Coordinator, along with any questions that are to be directed to the candidate following their oral presentation.

If a committee member cannot attend the defense at the last minute, they should notify the MPH Program Office and send comments and questions to the thesis supervisor (a copy must be sent to MPH Curriculum Coordinator).

Thesis defenses are open to all members of the University community.

4.2 Booking a Thesis Defense Date

When students are in the process of booking the defense date, make sure your thesis committee has agreed to the date and time. The student and supervisor will decide on either an in-person or virtual defence. Once this has been determined, contact the MPH Curriculum Coordinator with specifics as well as provide the Curriculum Coordinator the latest title of your thesis as sometimes this changes from the initial proposal. As soon as a defense date is confirmed, the Curriculum Coordinator will begin the process of securing a Chair for the defense. Typically defenses occur in the summer term of your second year of study. If you defend outside of this timeline, it must be pre-approved by your thesis supervisor and

additional tuition charges may apply. Deadlines for submitting thesis documents to SGS are posted on the SGS web site via the sessional dates link at the following:

https://academiccalendars.romcmaster.ca/index.php

4.3 Oral Defense Procedure

The examination will be chaired by either the second or third reader or another MPH faculty member, not by the supervisor. At the defense of the thesis, the student is expected to present a brief (typically 20 minutes, not longer than 30 minutes) presentation of the thesis with particular emphasis on the methodology. The presentation is expected to be orderly and concise. Following this, the student must be prepared to defend both their presentation and written thesis. Initially, questions will be asked by the thesis readers, then by other members of the faculty, and finally by other members of the audience.

During the question period following the oral presentation, the readers may pose questions concerning either the oral presentation or the written document. The candidate may be questioned on any aspect of the thesis, but most questions should emphasize the methodological aspects. Candidates can be expected to justify or clarify, but not debate, their responses.

At the conclusion of the defense, the supervisory committee will reach (in-camera) a judgment as to whether or not the defense was acceptable. If the defense is deemed unacceptable, the Examination Chair will provide a statement of the deficiencies and the improvements that must be addressed before the defense can be reconvened. If the deficiencies are substantial, the committee may recommend a follow-up committee meeting to review the student's progress before the defense is reconvened. Students who demonstrate major deficiencies may be required to complete additional work prior to reconvening the defense.

Any corrections or modifications which the examiners feel should be made in the written thesis should be communicated in writing by the Chair to the candidate and the thesis supervisor, who will take responsibility for ensuring that the corrections/modifications are properly incorporated into the thesis.

Prior to the thesis defense, the typed document must comply with university formatting requirements for thesis publications. https://gs.mcmaster.ca/current-students/completing-your-degree/masters-thesis/

A thesis may be submitted at any time of the year.

5.0 Deadlines, Style Requirements, and Other Hurdles

The School of Graduate Studies website contains a number of formal requirements pertaining to dates when theses must be submitted, the style which theses must follow, costs of binding theses, maximum permissible time for completion of degree requirements, and continuous registrations. It is the responsibility of the student to understand and comply with each of these requirements. In particular, students must be aware that to be eligible for convocation in the autumn or spring, there are deadlines by which theses must be submitted to the School of Graduate Studies (GH 212). Please refer to the Guide for the Preparation of Theses:

https://gs.mcmaster.ca/current-students/completing-your-degree/masters-thesis/

6.0 Expected Length of a Thesis

It is important to emphasize that students are writing a master's thesis, not a PhD dissertation. For many MPH theses, a document of approximately 80-100 pages in length is sufficient with the expectation that 200 pages is the maximum. The program expects that the average completion time for a thesis is three to six months of full-time intensive work following the selection of a topic and successful acquisition of data. While the efforts and endeavors of individual students will vary, and while some students may choose not to devote their full time to the thesis, the program does not expect the work for a thesis to extend for more than a year. In negotiating an appropriate project, consider also that a full-time student is expected to complete seven core courses, and a thesis within six terms (two years). Students who have not defended their thesis within the two years need to be aware that there is normally a three-year time limit on completion of a Master's degree as detailed in the policies and procedures described in the section on Regulations for Master's Degrees (Program Duration section) in the University Graduate Calendar.

Please refer to the MPH Thesis Guidance Document and Checklist below in Section 8.0.

7.0 Final Submission of a Thesis to the School of Graduate Studies

Students are responsible for the costs associated with typing, preparing, printing and binding their thesis. As of June 2014, students can submit their final thesis submission electronically. Information regarding the process can be found at: https://gs.mcmaster.ca/current-students/completing-your-degree/masters-thesis/

After the student's successfully defended thesis has been approved in writing by their supervisor, a final copy of the thesis may be printed for the supervisor and other members of supervisory committee (if appropriate). At that time, the student will be required to submit the final thesis, after which they will complete a request to graduate, convocation and alumni form. At this point the student has done everything they need to do towards completion of their degree. Happy Convocation!

8.0 Thesis Guidance Document & Checklist

MPH Thesis Guidance Document and Checklist

The timeline below is the *recommended* timeline for completion within 24 months. Students are encouraged to discuss with their supervisor and modify the timeline to meet their needs. Timely completion is encouraged.
Refer to the "thesis supplement" in the MPH handbook for additional thesis details.
All forms are available on Avenue 2 Learn: MPH program/Thesis/ forms

Task	Action item	Recommended Date/time period	Checkbox for completion

Identify and submit supervisor	Submit "thesis supervisor confirmation form"	May 1*	☐
Committee member form and approvals	Submit "thesis committee members form"	June 15*	☐
Hold first committee meeting	Submit "thesis progress report"*	August 31*	☐
Thesis proposal with signatures	Submit signed thesis proposal to MPH Curriculum Coordinator. See instructions on next page and refer to thesis supplement in MPH handbook for additional details.	Mid-September	☐
Additional thesis committee meetings	Submit "thesis progress report"**	Fall to winter (as determined by your committee and supervisor)	☐
Full thesis draft for review by supervisor and committee members	Submit "thesis approval for defense form"	April to May (as determined by your committee and supervisor)	☐
Approval of external thesis examiner by HEI and SGS***	External reviewer is selected by your supervisor and approval process is to be initiated by MPH Curriculum Coordinator	April / May	☐
Final thesis submitted to external and committee members	Thesis must be sent to external examiner and committee 4 weeks prior to defense (**mandatory**)	June	☐
Defend thesis	Submit "thesis defense forms"	July	☐
Complete thesis revisions and upload on MacSphere		Aug/early September****	☐

*Important actions that should happen in first year
**Note this form should be submitted for each of your thesis committee meetings. It is recommended that you have a minimum of 2-3 committee meetings over the course of your thesis
*** External reviewers must be external to your committee, but at the master's level they *do not* need to be external to McMaster (*consider using McMaster faculty whenever possible*)
**** refer to McMaster SGS Calendar for the exact dates for each year for thesis submission requirements and convocation, and any deadlines regarding payment of tuition fees for the exact dates for each year for thesis submission requirements and convocation, and any deadlines regarding payment of tuition fees

9.0 Suggested Template for MPH Thesis Proposal

SUGGESTED TEMPLATE FOR MPH THESIS PROPOSAL (2-3 pages maximum)
Single spaced proposal limited to two pages (excluding title page and references), including:
1. Thesis title
2. *Background and rationale*: Brief background and summary of the literature supported by references
3. *Research question*: One-sentence statement of the question to be posed in the thesis (include any secondary questions or specific objectives).

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4. *Methods*: The most important part of this submission should list and briefly describe the methodological or analytic problems which the student thinks they may encounter and will have to solve in the execution of their thesis.
5. *Public Health Implications*: A brief statement of the implications of this work to population and public health.
6. *Timeline:* Draft schedule for thesis completion including timeline and anticipated outcomes
7. *Supervisory committee:* Names and signatures of all supervisory committee members and student
      i. Student name: Signature:_____
      ii. Supervisor name: Signature:_____
      iii. Committee member 1:   Signature:_____
      iv. Committee member 2:   Signature:_____

References and other appendices as needed (these do not count towards the limit of 2-3 pages)

COMMITTEE MEETINGS:

The student must ensure that 3 committee meetings are completed in advance of defending your thesis. Please note each committee meeting date below.

Committee meeting 1:   Date:_____
Committee meeting 2:   Date:_____
Committee meeting 3:   Date: _____

**FHS GRADUATE PROGRAM IN MASTER
OF PUBLIC HEALTH (MPH)**

MPH Student Practicum Manual

Supplement to the MPH Handbook

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McMaster University

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Public health practice is an integral part of the MPH degree. The practicum provides the opportunity to integrate classroom learning and practice in a public health work environment.

The student contributes to a community agency's resources and to addressing a public health problem while developing personal confidence and skills as a public health professional.

The practicum allows students to develop skills needed to be a successful practitioner. Students will learn practical skills in public health management including skills in project development, selection of measures and measures development, data gathering, analysis and reporting that complement their formal course work

1.1 Selection of Practicum

Each student who selects the practicum stream is able to apply for posted practicum positions offered by the practicum agencies formally affiliated with the MPH program. *Students are also expected to find their own practicum placements. Spring/Summer practicum positions offered by our affiliated agencies will be posted in the Microsoft Teams MPH Practicum Group   by program staff as the positions become available, typically between January and March of the first year of study.* MPH students are expected to apply for practicum postings and secure a position by April of their first year of study. Students who want to request practicum sites not currently affiliated with the MPH program will need to discuss this with the Program Director in the fall of year one. Special requests will be considered but cannot be guaranteed. Part-time practicum opportunities will be posted in August within *Microsoft Teams MPH Practicum Group* for the fall term or December for the winter term. Students who want to consider staying on after the spring/summer practicum to complete a part time practicum in the fall with the same agency can discuss with the Program Director.

The practicum search is similar to a job search. Students will need to actively apply and interview for positions that may be competitive. While the MPH program will try to identify available opportunities, the MPH program does not have any control over when practicums are advertised, who is hired, and where they are located. Positions usually become available at all times throughout the winter semester (from Dec to April).

The program cannot control the availability of practicum opportunities external to the university; therefore, it is possible that a student might be delayed or may not finish the program.

1.2 Requirements of Successful Completion

The MPH practicum, full time (35 hours per week) for 16 weeks, or part time as an elective (17.5 hours per week) for 16 weeks, aims to provide students with an opportunity to:

- Integrate, synthesize and apply public health knowledge and skills (i.e. competencies) acquired in MPH courses to a real-world public health situation (see MPH Learning Plan for a description of competencies expected of MPH graduates);
- Enhance and develop skills needed to function in a professional public health setting including:
  - Problem identification, problem analysis and problem solving;

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- o Interpersonal skills, including working as part of an interdisciplinary public health team;
- o Oral and written communication; and
- o Understanding the mission, structure and function of the public health organization.
- Work on a substantive public health problem or issue relevant to the sponsoring organization;
- Engage in professional self-assessment and critical reflection; and
- Explore areas of concentration that interest them.

Students will cover their travel costs to the practicum location and their living costs while there. Where extensive travel is required to attend a practicum (e.g. international location, travel across North America), students must ensure that they have sufficient funds to cover expected costs well in advance of the practicum. An exception would be any travel and additional costs required to conduct practicum-related duties that are the responsibility of the hosting organization (e.g. practicum student asked to assist with investigating an outbreak in an outlying community).

2.0 Student Responsibilities

The student needs to actively engage in the MPH program's process in learning about the practicum sites in order to meet their learning and career development needs.

The student is expected to:

- Work with the Program Director as necessary, to clarify personal and professional learning needs;
- Apply to relevant sites of interest and make contact with the field-based practicum supervisor;
- Work with the field-based practicum supervisor to establish the project and learning contract prior to the start of the practicum;
- Seek ethics approval, if required, for any of the practicum-related projects that require primary data collection
- Once agreed to by the field-based practicum supervisor, submit the learning contract signed by both the practicum supervisor and student to the Curriculum Coordinator who will share with the Program Director for review and approval ideally by the first week of the practicum;
- Be able to receive the program stipend once the learning contract is fully signed
- Attend the practicum site agency full time for 16 weeks at 35 hours per week, or 17.5 hours per week for part time practicum (16 weeks).
- Conduct activities to meet learning objectives, service expectations and other deliverables of the learning contract.
- Identify, if applicable, where the practicum is not meeting learning needs;
- Meet professional standards of conduct, including:
  - o Respecting the confidentiality of health or other information related to individuals that they may encounter as part of their practicum experience;
  - o Respecting the confidentiality of agency information; and
  - o Behave responsibly regarding attendance and interest in agency activities. Students are required to adhere to the FHS Professional behavior code http://fhs.mcmaster.ca/main/education/documents/professional_behaviour_code_of_conduct_for_learners.pdf

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- Participate in the mid-placement and final evaluation interviews with the field-based practicum supervisor; and
- Prepare an evaluation of the placement and provide it to the Program Director

3.0 Practicum Processes and Forms

3.1 Identifying Learning Objectives

The learning objectives are the foundation of the practicum and the core element of the learning contract. They should build on the knowledge and skills acquired during the coursework and reflect the goals of the practicum placement (listed earlier in these guidelines). The objectives should also be informed by the student's overall training needs, interests and career goals. The Program Director and field-based practicum supervisor are key resources to advise the student in developing the objectives. It is critically important that the expectations of the student and field-based practicum supervisor are realistic, explicit and agreed upon prior to the onset of the practicum.

The learning objectives should be:

1. Linked to the goals of the practicum placement and/or Public Health Competencies;
2. Clear and specific statements about the learners' expected competencies (e.g. knowledge, skill, attitude changes as a result of the learning experiences);
3. Statements that will help guide the student's assessment of the experience, in addition to helping the Program Director and field-based practicum supervisor improve the practice-based teaching process;
4. Statements that begin with action verbs (e.g. list, explain, apply, predict, analyze, compare, contrast);
5. Linked to behaviourally-based, measurable statements of the learner's desired outcomes (i.e. to provide a way for the practicum mentor and agency field-based practicum supervisor to know whether a student understands or knows the subject matter);
6. Statements that convey the service or benefit to the agency and/or community.

3.2 Learning Contract

The learning contract is an indispensable tool for communicating, monitoring and evaluating the practicum. Misunderstandings related to practicum can be avoided by making explicit the expectations of the various parties involved. The student has the lead responsibility for developing the contract in collaboration with the field-based practicum supervisor prior to the onset of the practicum.

Learning contracts should include:

- A clear description of the practicum setting (name, address, field-based practicum supervisor name and contact info);
- The project title, dates, hours of work, stipend (if any);
- Core Competencies and areas
- The learning objectives;
- Methods and timetable to accomplish objectives;

- Deliverables; the deliverable itself may involve a more detailed project plan that is developed with the field-based practicum supervisor;
- The need for ethics review, as required;
- The responsibilities of each party; these may be described in more detail in a separate affiliation agreement between the host organization and university;
- Signatures:
  - Student;
  - Field-based practicum supervisor;
  - MPH Program Director;

3.3 Evaluation

There are two aspects to the evaluation of a practicum: an evaluation of the student; and an evaluation of the practicum experience (including the supervisor).

Evaluation of the student is based on the expectations set out in the learning contract. The mid-practicum interim evaluation assesses the progress achieved to date, assesses whether there is any need to adjust overall deliverables, and addresses any major performance concerns.

The final evaluation needs to be more detailed than the interim evaluation and should explicitly refer to the learning objectives for the practicum and the fulfillment of the deliverables. Any gaps in the student's preparation for the practicum should be noted, since this provides important feedback on the adequacy of the coursework component of the program.

A recommendation for pass/fail is provided by the field-based practicum supervisor. The Program Director assigns credit based on the assessment by the field-based practicum supervisor and the review of any practicum products. Students who are identified as requiring additional work to pass the practicum will be assigned standing deferred by the Program Director.

Both the interim and final evaluation are filled out by the student and submitted via Microsoft Teams MPH Practicum Group. Prior to the student filling out the evaluation, it is imperative that they meet with the supervisor to discuss the content. Once the content of the evaluations has been finalized the student can then submit via Microsoft Teams MPH Practicum Group . Once the student submits an email will be sent to the practicum supervisor to acknowledge the content in these evaluations. The supervisor cannot edit the contents, they can only acknowledge. Following the supervisor's acknowledgement, the curriculum coordinator will review for any discrepancies and the program director will then provide the final approval.

Practicum deliverables (i.e. what to expect from the practicum) will include, the following:

- Presentation to other students and PUBHLTH 708 - Leadership and Applied Public Health course ;
- Preparation of a written Capstone report for the practicum host organization to be evaluated by MPH faculty.

Evaluation of the practicum experience by the student is critically important as it provides important feedback to the Program Director regarding the suitability of the practicum experience at that site. To ensure receipt of all of the evaluations, the Program Director will withhold a mark/assessment for the practicum until all required documents have been received.

The Practicum final evaluation form and practicum student assessment form will be completed using Microsoft Teams. The final practicum report (capstone) will be finalized and submitted in PUBHTLH 708.

5.0 Capstone Paper

5.1 Guidelines: How to Complete the Capstone Paper

Students completing the practicum-based MPH master's degree need to complete the Capstone paper as part of their degree requirements.

5.2 Purpose

The purpose of the Capstone paper is to demonstrate individual mastery of learning across the courses that a student has taken in the MPH Program. The paper can be linked to the student's practicum experience or a public health topic approved by the Program Director. Students are encouraged to consult with the Program Director at the beginning of Leadership & Applied Public Health to finalize practicum paper topics.

The paper should not involve the collection or analysis of primary data, the conduct of research with subjects or design of a research protocol. It is a paper, not a thesis. If the student has considered ethics in the practicum project (including preparing an ethics review proposal), they can discuss in this report. The capstone paper submitted must be the students' own work and not written by the supervisor.

5.3 Format and Grading

The paper must be 10 to 15 pages, excluding references and appendices, double-spaced using 12-point font and one inch margins. There is no reason that your paper cannot be used for another purpose afterwards (e.g., publication of a paper on the topic or integrated into the introduction of a new research grant that you plan to write).

5.4 Example

Review a small area of research (e.g., health benefits and concerns of the flu vaccine), write a critique of the methods used and suggest what needs to be done to develop better information in this area.

5.5 Timing

The paper will be written during PUBHLTH 708, Leadership & Applied Public Health in the second year for full-time students and the final term for part-time students.

5.6 Steps for Completing this Requirement

1. Review full instructions for Capstone report given in Leadership & Applied Public Health.
   Keep note of the due date of your paper.
2. Submit your completed paper by the Leadership & Applied Public Health course deadline (final year of study).
   On the day your Capstone paper is due, submit an electronic version by uploading it to Avenue to Learn. Other Guidelines:

Feedback to the student about whether thy passed or failed will usually occur approximately two week of receipt of the paper. If the paper is deemed unsatisfactory, one rewrite will be allowed within a two-week period, after formal written notification to the student from the Program Director. A pass/fail decision on the rewrite will be made by the same reader and feedback given within one week.

The Capstone paper, like final papers for courses, is to be written solely by the student. Ensure that references are made appropriately and avoid any suggestion of plagiarism. Please read McMaster's policy on plagiarism on the university website:

http://www.mcmaster.ca/academicintegrity/students/typeofad/plagiarism/