FIELD AND CAPSTONE
PROJECT HANDBOOK

A Guide for Students, Faculty, and Preceptors

2017 - 2018
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## The MPH Capstone Project

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Dear MPH Students,

This handbook serves as a guide to completing the fieldwork and the Capstone Project for the UW-Madison Master of Public Health (MPH) Program.

The field experience serves as an opportunity for you to craft a learning experience that meets your personal and professional educational needs, to hone your existing skills and to gain new knowledge and abilities in order to help you become the public health professional that you want to be.

My job as the Community Engagement Coordinator is to facilitate your learning and oversee the fieldwork portion of the MPH curriculum. I bring over twenty years of public health experience to this position and am delighted to bring my expertise to guide you through your own public health field experience.

The field experience is a critical aspect of your education as a public health professional. Take the necessary time to explore and outline your interests. Seek guidance from faculty members who may have an interest in the same subject matter as you, ask other students about their past experiences, and begin planning early.

Many valuable lessons have been learned over the years and below are some important tips for a successful experience:

1. Read this guide, read it again, and keep it near you. Most of the answers to your questions are right here in the book. Look here first!
2. Students are often in a hurry to choose their fieldwork. Take these steps before you finalize your fieldwork/capstone project: a) Reflect about your personal and professional goals; b) Utilize the human resources in the Program; c) Participate in MPH sponsored activities to learn more about opportunities, and to network.
3. Narrow your list to three and do your homework regarding the site/organizations. Remember developing a field placement is your responsibility.
4. Stretch beyond your comfort level. Learn something new in your fieldwork. Choose a topic or issue that excites you.
5. Relate respectfully and effectively to the people you work with.
6. Become engaged at the field placement site.
7. Go above and beyond!
8. Reflect about your experiences DURING your fieldwork.
9. Record your experiences so that you can update your resume’ after the experience.
10. Complete required fieldwork paper work and assignments by the deadlines.

Enjoy this journey and valuable experience!

[Signature]

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THE MASTER OF PUBLIC HEALTH FIELD EXPERIENCE
POP HLTH 788

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Overview
The Master of Public Health (MPH) Field Experience (PHS 788) is a required component of the MPH curriculum for all students. All students are required to complete a 400 hour, six-credit, experience with a community-based component. The Field Experience provides a practical experience in a public health setting where students apply skills and knowledge they gained during didactic courses.

Community Engagement
At the University of Wisconsin-Madison’s MPH Program, community partnerships are integral to meeting student learning goals and community engagement outcomes. Beyond that, because of the MPH Program’s commitment to the Wisconsin Idea, a century-old aspiration that the benefits of the University extend not only to Wisconsin’s residents, but beyond the state borders, we seek to consistently improve the quality and depth of our Program’s impact with the surrounding community. The MPH Program intentionally partners with local public health agencies, community non-profits, public and private schools, and governmental agencies to provide service-learning opportunities each year.

Because of this commitment, all students are strongly encouraged to complete their fieldwork based in a community-setting such as local public health agency, community non-profit, public or private school, and governmental agencies that are noted among the Program’s Fieldwork Opportunities. All students are required to document their engagement with the community in their reflections, summary report and capstone project. In addition, all students will be required to have at least one member of the capstone committee whose primary duties take place in a local public health agency, community non-profit agency/organization, public or private school, or governmental agency, outside of the university. In the rare case when a student chooses to work with a university-based center or institute, he/she must seek out and document additional meaningful, positive experiences—both educational and social—that will enhance his/her education and promote the Program’s community engagement mission and provide specific documentation of these activities.
Learning Objectives
Through the field experience, students will be able to:

- Integrate public health theory, knowledge, and skills in a community or public health practice setting;
- Experience the “realities” of public health practice – organizational structure, local and organizational politics, program administration, community relationships, and program coordination;
- Complete a defined project in an area of public health practice including core public health functions such as needs assessment, program planning, program evaluation, policy development, educational campaign, or applied research project;
- Gain/expand/develop skills and knowledge in an area of interest not covered in depth elsewhere in the student’s educational plan;
- Demonstrate leadership, teamwork, communication skills, and creativity in the development and/or implementation of a public health practice activity.

Pre-requisites:
Students must be in good academic standing (GPA of 3.0 or above) and have completed seven of the eight core courses prior to registering for the field experience.

All students must have completed the following core courses prior to registering for the field experience:

- BMI 511: Introduction to Biostatistical Methods for Public Health
- POP HLTH 780: Public Health Principles and Practice
- POP HLTH 787: MPH Fieldwork Seminar
- POP HLTH 795-001: Principles of Population Health Science (1 credit)
- POP HLTH 797: Introduction to Epidemiology
- POP HLTH 785: Health Systems, Management, and Policy
- POP HLTH 786: Social and Behavioral Sciences for Public Health
- POP HLTH 789: Principles of Environmental Health for Public Health Practice

MD-MPH dual degree students are exempt from this requirement, as these students must complete the MPH portion of their dual degree in one year and frequently must complete fieldwork prior to completing the core courses. Whenever possible, these students should complete as many of the core courses as possible prior to beginning the field experience.

The MPH Faculty Director must approve any other exceptions to this policy on a case-by-case basis.

Fieldwork Planning
Planning for the field experience begins approximately six months before the projected start date, usually sometime during the first semester in the Program. Field placements are highly individualized for each student, which is what makes the UW-Madison MPH Program unique. Currently, the Program does not have a specific number of student slots at various organizations. Finding a field placement site is highly dependent upon the initiative you take to plan a quality experience. Before beginning, please read the Field Experience Checklist located on the MPH website. It will be a helpful resource in assisting in planning your timeline.
You may want to think about the following questions while preparing for a field experience:

- How do I hope to use my MPH degree in the future?
- What additional skills and/or knowledge will I need to meet my career goals?
- Where might I be able to learn to apply the skills and/or knowledge that I wish to obtain?
- Who might be best suited to assist me in obtaining the desired set of skills/knowledge that I need?

Having given thought to these questions, there are several formal and informal resources you may wish to utilize when choosing a placement.

To begin, you should review the Fieldwork Opportunity information on the MPH Program's website (mph.wisc.edu). The Opportunities page provides information about field placement sites, potential projects to be completed at the organization, and contact information.

Students often get ideas about possible field experiences and projects through lectures and guests in their courses, seminars, and ongoing and special events in the School of Medicine and Public Health and throughout campus. The first semester in the Program is an important time to learn about different public health issues, ongoing projects and research.

Talking to faculty members, staff members, and other students is also helpful. These important individuals may have ideas regarding possible projects.

Past students’ capstone papers are available to review by contacting the MPH Program Office at 608.263.4889.

Joining the MPH Program’s LinkedIn group is also helpful. Program staff, students, and alumni share information about potential field placements or job opportunities.

One of the primary responsibilities of the MPH Program’s Community Engagement Coordinator is to assist students in planning and implementing a quality experience. Initiate a meeting with Ms. Siegenthaler to discuss your professional goals and desired placement at any time during the MPH Program. It is especially important to meet with her prior to or during the Fieldwork Seminar.

While MPH Program staff and faculty members are poised to help in the development of the field experience, please remember that developing the field experience is the student’s responsibility.

**Fieldwork Seminar:**

A one-credit, required course, **PHS 787: MPH Field Experience Seminar**, prepares students for the field experience. The fieldwork site must be chosen by the time the student enrolls in the seminar. The seminar provides students with useful skills needed to complete a field experience and/or to work in a public health or community setting. During the seminar, students prepare their project abstract, learning objectives, work plan and Field Learning Agreement.

Given the pre-requisites for beginning fieldwork, the majority of the students take the Fieldwork Seminar in the Spring semester of their first year in the Program. It is, however, offered both in the Fall and Spring semesters.
The Field Learning Agreement (FLA):

A Field Learning Agreement will be mutually developed by the student and the fieldwork preceptor and at a minimum, the Capstone Committee Chair. It will be approved by the Community Engagement Coordinator. The agreement identifies the specific assignments the student will have at the placement, any tangible products that will be developed, interactions with and knowledge of other employees and their functions, and contact with other organizations to which the agency relates.

The FLA (the final assignment in PHS 787) must be submitted before the student is able to register for PHS 788.

Components of the Field Learning Agreement:

The Field Learning Agreement (FLA) has several components. Each component and a brief description follow:

**Face Page:** The face page of the FLA includes information about the student, and the preceptor. Students include information about their address, phone number, e-mail, etc. Similar information is included about the field placement site and the preceptor. Students also include information about their start and end dates, whether they will be completing their fieldwork on a part-time or full-time basis, and during which semesters they plan to complete their work.

It is important that the student provide accurate and up-to-date contact information for the student, preceptor, and other capstone members on the FLA, as it serves as the Program's contact information throughout the field experience.

**Project Overview or Abstract:** Students briefly describe the overall goal of their project in a short paragraph or provide a 250-word narrative abstract on the proposed project.

**Learning Objectives:** Students develop two to four learning objectives to guide the field experience in consult with their fieldwork preceptor. Learning objectives should be prepared using the following format in landscape form in a separate page attached to the FLA. This will allow students, as well as the preceptor and the capstone committee members, to see how the activities relate to what the student wants to learn or become skilled at. The time frame for submitting the products will be used by the preceptor and Community Engagement Coordinator to track completion of the assignments.
**Learning Objectives Format:**

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<th>Objectives</th>
<th>Activities</th>
<th>Products</th>
<th>Timeframe</th>
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<td>List Objective #: This is to be written as a learning objective using skills and knowledge demonstration verbs such as: investigate, examine, analyze, utilize, construct, develop, etc.</td>
<td>Briefly describe/outline the activity that will be completed in order to achieve the learning objective. There needs to be a clear association between the objective and the activities that you and your preceptor have planned or identified. You may wish to use bullets to delineate the activities that are planned.</td>
<td>Describe the products, output, or other type of evidence that was achieved through the learning objective. The products will be used as the basis for your grade. For example, products can be reports written for the field experience, self-assessments, or other material developed that demonstrates achievement of the objective.</td>
<td>Provide a date when the products will be submitted. It is recommended that the dates are spaced throughout the field experience. Dates can be changed, but the negotiations of date changes should be done prior to the original date the product is due.</td>
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**MPH Cross-Cutting Competencies:** Students will self-report the cross-cutting competencies that they intend to master during the MPH Program. The student will be required to report about how these competencies were mastered during the MPH Program in the Summary Report that is required at the end of the fieldwork. These cross-cutting competencies are taken from the Association of Schools of Public Health’s Competencies for MPH Students (2006).
The cross-cutting competencies include:

- **Communication and Informatics** – the ability to collect, manage, and organize data to produce information and meaning that is exchanged by use of signs and symbols; to gather, process, and present information to different audiences in-person, through information technologies, or through the media channels; and to strategically design the information and knowledge exchange process to achieve specific objectives.

- **Diversity and Culture** - the ability to interact with both diverse individuals and communities to produce or impact an intended public health outcome.

- **Leadership** – the ability to create and communicate a shared vision for a changing future; champion solutions to organizational and community challenges; and energize commitment to goals.

- **Professionalism** – the ability to demonstrate ethical choices, values, and professional practices implicit in public health decisions; consider the effect of choices on community stewardship, equity, social justice and accountability; and to commit to personal and institutional development.

- **Program Planning** - the ability to plan for the design, development, implementation, and evaluation strategies to improve individual and community health.

- **Public Health Biology** - the biological and molecular context of public health.

- **Systems Thinking** - the ability to recognize system level properties that result from dynamic interactions among human and social systems and how they affect the relationships among individuals, groups, organizations, communities, and environments.

The full document for the MPH competencies can be found at [http://www.aspph.org/app/uploads/2014/04/Version2.3_FINAL.pdf](http://www.aspph.org/app/uploads/2014/04/Version2.3_FINAL.pdf)

An example of how to include the cross-cutting competencies in the FLA can be found in the PHS 787 Learn@UW site and on the Program’s website.

**IRB Clearance:**
Students planning to engage in a project involving human subjects must satisfy current IRB requirements which include completion of the UW-Madison online CITI training at the following website: [https://my.gradsch.wisc.edu/citi/index.php](https://my.gradsch.wisc.edu/citi/index.php)

An overview of Human Subjects Training Requirements can be found at: [https://kb.wisc.edu/hsirbs/page.php?id=22595](https://kb.wisc.edu/hsirbs/page.php?id=22595)

Students planning to engage in research involving protected health information must satisfy the current HIPAA requirements which include completion of the online HIPAA Training Program at the following website: [http://hipaa.wisc.edu/hipaa-training.htm](http://hipaa.wisc.edu/hipaa-training.htm)

The certifications must be done prior to initiation of the fieldwork project. All MPH students are required to complete the CITI training as an assignment in the Fieldwork Seminar.

In addition, the proposed work must be presented to the University of Wisconsin-Madison’s and other relevant IRB’s for clearance before the work can begin. The Capstone Committee Chair, who must be a tenure track faculty member, must be involved in this process and serve as the PI of the project.
Students cannot serve as the PI for the purposes of IRB proposals. If the work is part of a larger project that has already received clearance, the student must be added as key personnel to the IRB protocol.

The University of Wisconsin-Madison IRB website. [https://research.wisc.edu/respolcomp/hrpp/](https://research.wisc.edu/respolcomp/hrpp/)

Additional information regarding each of the IRB’s regulations and clearance is available at the following web sites:

- Health Sciences IRB: [https://kb.wisc.edu/hsirbs/](https://kb.wisc.edu/hsirbs/)
  - The Health Sciences IRB recommends the use of the Quality Improvement/Program Evaluation Self-Certification Tool to help you to determine whether you need IRB approval on your project: [https://kb.wisc.edu/hsirbs/page.php?id=33386](https://kb.wisc.edu/hsirbs/page.php?id=33386)

Students must indicate on the FLA whether IRB approval has been obtained, is pending, or is not needed. If IRB approval is needed, the IRB proposal must be attached to the FLA.

**Signatures:** The Field Learning Agreement must be completed, signed by all parties (student, Preceptor, Capstone Committee Chair, and third Capstone Committee member, if identified), and returned to the Community Engagement Coordinator at the end of the Fieldwork Seminar (as the final assignment) and prior to beginning a field placement.

If the third member of the student’s Capstone Committee has not been identified by the end of the Fieldwork Seminar course, the third member’s signature can be added at a later date, but before the placement begins. Please note that the Preceptor and Capstone Committee Chair must be identified by the end of the Fieldwork Seminar and start of field experience.

The student is responsible for obtaining the proper signatures on the FLA and providing copies to each member of the Capstone Committee. The original FLA is kept on file in the MPH Program Office.

In the event that the student is completing a unique field experience that does not relate to the student’s Capstone Project, the student is still expected to identify a Preceptor.

**Important People:**

**Preceptor:** The Preceptor oversees the student’s field experience work on-site and serves as a member of the student’s Capstone Committee. The Preceptor is an employee of the agency/organization the student is working with and provides guidance and feedback regarding the student’s performance during their field experience. As necessary, they consult with the Community Engagement Coordinator of the MPH Program regarding problems and questions that may arise during the course of the field experience. At the end of the field experience the Preceptor completes an evaluation of the student’s performance. Preceptors are selected by the students (with advice from the Community Engagement Coordinator and Capstone Committee members) and approved by the Community Engagement Coordinator.
The following forms must be on file for each preceptor/placement site:

- The Preceptor's Resume’ or CV
- The Standard Affiliation Agreement between the site and the University

If these forms are not on file for the fieldwork placement, the Community Engagement Coordinator will assist in securing these items. The Standard Affiliation Agreement may be obtained from the Community Engagement Coordinator. A Preceptor who does not have an appointment with the University, may be eligible to receive a Zero-dollar Appointment.

**The Capstone Committee** members are also helpful in planning a successful field placement, particularly in the cases when the Capstone Project is related to the field placement. The Capstone Committee consists of three individuals – the Capstone Committee Chair, the Fieldwork Preceptor (if the fieldwork experience is used as the basis of the Capstone Project), and another Public Health Program Faculty Member.

Capstone Committee members may guide and assist the student during the field placement. It is crucial to have chosen a Capstone Committee Chair prior to the field placement, particularly if the student must obtain IRB approval for the fieldwork project. More information about the Capstone Committee can be found in subsequent pages of this handbook.

**Course Requirements**

**400 Hour Requirement**

*All MPH Students are required to complete 400 hours in the field regardless of whether they are dual degree students or single degree students.* The MPH Program may be completed on a full-time basis (40 hours/week for 10 weeks) during the course of the summer or a single semester, or on a part-time basis over more than one semester. If completing a part-time field experience, use the following guidelines for the number of hours to be completed in a semester.

- 1 credit = 67 hours
- 2 credits = 135 hours
- 3 credits = 200 hours
- 4 credits = 270 hours
- 5 credits = 335 hours
- 6 credits = 400 hours

Most students complete their 400 hours on-site in a public health or community organization; however, some students are required to do more independent work. The following is a list of activities that can count towards field experience hours, even if they are not accomplished directly at the field experience site:

- Hours working on fieldwork project or other related public health work at fieldwork site
- Hours spent at fieldwork site learning about public health or other related topics or projects that enhance the understanding of public health
- Time spent developing IRB proposal
- Time spent on completing a literature review or other library research related to the projected fieldwork
- Time spent in analyzing data related to the fieldwork project
- Time spent in meetings, trainings, or workshops either related to fieldwork or that enhance the understanding of public health

There are also some things that cannot be counted towards the fieldwork hours, including:

- Travel time to and from the field placement site
- Work/Job time
- Time spent in required courses, elective courses, summer institute courses and time spent studying for these courses and/or doing the course work

If you are unclear regarding what constitutes fieldwork hours, consult Ms. Siegenthaler.

**Waiving the Field Experience:**

Students who have had at least five years of full-time professional public health experience at a responsible level prior to entering the program, may petition to waive the fieldwork requirement. A written request must be submitted and be accompanied by a report, in the form of a 15-20 page evaluative paper, which discusses past work experience and employment in terms of products and processes and analytically discusses the lessons to be drawn from that work in relationship to the MPH Program’s required competencies. In addition to the report, the student must include a copy of a resume or CV that specifies the positions and employment dates that justify the waiver. Examples of previous waivers are on file in the MPH Program Office. Students who are interested in seeking a field experience waiver should contact Debra Siegenthaler, MPH Community Engagement Coordinator, by the end of the first semester in the MPH Program.

Students receiving a waiver of the fieldwork requirement must substitute other course work in order to fulfill credit requirements for the degree and must still complete a Capstone Project.

**Linking the Fieldwork to the Capstone Project:**

While many of the MPH students’ Capstone Projects are linked to their field experiences, it is not a requirement. While the purpose of the field experience is for students to experience public health in a practical setting, some students prefer to also experience population health-based research. These students may complete a practice-based field experience and then complete an additional research experience. Students wishing to plan unique fieldwork and capstone projects should discuss this with the Community Engagement Coordinator.

**Jobs and Assistantships**

The MPH Program has specific rules about completing fieldwork as part of the student’s job or assistantship. Generally, work/job time cannot count towards fieldwork hours. However, if the student wishes to complete a project that is completed above and beyond his/her regular work hours, that will benefit his/her organization, it is possible to negotiate a plan to do a work-site-related project. There may be special considerations related to preceptorship and fieldwork supervision as it relates to a work situation.
In the case of an assistantship, if a public health related project is identified within the framework of the position, then it is possible to count some of the assistantship time toward the fieldwork. Typically, about 25% of the project can be paid on the assistantship and 75% is done on the student’s own time. It is important to negotiate any work-related fieldwork with Ms. Siegenthaler early in the planning process.

Fieldwork Site:

While the fieldwork hours can be divided during different semesters; the fieldwork must be completed at the same site for the entire 400 hours.

Course Mechanics/Components

Course materials and all forms for PHS 788 are posted on Learn@UW. Students are graded on three aspects of the Fieldwork: 1) Preceptor Evaluation of Student Performance, 2) Self-Reflections, and 3) Summary Report.

Self-Reflections

During the field placement, students are required to complete self-reflections about their experiences. A total of 20 reflections are required at the end of the 400-hour period. Self-reflection is not simply to report about the completed tasks and activities, but to actually reflect upon the work that is being done in the field experience and how it relates to overall career goals, public health, and the cross-cutting MPH competencies.

Reflections are submitted to the course instructor via the Assignment Section on Canvas, on Learn@UW. They are not available to the Preceptor, Capstone Committee, or other students. MPH students are required to complete a total of 20 reflections by the time that the field experience is completed.

Students who do not take the entire 6 credits in one semester can use the following guide for the specific number of reflections/semester based on the number of credits taken during the semester. Expectations are as follows:

- 6 credits - 10 self-reflections
- 4 credits - 7 self-reflections;
- 3 credits - 5 self-reflections
- 2 credits - 3 self-reflections
- 1 credit - 2 self-reflections

Each reflection should be at least one typed, single spaced page in length.

Reflections constitute 25% of the fieldwork grade and are meant to be completed over the course of the time spent in the field. The final fieldwork grade will be impacted if the student chooses not to complete the reflections, completes them all well after the fieldwork has ended, or simply uses the reflection as an inventory of activities completed throughout the experience rather than an opportunity to think critically about their experiences.
Students may use the ‘Tips and Resources for Writing Self Reflections’ document located on the PHS 788 course site as well as the following website for additional tools related to self-reflection: http://www.uta.edu/ccsl/for-students/reflection-journals.php

**Student Time Logs**
While not part of the grade, all students in the MPH Program are required to complete documentation that they have met their 400-hour time requirement for the field experience in the form of a student time log. A copy of the student time log must be signed by both the student and Preceptor and submitted to the Community Engagement Coordinator at the end of each semester the student is taking field experience credit. If the form is not submitted to the Community Engagement Coordinator, the student will receive an “incomplete” for the field experience, until the form is completed and submitted.

The student time log form is available on the PHS 788 Learn@UW site, on the MPH website and from the Community Engagement Coordinator. Students may also develop and complete their own student time log, as long as it provides evidence of the time spent in the field and has signatures of both the student and Preceptor.

**Summary Report**
Students are required to prepare a written Summary Report of the field experience at the end of the placement. The Summary Report needs only be submitted one time, at the very end of the experience and not at the end of each semester. The Summary Report, which includes three sections, is submitted in the Assignment Section on Canvas in the PHS 788 Learn@UW course at the end of the field experience. Summary Reports account for 25% of the students’ final grade for the field experience. The Summary Reports are typically 6–8 pages in length, double spaced and must include:

**Part I: Summary of Field Placement**
1. Brief description of activities performed during the field experience, noting any deviations from the field learning agreement.
2. The extent to which the field experience integrated what the student learned from formal MPH coursework.
3. Description of knowledge and skills gained from the experience and any problems if they occurred.
4. The extent to which the student’s learning objectives were achieved (as identified in the field learning agreement).
5. The extent to which the overall field experience learning objectives were achieved (as identified in the course handbook).

**Part II: Cross-Cutting Competencies**
This section should include a discussion about the MPH Cross-cutting competencies and how they were mastered during the MPH Program and the field experience. Identify the cross-cutting competencies that you chose to address when you developed your FLA and provide documentation regarding the skills and knowledge that you gained in each of these areas as a result of a culmination of your didactic learning and experiences in the field.

**Part III: Community Engagement**
This section should include a discussion regarding the specific interactions and activities experienced with the community during the field experience. Describe specifics of how you were involved in
meetings, events or activities involving a community. Discuss how your project impacted the community and/or the residents of the community. Describe in detail how your community Preceptor interacted with the community. Please include observations, challenges encountered and lessons learned.

**Preceptor Evaluation of the Student**
The Preceptor’s evaluation of the student’s performance in the field experience and final field experience products (described in the Field Learning Agreement) constitute 50% of the student’s final fieldwork grade. The Preceptor will evaluate the student’s performance and final fieldwork product(s) by completing the evaluation form and meeting with the student, either face to face or via telephone or Skype to review and discuss the evaluation. The evaluation must be signed by both the preceptor and the student and received by the Community Engagement Coordinator on the final day of classes for the semester in which the field experience is taken.

The Preceptor Evaluation Form is available on the PHS 788 Learn@UW site, on the MPH website and from the Community Engagement Coordinator.

Grade disputes between the Preceptor and student should be discussed and resolved by the two parties. MPH Program staff will not change preceptor grades.

**Student Evaluation of the Preceptor and Placement Site**
The purpose of the student evaluation is to provide an opportunity to evaluate the Preceptor and the placement site. While not a part of grading, the student evaluation is the MPH Program’s effort to make certain that all of our field placement sites and preceptors provide a quality experience. The information provided by the student in the evaluation is kept confidential and is not shared with the preceptor. The student evaluation is available on the PHS 788 Learn@UW site, on the MPH website and from the Community Engagement Coordinator.

Students only need to complete the student evaluation once at the very end of the placement.

**Final Field Experience Grade**
Student grades are based on the following:

- Preceptor’s Evaluation of the Student Experience = 50%
- Self-Reflections = 25%
- Summary Report = 25%

Students are graded on the standard University grading scale:

- A = Outstanding
- AB = Very Good
- B = Good
- BC = Satisfactory, but Below Expectations
- C = Minimal Pass
- F = Fail
“Incomplete” Grade in Fieldwork
The timing for doing fieldwork does not always fit nicely into a semester or summer session. Sometimes, because a student does not quite finish during the semester or session or is taking the fieldwork over more than one semester, the Preceptor and student may ascertain that they would like to wait until the entire field experience has been completed to issue a final grade. In this case, the Preceptor may notify the Community Engagement Coordinator that the student is to receive an “incomplete” for that semester’s fieldwork grade. This is acceptable; however, it is expected that the “incomplete” work will be completed in a timely fashion. Whenever possible, it is recommended that incompletes be taken care of by the end of the following semester. If the fieldwork is expected to continue into an additional 3rd semester or beyond, it is acceptable for the “incomplete” to be carried over based on agreement between the student, Preceptor and the Community Engagement Coordinator. It is an expectation of the MPH Program that when fieldwork occurs over multiple semesters (more than two) there is a clear plan to complete the fieldwork in a timely manner and this plan is outlined and achieved by the student.

Please note that having had an “incomplete” will show on the student’s transcript, even after the final grade is changed to a letter grade.

Students who do not complete all the requirements of the field experience in a timely fashion; i.e., well after the deadlines for the semester following completion of the entire fieldwork; should expect to have their final grade reflect this.

MPH Student Conduct
While students are in the field, they are expected to behave in a professional manner at all times. The MPH Student Organization has created a Student Honor Code. The Honor Code contains important statements about professional ethics, honesty and integrity, interpersonal relationships, and commitment to learning. Please read it and adhere to it during the field placement and throughout the time enrolled in the MPH Program.

Communication
Communication is an important aspect of a successful placement. The student and Preceptor should discuss expectations for communication and obtaining feedback about performance at the beginning of the placement. It is expected that the Preceptor will be available to the student at the fieldwork site for the majority of the time that the student is placed within the organization. In addition, the student and Preceptor should plan to communicate about the fieldwork face to face, via telephone, or via e-mail at least once each week.

It is expected that both the student and Preceptor will contact the Community Engagement Coordinator any time a question or issue arises that cannot be addressed by reading the handbook. It is important that all parties have current contact information on file with the Community Engagement Coordinator (through the Field Learning Agreement) for those involved in the field placement.

Problems or concerns about the field placement should be addressed to Debra Siegenthaler, Community Engagement Coordinator at dssiegenthal@wisc.edu or 608.263.3036.
Global Health Field Experience

Many MPH students are excited to address global public health issues during their educational pursuits in the MPH Program. There are several opportunities to study global public health in the MPH Program, including opportunities for field studies. Global Health education options that may be pursued in conjunction with the MPH degree include:

- The Graduate/Professional Certificate in Global Health (Application deadline April 30th)
- Faculty-led Global Health Field Courses (Application deadline December 2nd)
- The Global MPH Field Experience (Application deadline June 12th)

Students must apply and be accepted to all of the programs listed above. Please read the descriptions below to determine which program is right for you.

**The Global MPH Field Experience:** Because the UW-Madison MPH Program endeavors to provide high-quality, academically rigorous field experiences for our students, each year we are able to provide up to six global public health educational opportunities for our incoming students. These experiences may serve as the MPH Program field experience. These opportunities are provided to MPH students based on demonstration of past global health experience, knowledge and skills. The students selected for this track will build advanced competencies in global public health.

Priority for the Global MPH Field Experience is given to students who provide:
1) Evidence of commitment to global public health initiatives; 2) Interest in serving the needs of underserved populations; 3) Strong academic performance; and 4) Plans for a career in or related to global public health.

MPH students interested in completing a global health field experience to meet the MPH 400-hour Fieldwork requirement are invited to apply via a specific application process upon matriculation into the MPH Program. Applications are reviewed and students who have been accepted to complete the Global MPH Field Experience are notified by approximately July 1st. Following notification of acceptance, the student will begin working with the Community Engagement Coordinator to plan the specific experience and additional didactic coursework that will support the experience. The field experience will take place during the summer between the first and second year of the MPH Program.

Because of the nature of a global health field experience, hours may be counted differently for these experiences, either as a global health certificate student or as an MPH student, however MPH students are still required to complete 400 hours. Please consult with the Community Engagement Coordinator to discuss the specific requirements. MPH students are required to be at the international site for a minimum of 6-8 weeks.

**Faculty-led Global Health Field Courses:** Students who are interested in global public health, but do not have the past experience to qualify for the MPH Global Health Field Experience or did not get accepted to the Global MPH Field Experience are encouraged to participate in the Global Health Institute’s faculty-led global health field experiences.

Currently, the Global Health Institute offers faculty-led interdisciplinary field courses in Thailand and Uganda. All students who are accepted to one of the faculty-led field courses (PHS 645) are required to enroll in PHS 644 “Interdisciplinary Perspectives on Global Health and Disease: Country Studies” in the spring prior to the summer field experience for a classroom based preparation.
PHS 644 is a 1-credit semester course that provides global health core content as well as country-specific interdisciplinary perspectives on global health and disease. The class takes place during the early evening on select weeks in the spring semester. This course engages students in learning about country-specific health data and descriptive information about the health system. Students work individually and in small, interdisciplinary groups to explore health topics relevant to the sites they will visit. The place based knowledge gained in the prep course allows for students to develop projects to implement once in the country, in collaboration with the in country partner organizations.

The faculty-led field courses are typically 2-3 credits. MPH students who take PHS 644 and PHS 645 (faculty-led field course) may count these credits towards MPH electives and towards the Global Health Certificate.

The Graduate/Professional Certificate in Global Health is available to graduate students as well as professional students in the health sciences. The program is administered by the campus-wide Global Health Institute at UW-Madison. The certificate curriculum focuses on global health topics and health issues that transcend national boundaries, emphasizing health and disease in developing countries. Through a nine-credit program of preparatory course work and culminating in a global health field experience, students will be prepared to address health challenges and disparities in marginalized communities. The Global Health Certificate pairs nicely with the MPH degree, allowing for some specialization. Credits taken towards the Global Health Certificate may count as MPH electives. The faculty-led Global Health Field Course or the Global MPH Field Experience may count towards the Certificate field experience requirement. Applications for the Global Health Certificate are due April 30th. For more information about the certificate and the application process see: http://ghi.wisc.edu/graduatecapstone-certificate-in-global-health/

Course Planning/Mechanics

MPH students who are selected and complete the global health field experience have a slightly different timeline and payment structure than students completing their field experiences within the state of Wisconsin or U.S. For global public health experiences, the MPH Program works with the International Academic Programs (IAP) Office located in Bascom Hall, on the University of Wisconsin-Madison campus. The MPH Program’s contact at the IAP Office is:

Katie Robinson
Study Abroad Program Coordinator
International Academic Programs
University of Wisconsin-Madison
301 Red Gym, 716 Langdon St.
Madison, WI 53706
Phone: +1.608.265.6329
Fax: +1 608.262.6998
www.studyabroad.wisc.edu
Students selected to participate in the global public health Field Experience will be notified prior to the start of their first fall semester and will work directly with the Community Engagement Coordinator to plan the specifics of the project. Each placement will be unique based on the availability of the University faculty, availability of a preceptor on site, and the health care systems and resources within a specific country.

MPH students completing a global public health field experience are required to complete a 400-hour field experience; however the hours may be counted slightly differently. That is, student work may be counted through more than the typical 40-hour work week. In order for the experience to count towards the MPH requirement, though, the student must spend, at a minimum, six weeks on-site in the country. Students who complete global public health experience do not pay tuition, but rather pay a study abroad fee. The study abroad fee covers an administrative fee to the IAP office, CISI (travel insurance) insurance, and a site fee for the placement site. The fee is approximately $1500.00 per student.

Students with assistantships (TA/PA/RA positions), who are typically eligible for tuition remission, must still pay the study abroad fee. The tuition remission that comes with assistantships DOES NOT apply to the study abroad fees. In addition, the study abroad fee is only equivalent to the tuition for the fieldwork. Students who take additional credits during the same summer session will be billed per the tuition fees.

The MPH Program has made the decision to work with IAP for international fieldwork, based on various factors, but primarily because of the administrative support the office provides (e.g. safety preparations, access to emergency phone line during in-country field experience, insurance) as well as IAP’s ability to channel financial compensation to the in-country organization for the support they will be providing to students. These site fees will assist in the long-term development, support, and sustainability of fieldwork sites for present and future MPH and Global Health students.

Because of the timing and extensive planning required for a global health MPH field experience, the global health field experiences always take place in the summer semester between the student’s first and second year in the program. A global health time-line/checklist is available on the MPH website.
The MPH Capstone Project

Overview: Each Master of Public Health (MPH) student must complete a Capstone Project prior to graduation. It is the final requirement for the MPH degree. The Capstone Project is a non-thesis, culminating project that demonstrates mastery of public health competencies through:

- A formal paper that will become part of the Public Health archives
  - 20-30 page research paper or report
  - Manuscript for submission to a journal
- A formal presentation
  - 10 minute presentation in the community or other event open to students and faculty,
  - A digital story, or
  - A poster presentation at the Department of Population Health's Annual Poster Session
- An oral defense consisting of questions by the student’s Capstone Committee

The nature of the Capstone Project should be consistent with the career goals of the student, and should be viewed as a culminating display of ability, demonstrating that the MPH graduate is prepared to become a professional in the field of public health. The demonstration of excellence through writing and oral presentation reflects the competencies that are essential to success in the field of public health. The “manuscript format” for the Capstone Project is intended to familiarize students with the rigors of preparing manuscripts for professional journals.

MPH students either must have completed, waived, or are concurrently completing the public health field experience in order to present their Capstone Project.

Since the Capstone Project is not a course for credit, but rather a requirement of the Program, the student will not be able to graduate until this aspect of the MPH Program requirement is completed. Each component of the Capstone Project is required for completing the requirements of the MPH Program. A Capstone paper/oral defense checklist is available on the MPH website. This is an important tool you should reference and use early as it will be a helpful resource in assisting you to plan your timeline.

The Capstone Committee:

The Capstone Committee and its members are responsible for guiding the student’s Capstone Project and determining whether or not the Capstone Project satisfactorily meets the MPH requirements. The MPH Program requires that one member of the student’s Capstone Committee, typically the Capstone Committee Chair, be a faculty member at the University of Wisconsin – Madison with PI status for IRB purposes and one member is from a community-based organization (local public health agency, community non-profit, public and private school, and/or governmental agency), outside the University to bring the public health practice perspective to the committee.

The Capstone Committee Chair: The responsibilities of the Capstone Committee Chair include serving as the primary contact for the student’s Capstone Project, helping students hone their interests, identify career paths and provide support for career development. In addition, the Capstone Committee Chair may provide a link to the campus community, resources, and extracurricular activities, which serve to enhance the educational experience (such as seminars, conferences, speakers, professional meetings). The Capstone Committee Chair serves as the PI on all IRB proposals and chairs.
the oral defense.

MPH Students should plan to identify a Capstone Committee Chair by the end of the first semester in the Program.

**Preceptor/Community-based Member:** One member of the Capstone Committee must be from a community-based organization (local public health agency, community non-profit, public or private school, and/or governmental agency), outside the University to bring the public health practice perspective to the committee. The majority of MPH students complete their Capstone Projects based upon the work they have done in the field. In this circumstance, the second member of the Capstone Committee is the student’s fieldwork preceptor.

**Additional Capstone Committee Member:** The third member of the Capstone Committee may be chosen from the program’s list of public health program faculty members or may be chosen based on his/her expertise in the subject matter. In the case where the student’s field experience is not tied to their Capstone Project, the faculty member who works with the student on said research or project would be an appropriate candidate for the student’s capstone committee.

Occasionally a student may choose a project in which the Preceptor is a university-based faculty member. Despite the fact that this person serves a dual role on the committee, it is still a requirement to have three Capstone Committee members.

Sometimes there is an additional individual or faculty member beyond the three required members who can provide credence, expertise, or critical input to the Capstone Project. It is also acceptable to have more than three Capstone Committee members.

**Capstone Committee Composition:**

All Capstone Committees must consist of a minimum of three members. The composition of the committee must meet the following requirements. Some committee members may serve in more than one role (i.e., be a University faculty member and a Public Health Program Faculty, or have content expertise and from a community-based organization (local public health agency, community non-profit, public and private school, and/or governmental agency).

The following conditions for Capstone Committee composition must be met for each student:

- At least one of the committee members must be a University of Wisconsin - Madison faculty member who has PI status at this institution.
- At least one committee member must be from the MPH Program’s Public Health Program Faculty.
- At least one of the committee members is from a community-based organization (local public health agency, community non-profit, public or private school, and/or governmental agency), outside the university to bring the public health practice perspective to the project. When the Capstone Project is based on the field experience, the capstone member is the student’s fieldwork preceptor.
- At least one member of the Capstone Committee should be chosen based on his/her expertise in the subject matter.
**Assistance in choosing a Capstone Committee Chair:** A list of Public Health Program Faculty is available on the MPH Website. Students are encouraged to gather information from courses, faculty and student seminars, the program, and publications to help identify faculty with interests matching those of the student. It is highly recommended that the Capstone Committee Chair be a UW Madison faculty member. This is particularly important if your Capstone Project requires IRB approval. The Capstone Committee Chair should be chosen by the end of the first semester in the Program. The Capstone Committee Chair can and should be consulted in identifying additional committee members.

Since the MPH Program is an interdisciplinary program, committee members should represent that broad spectrum. If the student requires extensive advice and input from a committee member other than the Capstone Committee Chair, it is appropriate to recognize that committee member as a co-chair for the Capstone Committee.

It should also be recognized that Capstone Committee members who make substantial contributions to the project or research should have the opportunity to be included as co-authors on any publications that result, following the journal guidelines of authorship.

**Notification of Capstone Committee to MPH Program:** Students are responsible for reporting the members of their Capstone Committee to the MPH Community Engagement Coordinator. This can be done at the time the student submits his/her field learning agreement or at the time that the Capstone Committee approves the Capstone Project Proposal. In either case, the student is responsible for completing the paper work, obtaining the proper signatures on the forms, and submitting the Field Learning Agreement and the Capstone Project Proposal Approval Form to the Community Engagement Coordinator.

**The Capstone Project Proposal**

Once the student has chosen a Capstone Committee Chair, the student and the Chair (and committee members, if appropriate) should begin to develop a topic for the project. After choosing the topic, the student is strongly encouraged to write an eight–ten page (3000-3500 word) Capstone Project Proposal for review by the Capstone Committee Chair and members.

The Capstone Project Proposal should include the following:

- A 200 word structured abstract of the project that includes the following labels:
  - Introduction
  - Purpose
  - Methods/Procedure
  - Results
  - Conclusion
- A brief description of the public health problem or issue to be addressed in the project
- A review of the most relevant existing literature
- A description of the data that will be collected
- A description of the methodology that will be used to address the problem
- A description of plans for IRB approval, if needed
- A list of references used in the project proposal

It is recommended that the student and members of the committee meet to discuss the proposal.
The committee will then approve the Capstone Project. The student is responsible for completing the Capstone Project Approval Form, obtaining the proper signatures, and submitting the form to the Community Engagement Coordinator. The student should also provide copies of the proposal and approval form to each of the capstone committee members.

The Capstone Project Approval Form is available on the PHS 787 and 788 Learn@UW sites, on the MPH website and from the Community Engagement Coordinator.

The Capstone Paper

The Capstone Project Paper may be submitted in one of two formats – either as a 20-30 page paper summarizing a student’s investigation into a public health problem or a manuscript of comparable length submitted to a public health peer-reviewed journal.

A detailed outline is provided below for the student who wishes to submit a scholarly paper to meet the Capstone Paper criteria.

Students may negotiate the final form of their paper with their Capstone Committee members to appropriately match the project objectives. For example, students have developed written reports, policy briefs, and other forms of final capstone papers in lieu of the formats described. Alternative formats should be of similar length, breadth, and depth and should be consistent in providing evidence that the student has mastered public health competencies sufficiently. Once the Capstone Committee approves the alternative format, the student and/or Capstone Committee Chair should seek the Community Engagement Coordinator's approval.

The final paper may be an extension or further development of work previously submitted for other courses at UW-Madison or for professional practice, but it must have been prepared since matriculating as an MPH student.

As with all assignments in the MPH Program, students are held to the MPH Program’s Honor Code as well as the UW-Madison’s integrity standards. For more information: https://www.students.wisc.edu/doso/academic-integrity/

Plagiarism is an act that is taken very seriously on this campus and in this Program. Important information about the definition of plagiarism and how to avoid it can be found on the Writing Center web site http://www.wisc.edu/writing/Handbook/QuotingSources.html

Information on academic misconduct can also be found at: https://students.wisc.edu/student-conduct/

Please take the time to examine these resources and familiarize yourself with the information available in order to avoid any problems with the Capstone Project.

Guidelines for the Capstone Paper

The Capstone Paper should reflect the overall goals and objectives (stated in Field Learning Agreement or the Capstone Project Approval Form) and provide details of the project completed.

Specific guidelines for the paper include:
- The paper must be typed, double-spaced, and 20-30 pages in length (not including references), with one-inch margins and 12 point font.
- The paper should be printed on a single side of quality paper.
- The final paper must be completed and submitted to members of the Capstone Committee at least three weeks prior to the oral defense.
- The student and the Capstone Committee should meet either face to face or via telephone conference to review and discuss the Capstone Project in an oral defense.
- Upon approval of the paper by the Capstone Committee an electronic copy of the paper must be turned into the MPH Program Office no later than the last day of classes for the semester in which the student intends to graduate.
- Students should use the AMA or APA format in writing the paper.

Examples of previous students’ Capstone papers are available for review by contacting the MPH Program Office at 608.263.4889

Following is an example of the components to include in the Capstone Paper:

**Title Page** (1 page)
A title page for the paper should include the title of the paper, the author, the date, and the Capstone Committee members.

**Abstract** (1 page)
Prepare a 250 - 300 word summary of the paper or project in a structured abstract.
The abstract should be on a separate page of the final document and should include:
- Background/Introduction
- Purpose
- Methods/Procedure
- Results/Findings
- Discussion/Conclusion

**Introduction** (1-2 paragraphs)
Provide an introduction of the topic and/or public health problem. This section should prepare the reader for the purpose of the paper.

**Background** (~4-6 pages)
This section of the paper should provide the evidence of the problem as well as the evidence to justify the project and/or the intervention. Include relevant and current public health literature as it relates to the topic and project. A minimum of 10 references from peer-reviewed journals should be cited. Sources may vary, depending on the topic and agency.

  The following questions may be considered:
  1) What is the prevalence/incidence of the problem?
  2) Are certain groups disproportionately affected?
  3) What are the economic, social, and physical consequences?
  4) What has already been done about this problem and what are the gaps?
  5) How is your project (or the agency/organization you are working with) attempting to address those gaps?
  6) What has been learned from previous interventions/work and how is this information used to inform current or future action?
Project Description/Methods (~4-5 pages)
Describe the project, including goals and objectives relevant to the public health problem. Include the methods/process of the intervention/project and the outcomes. Depending on the nature of the project, this may include any or all of the following:
- Research and/or evaluation methods
- Program planning methods
- Survey design and implementation methods
- Community outreach procedures and activities
- Needs assessment methodology
- Advocacy efforts and activities
- Health education development (materials, etc.)

Results/Findings (~4-5 pages)
This section should include the results or findings of the project. The following questions may be considered:
1) What were the findings/outcomes (qualitative or quantitative) of the project?
2) By what criteria was the project successful? Effective? Were the outcomes expected?
3) What about sustainability (to invest in transformational population health programs and initiatives which have the potential to evolve and become self-sustaining)?
4) What partnerships were utilized or are needed?
5) Did the organizational structure affect the outcomes?

Discussion (~4-5 pages)
This section should reflect upon the project and discuss overall strengths and limitations. The following questions may be considered:
1) How do these results compare to the literature?
2) Were the results different for subgroups?
3) Could anything have been improved?
4) What were lessons learned?
5) What happens next?
6) What is the public health impact?

Conclusion (1-2 paragraphs)

References
Critical use of references is required. Students are advised to consider the quality of their cited resources and recognize the distinction between advocacy documents and peer-reviewed literature. For assistance with citations and writing, contact the UW Writing Center and the Writing Center Handbook: http://www.wisc.edu/writing/.

A guide to the AMA citation style can be found online at: http://libguides.css.edu/c.php?g=41669&p=264927

A guide to the APA citation style can be found online at: http://www.apastyle.org/elecref.html

Appendices
- Any supporting data (tables, charts, graphs, surveys, evaluation forms, etc.)
Guidelines for the Capstone Manuscript

Students may submit a manuscript to a public health journal rather than the previously described paper. Students should follow the “Instructions to Author” provided by the journal for the format of the paper. The completed manuscript may be approved regardless of whether it is published or not. In order for the manuscript to be accepted as the Capstone Project Paper it must meet the following criteria:

- The paper must be a comparable length to the Capstone Paper previously described (at least 10 – 20 pages).
- The student must be the first or second author of the paper.
- The student must be able to document the originality of the research or work.
- If applicable, the student must be able to document IRB approval of the project.
- The journal to which the student will be submitting the manuscript must be pre-approved by the MPH Program Office and/or the Capstone Committee

Evaluation

Papers will be evaluated on a “criteria met/unmet” basis based upon the following:

- The background, rationale, and purpose for the project are clearly stated
- The methods are clearly described and appropriate for the purpose of the project
- The results are presented clearly, using tables and figures if appropriate
- The discussion relates the findings to the existing literature, identifies strengths and limitations, and describes implications for public health
- The paper is well written (e.g., following the guidelines above)

Capstone Project Presentation

In addition to producing a Capstone Project Scholarly Paper, each student will be expected to prepare an oral Capstone presentation, digital story, or poster.

The three options are outlined below.

1) Oral Capstone Presentation
Students may present a 10-minute oral presentation at the conclusion of the MPH Program at a community organization or at some other official event. Some examples include the Global Health Symposium, Wisconsin Public Health Association (WPHA) Annual Meeting, American Public Health Association (APHA) Annual Meeting, or an interest group, such as the Infectious Disease Interest Group (IDIG).

2) Digital Story
Students may present a digital story that conveys the student’s personal reflection of their learning experience. The digital story must be a compelling, brief 2-3 minute video story that includes still images, video, voice over narrative, and music and/or other sound effects.

3) Poster Session
Students may present a poster at the Department of Population Health Science’s annual Poster Session, typically held in March.
Specific guidelines for the **Oral Capstone Presentation** include the following:

1) Presentations should not exceed 10 minutes, with an additional 5-8 minutes of time for questions.
2) The format for the oral presentation must include the following:
   - Title
   - Overview/Outline
   - Introduction/Background
   - Project Methods
   - Results/Findings
   - Discussion
   - Conclusion
   - Acknowledgments

For the oral presentation for the MPH Program, **do not** include a reference slide.

Specific guidelines for the **Digital Story** presentation include the following:

1) Digital story must be two to three minutes or less in length.
2) The digital story must include still images, voice over narrative (told in the first person), music and/or other sound effects. The use of video is optional.
3) The digital story should serve as a succinct, creative and memorable expression of the student’s individual learning journey and what it meant to the student.
4) Digital story content must include the following:
   - Title screen: Include the title of the project and the name of creator (student)
   - Clear introduction of project’s purpose/theme
   - Supporting information that contributes to understanding the project’s main ideas
   - At least one compelling “take away” from the learning experience/project
   - Reference screen: All images/music/sources used in the digital story must be cited using APA or AMA format.
5) Following production, students will export their final digital story in one of the following application formats listed below.
   - **You Tube** [https://www.youtube.com/](https://www.youtube.com/)
   - **Microsoft Photo Story 3 Windows Moviemaker** [http://download.cnet.com/Photo-Story-3-for-Windows/3000-12513_4-10339154.html](http://download.cnet.com/Photo-Story-3-for-Windows/3000-12513_4-10339154.html)

Additional resources for developing a digital story can be found on the MPH Program’s website.

Specific guidelines for the **Poster** presentation include the following:

- The nature of the project, including topic and purpose is clear.
- The format and elements that should be included in the poster:
  - Title
  - Abstract
  - Introduction
  - Goals
Ensure there is a balance between the use of text and graphics (pictures, tables or graphs).

Important points should stand out and the poster should be understandable without oral explanation.

Consult your Capstone Committee members for assistance in developing a poster. Additional resources, tips and a template for developing a poster presentation can be found on the MPH website.

Evaluation

The Oral Presentation (presentation, digital story, or poster session) will be evaluated on a “criteria met/unmet” basis by the Capstone Committee and/or the MPH Program on the following:

- The purpose for the project is clearly stated
- The methods are clearly described and appropriate for the purpose of the project
- The results are presented clearly, using tables and figures if appropriate
- The discussion relates the findings to the existing literature, identifies strengths and limitations, and describes implications for public health
- The presentation is well organized and presented within the time allotted

Oral Defense of the Capstone Project

The Oral Presentation and the Oral Defense are two different components of the Capstone Project.

Students are expected to meet face to face or via teleconference with the Capstone Committee members for an oral defense of the paper/Capstone Project. This is typically done after the student has completed the Capstone presentation and before the student is set to graduate.

A helpful timeline for planning the paper and oral defense can be found on the MPH Program’s website. [http://mph.wisc.edu/sites/default/files/capstonepaperoraldefensechecklist3.2.16.pdf](http://mph.wisc.edu/sites/default/files/capstonepaperoraldefensechecklist3.2.16.pdf) This is an important tool you should reference and use early as it will be a helpful resource in assisting you to plan your timeline.

The student is responsible for the following:

- Schedule final meeting with Capstone Committee members before graduation
- Provide a final copy of the Capstone Paper (that has incorporated all of the committee members’ prior feedback on the paper) to the committee members at least three weeks prior to the oral defense
- Resolve incompletes and progress grades
**Scheduling the Oral Defense**

Students should plan to schedule the oral defense well before the last day of classes in the semester they plan to graduate. At times things do not go as planned; therefore, scheduling the oral defense during the final week before graduation is risky. If the paper is deemed unacceptable or needs modifications, the student may not be able to graduate.

When setting up the meeting, students should plan that the defense will last 1.5 – 2 hours in length.

Consult with Capstone members to find an appropriate date/time and place for the meeting. Work with Capstone Committee members to find a conference or meeting room for the defense. Determine if all members can be present for the meeting or if a teleconference is needed. For assistance with logistics, contact the MPH Program Office.

In the rare instance when it is not possible to have all Capstone members in the same room for the oral defense, one or more of the members can participate via teleconference or Skype.

**The Oral Defense “Meeting”**

The oral defense typically takes 1.5 – 2 hours.
The Capstone Committee Chair will be responsible for conducting the oral defense.

**Obtaining Signatures on the Capstone Completion Form**

In preparation for the oral defense meeting, the MPH Student should complete the Capstone Project Completion Form, except for the signatures. The form is brought to the meeting so that all committee members can sign the form at the end of the oral defense.

The Capstone Project Completion Form is available on the PHS 788 Learn@UW site, on the MPH Program website, and from the Community Engagement Coordinator.

In most cases, the Capstone Committee members feel that the student has done an adequate job in meeting the Capstone criteria either at the meeting or with a few minor edits to the final paper. In this case, all members will sign the form at the oral defense meeting.

If the paper requires additional work, the committee members may sign the form, but the Capstone Chair keeps the form without signing it until the student makes edits to the paper that meet the satisfaction of the chair. When the corrections are made, the Chair signs the form and it can be forwarded, along with the final paper, to the MPH Program Office.

Occasionally the Capstone Committee members require the student to make substantial modifications or edits in the paper and do not feel comfortable in signing the final form. If this is the case, the student should make the revisions and a second oral defense will need to be scheduled.

Given the time in which it takes to organize a meeting with the Capstone Committee members and the possibility that the student will be required to make additional edits on the paper, it is imperative that students schedule the oral defense well in advance of semester end and graduation deadlines.
When all of the Capstone Committee members cannot meet in the same room for the oral defense, it is the student’s responsibility to send a copy of the Capstone Completion Form to each of the members electronically for signature. The Capstone Committee members then are responsible for returning the signed and dated forms to the MPH Program Office either by email, fax, or US mail. In this instance, the student may have several Completion Forms on file, with an individual signature on each.

If the Capstone Project is reviewed and found to have met the Capstone Paper criteria sufficiently then it will be deemed that this requirement for graduation has been fulfilled.

The student is responsible to provide the signed Capstone Project Completion Form and an electronic copy of the final Capstone Paper to the MPH Program Office.

*The Capstone Project must be completed no later than two years after the completion of all course work. Students who are no longer enrolled at the University of Wisconsin-Madison may lose access to the UW Libraries and other valuable resources.*