

MPH Thesis Guide
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Background. Students in the Master of Public Health (MPH) program at Indiana University, Bloomington can elect one of two options: a public health leadership and practice concentration or a public health research concentration. The website contains a detailed description of the courses and requirements for these two concentration options including the recommended sequencing of courses [http://www.indiana.edu/~aphealth/graduate/ph_mph.shtml].

The public health research concentration is an intensive independent effort that requires diligent work adhering to a tight schedule to complete the degree in two years as well as a master's thesis. The MPH program uses a manuscript version of the thesis in which the student conducts research and develops a manuscript presenting key results from a major research question addressed by the study in a format consistent with publication guidelines for peer-reviewed journals. The School of HPER requirements are outlined in the Master's Thesis Steps Guide [www.hper.indiana.edu/academics/forms/pdf/masters%20thesis%20steps%20guide.pdf].

The purpose of this document is to provide more detail on the thesis requirement of the public health research option. It consists of three sections:

- Steps in completing the MPH thesis
- Outline of the MPH thesis proposal
- Outline of the MPH final thesis document

Steps in Completing the MPH Thesis. This section of the Guide outlines the steps in completing the thesis. It outlines the tasks that must be completed in a rough estimate of their sequence and includes links to the forms that must be signed and submitted.

1. **Determine if a public health research concentration is appropriate for career path, in discussion with advisor and potential thesis committee chair.** Students should carefully consider their past experiences, interests, and future academic and career goals when deciding which MPH concentration to pursue. Students who want to become public health practitioners focused on the delivery or management of health promotion programs in a community, worksite, or government setting might want to consider the leadership and practice concentration. Students who want to work as a member of a research team in a community, worksite, or government setting or students who want to pursue a doctoral degree might want to consider the public health research concentration.
2. **Get approval from a faculty member to serve as committee chair.** This step may entail changing advisors. It is important to note that admission to the research concentration is dependent on the availability of an advisor to guide the research and supervise the thesis.
3. **Declare public health research concentration on Concentration Declaration Form.** Submit form to academic advisor. Typically, this will occur by the mid-point of the first semester.

4. **Summarize literature and identify research questions.** You will need to search the literature, create evidence tables for several topics in the literature, write summaries for each evidence table, and draft a statement of the problem with proposed research questions. This is typically done while enrolled in C641 for 2 to 3 credits. The MPH program recommends that students create evidence tables in order to capture the literature. The appendix to this document describes how to prepare a literature review in the form of summaries and evidence tables as an alternative to a solely textual literature review.
5. **Develop research competencies.** Enroll in T590 or appropriate research course during the first year or during the summer between the first and second years to learn how to conduct a research project consistent with master's level work.
6. **Form thesis committee with a committee chair and at least two other members.** Three members of the committee need to have graduate faculty status. Submit signed nomination form to Dean's office.
[\[http://www.hper.indiana.edu/academics/forms/pdf/thesis_committee_approval.pdf\]](http://www.hper.indiana.edu/academics/forms/pdf/thesis_committee_approval.pdf)
7. **Develop thesis proposal.** The proposal should be developed with input from the chair and other committee members. The outline for the proposal is described below.
8. **Create a data ownership and publication agreement in collaboration with thesis committee chair.** This agreement should outline who owns the data (i.e., faculty owned, student owned, or co-owned) and should describe plans for authorship for publications and presentations based on the thesis research.
9. **Pass the Human Subjects tutorial.** Access the online tutorial on the Protection of Human Subject, review the information, and take the "Human Subject Protection Test."
[\[http://researchadmin.iu.edu/HumanSubjects/IUB/cert_req.html\]](http://researchadmin.iu.edu/HumanSubjects/IUB/cert_req.html)
10. **Submit application to Human Subjects Committee with all IRB approval form(s).** Obtain approved clearance for the use of human subjects. File copy of clearance with graduate recorder [\[http://researchadmin.iu.edu/HumanSubjects/IUB/hs_forms.html\]](http://researchadmin.iu.edu/HumanSubjects/IUB/hs_forms.html); provide documentation to committee chair.
11. **Schedule proposal meeting with committee members.** Submit form to Dean's office [<http://www.hper.indiana.edu/academics/forms/pdf/grad%20stu%20mtg%2008.pdf>]. The Dean's office will identify the location and confirm the date and time.
12. **Write one-page announcement/abstract of proposal.** Illustrative announcements are on file in the Dean's office. Have announcement/abstract signed by chair. Submit announcement to Dean's office at least two weeks before scheduled proposal meeting.
13. **Prepare a presentation to be made at the thesis proposal meeting.** Typically, the thesis proposal will begin with a presentation by the student of the proposed research.
14. **Hold proposal meeting open to faculty and students.** The student will present the research plan. Then the committee members will discuss the plan and provide input on the research. Dean's office will generate form that will be signed by committee members if the proposal is approved. Your chair will submit this form to the Dean's office.

15. **Conduct research and analyze data.** This is typically done while enrolled in C640 for 2 to 3 credits in collaboration with your chair and the other committee members.
16. **Draft thesis, including draft manuscript.** With input from committee members and using the publication format of the APA or of the target journal, write the thesis, including a manuscript with key results of the study. This is typically done while enrolled in H599 for 3 credits. An outline of the thesis is provided below.
17. **Create a poster presentation of thesis results.** Present a poster based on the analysis of the study at the MPH poster session. This is ideally done at the end of the second semester of the second year.
18. **Schedule defense with committee members.** Submit form to Dean's office at least five weeks in advance of thesis defense [<http://www.hper.indiana.edu/academics/forms/pdf/grad%20stu%20mtg%2008.pdf>].
19. **Write announcement/abstract of defense.** Illustrative announcements/abstracts are available in the Dean's office. Have announcement signed by chair and submit to Dean's office at least four weeks in advance of the thesis defense.
20. **Submit *Application for Advanced Degree*.** This application needs to be submitted to University graduate school at least 60 days prior to desired degree date [http://graduate.indiana.edu/pdf/APP_FOR_ADV_DEG.pdf].
21. **Prepare an acceptance page.** The University requires a signed acceptance page for the bound copy of the Master's thesis [<http://graduate.indiana.edu/appendix-e.php>]. It is recommended that the student prepare this page so that it can be signed at the defense meeting.
22. **Prepare a presentation to be made at the thesis defense.** Typically, the thesis defense will begin with a presentation by the student of the research and the key findings.
23. **Hold public thesis defense open to faculty and students.** The committee will read your draft thesis to prepare for the defense. At the defense, you will make a presentation of your research and the key findings. The committee will review your thesis and decide whether to approve it. Dean's office will generate form that will be signed by committee members at the end of the defense if the thesis is approved. The chair will turn the form in to the Dean's office.
24. **Meet with the Dean's office about requirements.** The student will review the final thesis requirements with Robert O'Loughlin in the Dean's office.
25. **Make changes in thesis as specified by committee.** At the thesis defense, the committee will discuss with the student the changes that need to be made in the thesis as well as the plans for the draft manuscript.
26. **Repeat the MPH competency self-assessment.** At the beginning of the program, each student completed a self-assessment on the MPH competencies. At the end of the program, the student will repeat the self-assessment on MPH competencies. Both of these need to be included in the appendix to the thesis.

27. **Update the CV.** The University Graduate School requires the thesis contain a copy of the student's CV.
28. **Submit two bound copies of thesis to University Graduate School.** The outline below shows the contents of the final thesis. Two copies need to be bound and submitted to the University. The student should discuss with the committee the form for copies to the committee members.

Outline of Proposal. This section of the MPH Thesis Guide lists the contents of the proposal. The MPH thesis proposal should consist of:

- Title page.
- One-page abstract of the research.
- Brief introduction that states the scope and magnitude of the problem or issue and the research questions or study aims.
- Brief summary of the literature based on evidence tables that provide the background for the research questions. As described above, the faculty suggests a literature review in the form of evidence tables for each of the key literature questions (e.g., scope and magnitude; determinants; interventions) and a short summary of the findings for each evidence table.
- Detailed description of the methods including analysis plan. The student will describe in detail the methods to be used to address the research questions, including a detailed analysis plan.
- Proposed research question and potential journal for the manuscript.
- Various appendices, including:
 - Evidence tables that support the literature summary
 - Complete reference list
 - Instrument(s)
 - IRB clearance documentation
 - Data and publication agreement

Outline of Thesis. This section of the MPH Thesis Guide lists the contents of the thesis. The University Graduate School has detailed specifications for the thesis [<http://graduate.indiana.edu/preparing-theses-and-dissertations.php>]. This link describes the required contents of the thesis, consistent with the list below; provides details on the format of the thesis, including margins, fonts, and paper types; and outlines required format for key pages of the thesis. Two bound copies of the thesis will be submitted to the University. The thesis should consist of:

- **Title page.** This is mandatory. The University link shows the format for the title page.
- **Signed acceptance page.** This is mandatory. The University link shows the required format. This page confirms the committee's approval and acceptance of the thesis. The page with original signatures should be included in one of the bound copies of the thesis after the title page. Photocopies of the signed acceptance may be used for in additional copies of the thesis.
- **Copyright page.** This is mandatory, if the student chooses to copyright the thesis. The University link describes how to register and copyright the thesis.
- **Dedication.** This is optional.
- **Acknowledgements.** This is recommended. Depending on personal inclination, the student may wish to include a set of acknowledgements to people and institutions to

whom they feel grateful for any academic, technical, financial, or personal aid received in preparation of the thesis. As a matter of courtesy, the student would ordinarily mention the members of the committee here, as well as institutions that provided funding or support of any kind, or people that helped in any way.

- **Preface.** This is optional.
- **Abstract.** This is mandatory. This is a short description of the complete thesis. The University link specifies the format.
- **Table of contents.** This is mandatory.
- **List of tables, figures, appendices, abbreviations and other supplemental material.** This is a list of the tables, figures, appendices, and other material in the thesis. The exact contents will depend on the particular thesis.
- **Brief introduction.** This is the introduction used in the proposal revised as required by the committee. It should outline the scope and magnitude of the problem or issue and state the research questions or study aims.
- **Brief summary of the literature.** This is the brief summary of the literature used in the proposal revised as required by the committee.
- **Detailed methods.** This is the detailed method section for the complete thesis. This will be based on the detailed method section submitted with the proposal but revised based on the comments of the committee.
- **Draft of the manuscript.** A typical thesis study contains results addressing several research questions. In the manuscript version of the thesis, the student will write up ONE section of the results in a format consistent with a peer-reviewed journal. Typically, a manuscript consists of: abstract; introduction; methods; results; discussion and implications; references; tables and/or figures. It should follow the format of the APA or of a targeted journal. The APA website [<http://www.apastyle.org/>] provides links to the complete APA publication manual as well as online style helpers and APA style books.
- Various appendices.** The appendices will depend on the exact nature of the thesis but might include:
 - Evidence tables that support the literature summary
 - Complete reference list
 - Instrument(s)
 - IRB clearance documentation
 - Data and publication agreement
 - MPH Competency Self-Assessment (Pre)
 - MPH Competency Self-Assessment (Post)
 - CV