MIEH 786 – Capstone Project in Public Health

Semester: Fall 2017/Spring 2018  
Classroom and Time: N/A  
Instructor: Dr Robin Puett  
Office: 2234EE  
Phone: 301-405-5610  
Email: rpuett@umd.edu  
Office Hours: By Appointment

Course Pre- and Co-requisites: Permission of department required.

Required Texts and Other Readings: Required reading materials are determined by the student, faculty advisor and Project Examining Committee on a case-by-case basis.

Additional Materials Required: Additional materials that may be required are determined by the student, faculty advisor and Project Examining Committee on a case-by-case basis.

Course Description: The purpose of the capstone project (MIEH 786) is to provide the student with a culminating experience where s/he applies the knowledge and skills learned in the MPH program to conduct independent work (under the supervision of the student’s Capstone Advisor) on a project related to a specific environmental health issue. The final project illustrates the student's understanding of the chosen environmental health issue and material relevant to the issue presented through coursework, as well as her/his ability to actively apply this knowledge towards advancing a solution to the issue. Capstone projects are generally very applied in nature and provide a deliverable that can be used immediately by the community, agency or group to address the environmental issue. Examples of capstone projects include (but are not limited to) environmental health planning for a specific locality, education/outreach involving a community, and implementation of a solution to an environmental health or safety problem in a workplace.

Course Learning Objectives: Upon completing this course, the student will be able to:

1. Develop a project idea and expand upon this idea in a written proposal that details what is to be accomplished and how it will be completed.
2. Successfully defend a project proposal.
3. Conduct independent work (under the supervision of the student’s advisor) on a project related to a specific environmental health issue or problem.
4. Prepare a written report, as evidence of scholarly writing ability, as well as other deliverables (if applicable) to cover all aspects of the project.
5. Successfully defend a final project.

Program Competencies Addressed in this Course: The following competencies for the MPH in Environmental Health could be addressed in this course: (NOTE: All of the MPH Environmental Health competencies must be addressed between the capstone project and the internship. Students should work with their advisor to identify how each competency will be met during this “Capstone Experience”
(capstone project + internship). As many competencies are multi-faceted, each competency must be met at least in part, if not in its entirety.

1. Evaluate and prioritize the direct and indirect human, ecological, and safety effects of major environmental and occupational agents.
2. Identify and apply appropriate, state of the art, approaches for assessing, preventing, and controlling environmental and occupational hazards that pose risks to human health and safety.
3. Incorporate the role of psychosocial factors that affect susceptibility to adverse health outcomes following exposure to environmental and occupational hazards into assessment, prevention, and control strategies.
4. Identify vulnerable populations and develop and apply risk management and risk communication approaches that address issues of environmental justice and equity.
5. Apply the concepts regarding genetic and physiologic factors and mechanisms of toxicity to evaluate and improve assessment, prevention, and control strategies.
6. Evaluate policies and standards with respect to ethical considerations of and disparities in environmental and occupational health and use the evaluation to develop improved policies and standards.
7. Critique and apply current environmental risk assessment methods.
8. Synthesize environmental-occupational health knowledge to design and evaluate environmental-occupational health policies, programs and research. Integrate, synthesize and apply theory to practice in the context of a research study, policy development, and public health systems development.
9. Critique federal and state regulatory programs, guidelines, and authorities that control environmental-occupational health issues.

Course Requirements and Expectations:

1. Send bi-weekly emails to Capstone Coordinator and Faculty Advisor updating on the progress of topic selection, Capstone Supervisor selection, if different than Faculty Advisor and Project Examining Committee (see Appendix, Form A for guidance re: bi-weekly emails at each stage of the process). Updates are not due during University extended holiday periods (e.g. winter break).
2. Select a project topic, Capstone Supervisor and Project Examining Committee. Complete and submit project topic approval form (Appendix, Form B)
3. Send bi-weekly emails to Capstone Coordinator and Faculty Advisor updating on the progress of the project proposal (see Appendix, Form A)
4. Develop a 5 to 15 page (double spaced, font size 10/11) project proposal that details what is to be accomplished and how it will be completed. Submit the project proposal at least 2 weeks prior to the defense. Signed approval Form (Appendix form C) is required to be submitted to the Capstone Coordinator at least one week prior to Capstone Presentation Day before student can defend the final project.
5. Present and successfully defend project proposal before the Project Examining Committee during Capstone Proposal Defense and Presentation Day.
6. Send bi-weekly emails to Capstone Coordinator and Faculty Advisor updating on the progress of project (see Appendix, Form A).
7. For Projects Involving Human Subjects ONLY: Prior to any work, obtain Institutional Review Board (IRB) approval and complete an online Collaborative Institutional Training Institute (CITI)
course (www.citiprogram.org). If data from another agency/organization will be used, a Data Use Agreement must be secured before any work can begin.

8. Complete the project.

9. Prepare an original (i.e. not used for other courses or work unless permission granted by advisor and MIAEH Capstone Coordinator) written report (25-50 pages, double spaced, font size 10 or 11) as evidence of “scholarly writing ability,” complete all other deliverables (if applicable) associated with the project and submit to Project Examining Committee at least two weeks prior to Capstone Presentation Day. Signed approval Form (Appendix form C) is required to be submitted to the Capstone Coordinator at least one week prior to Capstone Presentation Day before student can defend the final project.

10. Pass an oral defense conducted by the Project Examining Committee during the annual MIAEH Capstone Project Presentation Day, generally scheduled the last week of March- first week of April. Submit signed certification of master’s degree form without thesis to Graduate School.

Major Graded Assignments:

1. Biweekly progress reports and completed forms (10%)
2. Written project proposal (15%)
3. Oral presentation and proposal defense (15%)
4. Final project paper (and other deliverables, if applicable) (30%)
5. Oral presentation and defense of project (30%)

Assignment 1) Biweekly progress reports

It is the student’s responsibility to choose a capstone project supervisor (if not same as MPH program advisor), and capstone project examining committee in consultation with their project supervisor. The Project Examining Committee should consist of the Capstone Supervisor (must be MIAEH tenured or tenure track faculty member), and two additional members, one of whom has to be in MIAEH. Consistent with the criteria for all MIAEH graduate committees, the majority of faculty on the committee must be full-time, tenure-track graduate faculty in the Maryland Institute for Applied Environmental Health who are currently conducting research in their discipline. The topic of the capstone project must be relevant to the field of environmental health. Project topics and scope are mutually agreed upon by the student, Capstone Supervisor, and the Project Examining Committee. If a student is conducting the project at his/her workplace, the topic of the project must be outside the framework of regular employment duties and responsibilities. Similarly, if a student is conducting a project associated with the internship site that is somewhat related to the work performed during the internship, it must be made clear how the project and internship activities are different and how they culminate in different projects.

Throughout the capstone (including project selection phase, project proposal development stage and conduct of the project), the student will correspond with the MIAEH Capstone Coordinator and faculty advisor at least once every 2 weeks via a Word or PDF document attached to bi-weekly emails to the advisor using Form A in Appendix. The information presented should be one page in length.

Assignment 2) Project topic and committee approval form

It is the student’s responsibility to obtain approval of the capstone project before work is begun via timely discussions with the Capstone Supervisor and Project Examining Committee and through
submitting the formal approval form (Form B Appendix) with signatures by the Capstone Supervisor, faculty advisor, and MIAEH Capstone Coordinator.

**Assignment 3) Project proposal**

After selecting a project topic, the student will prepare a written proposal (5-15 pages double-spaced, font 10/11 Arial or other similar fonts) that details what is to be accomplished and how it will be completed. At least 2 weeks before the Capstone Proposal Presentation Day, the proposal must be provided to the Project Examining Committee. At least 5 days prior to the Capstone Proposal Presentation Day, the Capstone Coordinator must receive approval from the Capstone Supervisor for the student to present in Capstone Proposal Presentation Day (Appendix Form C). The student is responsible for obtaining this signed approval form and transmitting it to the Capstone Coordinator. The components of a project proposal should include, at minimum (Grading rubric for written materials Appendix C for guidance):

a. The purpose of the project  
b. The significance and relevance of the project to environmental health  
c. The Environmental Health MPH competencies to be addressed  
d. A description of the project  
e. Methods to be used in completing the project  
f. The project deliverables  
g. A project time line

**Assignment 4) Oral presentation and defense of project proposal**

Students must formally present and defend their proposal before the Capstone Project Examining Committee. These presentations and proposal defenses will occur during the annual MIAEH Capstone Project Proposal Presentation Day. The Capstone Project Proposal Presentation Day will take place during the fall semester (date determined at least one month prior). During this day, each student who is proposing a project will provide a 15-minute presentation, followed by 5 minutes of discussion/questions by the Project Examining Committee.

The presentation and proposal defense must be in person with the student and all Project Examining Committee members present. If there is an unforeseeable circumstance in which a committee member cannot make the presentation, that committee member may attend by teleconference. The committee may approve the proposal without revision, provisionally approve the proposal contingent on revisions, or fail the proposal. Revisions can be approved by written documentation from all committee members submitted to the MIAEH Capstone Coordinator (e-mail is acceptable). The Capstone Presentation and Defense Form (Appendix Form C) should be signed by the Project Examining Committee during Capstone Project Proposal Presentation Day and submitted to the Capstone Supervisor and Capstone Coordinator.

A failed proposal means that the project proposal is not acceptable and must be redone and presented again to the Project Examining Committee in person. The student is responsible for scheduling the second attempt in collaboration with the Project Examining Committee and informing the Capstone Supervisor. This second attempt must take place within the next two weeks of the
semester. If the project is approved, the student is responsible for presenting the Capstone Presentation and Defense Form to the Capstone Supervisor at the defense and the Capstone Supervisor is responsible for submitting the completed form to the Capstone Coordinator. If the project is not approved the second time, the student is dismissed from the program. No proposal can be approved until all committee members grant written approval.

If the **project involves human subjects**, IRB approval should be requested. The student is responsible for and must prepare an IRB application under the Capstone Supervisor’s direction. Any student who collects data from human subjects (qualitative or quantitative) must obtain IRB approval before collecting any data. For complete details, visit the UMD IRB website at [http://www.umresearch.umd.edu/IRB/index.html](http://www.umresearch.umd.edu/IRB/index.html). Students collecting data from human subjects also need to complete an online Collaborative Institutional Training Institute (CITI) course ([www.citiprogram.org](http://www.citiprogram.org)). Typically, it is the “Biomedical Research - Basic/Refresher, Basic Course” that should be completed; however, students should check with their advisors before they begin the online course. Students may choose to (and are encouraged to) complete CITI training before submitting an IRB proposal.

Data Use Agreements may also be needed if secondary data are used. Check with your Capstone Supervisor and the SPH Research Office (e.g. Dawn Schettino).

**Assignment 5) Final project paper and other deliverables**

After the project proposal has been approved by the Project Examining Committee (and the IRB approval and data use agreement, if required), the student may begin work on the project. It is expected that the project will be conducted according to what was approved by the Project Examining Committee. If substantive changes to that proposal are sought, approval from the Project Examining Committee is required. The student must consult with the Capstone Supervisor to determine which changes are substantive and require committee approval. Biweekly emailed progress reports (Form A Appendix) are due to the Faculty Advisor and Capstone Coordinator during this period.

Once the project is completed, the student will prepare a written report (25-50 pages double-spaced, font Arial 10/11 or other similar font), as evidence of “scholarly writing ability,” and **complete all other deliverables (if applicable)** associated with the project. “Scholarly writing ability” is the ability to present ones’ ideas in a clearly organized paper, with proper scholarly documentation and evidence of original research and/or critical analysis, and/or evaluation. This report is provided to the Project Examining Committee for final review no later than 2 weeks prior to the oral defense. See Grading Rubric, Appendix D.

The project paper in final form should include the approval form for the defense (Appendix Form E), a title page, an abstract or executive summary and a table of contents. Students should consult with their Capstone Supervisor for the exact contents related to reporting their specific project. Other project deliverables should take on a format agreed upon in the approved project proposal. Important Note: Approval Form (Appendix Form C) is required before student can defend the final project.

**Assignment 4) Oral presentation and defense of project, project paper, and other deliverables**

The final step in completing the MPH project is to pass an oral defense conducted by the Project Examining Committee during the annual **MIAEH Capstone Project Presentation Day**. During this day,
student presenters will provide a 15-minute presentation of their project, followed by 5 minutes of discussion/questions from the Project Examining Committee. In addition to committee members, any member of the faculty or any student may attend this meeting. Committee members must receive the final project at least two weeks in advance of the MIAEH Capstone Project Presentation Day. At least 5 days prior to the Capstone Final Project Presentation Day, the Capstone Coordinator must receive approval from the Capstone Supervisor for the student to present in Capstone Proposal Presentation Day (Appendix Form C). The student is responsible for obtaining this signed approval form and transmitting it to the Capstone Coordinator. Students should complete the certification of masters’ degree without thesis form (Appendix form F) and have it signed after successful defenses on MIAEH Capstone Project Presentation Day. The final MPH project will be evaluated on the criteria presented in the grading rubrics (Appendix D)

The Project Examining Committee may approve the project without revision, provisionally approve the project contingent on revision, or fail the project. Revisions can be approved by e-mail communications without the need for a formal committee meeting. A failed project means that the project is not acceptable and must be redone and presented again in-person to the Project Examining Committee in a formal meeting. In consultation with the Project Examining Committee, the student can either return the next semester to repeat the project or revise the project and schedule a second defense attempt within two weeks. The student is responsible for scheduling the second attempt in collaboration with the Project Examining Committee and informing the Capstone Supervisor. This second attempt must take place within the next two weeks of the semester. If the project is approved, the student is responsible for presenting the Capstone Presentation and Defense Form to the Capstone Supervisor at the defense and the Capstone Supervisor is responsible for submitting the completed form to the Capstone Coordinator. If the student again fails the project, he/she is dismissed from the program. The project is not approved until all committee members grant their approval with their signatures. When final approval is granted, the Project Examining Committee will acknowledge this in writing on the form titled School of Public Health MPH/MHA Project Evaluation. The advisor will forward this form to the MIAEH Capstone Coordinator. Following final approval, the student must provide one hard copy of the project paper to the MIAEH Capstone Coordinator. A copy of the final project paper will be placed in a file that future students may refer to.

**Note:** Students are NOT required to submit a copy of the final project paper to the Graduate School.

**Grading Procedures:**
A = 90-100, B=80-90, C=70-80, D=60-70, F=below 60

1. Biweekly progress reports and completed forms (10%)
2. Written project proposal (15%)
3. Oral presentation and proposal defense (15%)
4. Final project paper (and other deliverables, if applicable) (30%)
5. Oral presentation and defense of project (30%)

Rubrics for written and oral materials Appendix D
Course Timeline for Spring Graduation: *Note the latest possible dates for deadlines are provided – students are encouraged to satisfy each requirement as soon as possible in consultation with their Capstone Supervisor*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date or Time Period</th>
<th>Task</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>From capstone orientation 2 weeks prior to final project defense</td>
<td>Biweekly progress emails to Faculty Advisor and Capstone Coordinator (Form A)</td>
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<tr>
<td>By Oct 9</td>
<td>Capstone project topic and committee selected and approval form signed and submitted (Form B)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>By Nov 13</td>
<td>Project proposal submitted to Examining Committee</td>
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<tr>
<td>By Nov 29</td>
<td>Approval for participation in Capstone Proposal Defense Day (form C) due to Capstone Coordinator</td>
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</table>
| Dec 4              | Capstone Project Proposal Defense Day— Form E submitted  
If successful – project can proceed after IRB and DUA obtained (if needed)  
If unsuccessful – follow row below* |
| *By Dec 18         | Revised proposal defense  
If successful - project can proceed after IRB and DUA obtained (if needed)  
If unsuccessful – student is withdrawn from program |
|                    | Work on project and continue biweekly progress updates submissions    |
| By Feb 16          | First draft of project submitted, with discussion by committee for final analysis/needs |
| By March 16        | Final project report submitted for committee review                   |
| By March 28        | Approval for participation in Capstone Final Project Presentation and Defense Day (form C) due to Capstone Coordinator |
| April 2            | Student will provide a presentation and defend the final project, project paper and any other deliverables associated with the project – Form E submitted  
If successful – proceed to last row  
If unsuccessful – follow row below* |
| By April 20*       | Revised final defense  
If successful – proceed to last row  
If unsuccessful – student is withdrawn from program |
| April 23           | Final date to submit [Certification of Master’s Degree Without Thesis Form](#) to the Registrar, 1113 Mitchell Bldg. |

Course Policies:

**Email – The Official University Correspondence:**

Verify your email address by going to [www.my.umd.edu](http://www.my.umd.edu).

All enrolled students are provided access to the University’s email system and an email account. *All official University email communication will be sent to this email address* (or an alternate address if provided by the student). Email has been adopted as the primary means for sending
official communications to students, so email must be checked on a regular basis. Academic advisors, faculty, and campus administrative offices use email to communicate important and time-sensitive notices.

**Students are responsible for keeping their email address up to date or for redirecting or forwarding email to another address.** Failure to check email, errors in forwarding email, and returned email (from “full mailbox” or “unknown user” errors for example), will not excuse a student from missing University announcement, messages, deadlines, etc. Email addresses can be quickly and easily updated at www.my.umd.edu or in-person at the Student Service Counter on the first floor of the Mitchell Building.

For technical support for University email: www.helpdesk.umd.edu or call 301-405-1400.

All University of Maryland-approved course policies are provided at the following website: [http://www.ugst.umd.edu/courserelatedpolicies.html](http://www.ugst.umd.edu/courserelatedpolicies.html)

Policy descriptions, resources, and links to official policy documents are provided for:

**Academic Integrity:** What is cheating? What is plagiarism? What is the Honor Pledge?
**Code of Student Conduct:** What behavior is prohibited?
**Sexual Misconduct:** What to do in case of sexual harassment or sexual assault.
**Discrimination:** Procedures to prohibit discrimination, complaints about discrimination, harassment, and retaliation.
**Accessibility:** Information about disability support services (DSS) and accommodations.
**Attendance, Absences, or Missed Assignments:** The student must notify the instructor in a timely manner (typically first week of class). Read this prior to Schedule Adjustment date.
**Student Rights Regarding Undergraduate Courses:** What should I find in the course syllabus? Am I allowed to see my exams after they are graded?
**Official UMD Communication:** Use of email, communication with faculty, communication about cancelled class meetings, and weather-related or other urgent notifications.
**Mid-Term Grades:** Provided for 100 and 200 level courses, and all student athletes.
**Complaints About Course Final Grades:** Questions about course grades should first be addressed to the course instructor.
**Copyright and Intellectual Property:** Who owns the work that I produce in class?
**Final Exams:** Final exams are scheduled by the University.
**Course Evaluations:** The School of Public Health is committed to the use of student course evaluations for improving the student experience, course and curriculum delivery, and faculty instruction.
**Campus Resources:** ELMS, counseling, learning workshops, tutoring, writing help, questions about graduation, adding or dropping classes, withdrawing from the semester, etc.

**Course Procedures and Policies:** [You may add course-specific policies regarding late work, missed assignments, lab safety, classroom etiquette, etc., but all such policies must conform with university policies listed above. In the case of a discrepancy, university policy will override a course policy.]

**Inclement Weather / University Closings / Emergency Procedures:**
In the event that the University has a delayed opening or is closed for an emergency or extended period of time, the instructor will communicate to students regarding schedule adjustments, including rescheduling of examinations and assignments due to inclement weather and campus emergencies.

Course Evaluations
The University, the School of Public Health, and the Maryland Institute for Applied Environmental Health are committed to the use of student course evaluations for improving the student experience, course and curriculum delivery, and faculty instruction. Your evaluations help instructors improve their courses; help deans and department chairs decide on merit pay for faculty, renewal of contracts, and support tenure and promotion decisions; and help current and future students decide on classes. At the appropriate time towards the end of the semester, please login to the system (www.CourseEvalUM.umd.edu) and complete your evaluation.

Available Support Services: For additional help with writing the project proposal and/or final project paper, students can refer to the University of Maryland Writing Center (http://www.english.umd.edu/academics/writingcenter). International students may find their English Editing program particularly useful (http://www.english.umd.edu/academics/writingcenter/graduate/international).
Appendix
Form A: Bi-Weekly Email Updates with MIAEH Capstone Coordinator and Faculty Advisor.
Important note: If issues should be addressed, if volume of work is too little/too much repeatedly, or if the capstone diverges from the approved plan, please contact the faculty advisor and MIAEH capstone Coordinator for an appointment immediately.

Week #:

Goals for the upcoming 2 weeks:

Accomplishments in the previous 2 weeks:

If any of the goals were not accomplished or changed, please briefly describe why and how:

Any problems or issues that need to be addressed by the student faculty advisor, MIEH capstone Coordinator and/or – if applicable, site supervisor?
Form B: Approval of Capstone Project and Project Examining Committee

The student is responsible for obtaining approvals and signatures below and filing copies with the MIAEH Capstone Coordinator, Faculty Advisor and Graduate Director prior to beginning the capstone project.

Student Name ___________________________ Anticipated Graduation Date ________________________________

Capstone Location/Agency/Organization: ______________________________________________________________________

Address: ________________________________________________________________________________________________

Capstone Supervisor Name____________________________________

Title______________________________________________

Phone ___________________________ Email ___________________________

Preliminary date of defense:

Potential Duties and Learning Objectives:

Name and Department of MIEH Project Examining Committee Members:

________________________________________________________ MIAEH
Name Dept Name Dept

Signatures below indicate preliminary approval of proposed capstone site/duties until full committee approval at proposal defense and approval of the Project Examining Committee.

________________________________________________________
Signature MIAEH Capstone Coordinator date

________________________________________________________
Signature Capstone Supervisor date
Form C: Approval of Student Participation in Capstone Presentation and Defense Day

This form should be submitted twice during the Capstone Experience. The student is responsible for obtaining approvals and signatures below and filing copies with the MIAEH Capstone Coordinator at least 5 days prior to the 1) Capstone Proposal Defense and Presentation Day and again at least 5 days prior to the 2) Capstone Final Project Defense and Presentation Day.

Student Name ____________________________ Anticipated Graduation Date ____________________________

Capstone Project Title: ____________________________________________________________

By signing, I confirm that the Project Examining Committee has approved the student is prepared to present and defend her/his Capstone Project during the MIAEH Capstone Defense and Presentation Day.

Capstone Supervisor Name (printed) and Signature ____________________________________________

Date
### Grading Rubric for Written Materials (Proposal and Final Project Report)

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<tr>
<th>Criteria</th>
<th>Evaluation Levels</th>
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<td></td>
<td>Excellent</td>
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<tr>
<td>Effective Organization</td>
<td>1) easy to follow</td>
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<td>5) meets format limitations</td>
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<td>2) well-reasoned and supported arguments</td>
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<td>3) appropriate sources/background material</td>
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<td></td>
<td>4) accurate information presented</td>
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<td>5) all components required for written</td>
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### Oral Proposal Presentation and Oral Final Project Presentation and Defense Grading Rubric

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<td>4) central point of presentation obvious</td>
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<td>5) meets time limitations</td>
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<td></td>
<td>1) demonstrated knowledge on topic</td>
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<tr>
<td>Credibility Established</td>
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</table>
2) well-prepared to answer questions
3) appropriate sources/background material cited
4) accurate information presented
5) all components required for presentation included*

Effective Audio/Visuals

1) easy to read
2) accurate graphics included
3) appropriate level to convey information
4) graphics well-explained
5) presenter addresses the audience articulately and respectfully
University of Maryland College Park  
School of Public Health  

Form E: Project Examining Committee Grading Form

Each member of the Project Examining Committee must complete and submit the Capstone Coordinator one of these forms at the Capstone Proposal Defense Day and again at the Capstone Final Project Presentation and Defense Day.

Student Name ______________________________________________________

Student Capstone Title ______________________________________________

Presentation and Defense Date __________________________________________

Committee Member: ___________________________________________________
                      Printed Name ______________________ Signature ____________ Date __________

Using the Written Materials Grading Rubric Below, please assign a letter grade to the student’s written Capstone proposal/final paper: ________
(Circle one)

Using the oral presentation grading rubric below, please assign a letter grade to the student’s oral Capstone proposal/final project presentation and defense: ________
(Circle one)

**Grading Rubric for Written Materials** (Proposal and Final Project Report)

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### Oral Proposal Presentation and Oral Final Project Presentation and Defense Grading Rubric

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<td>4) accurate information presented</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>5) appropriate application of Environmental Health MPH</td>
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</table>
| **Effective Audio/Visuas** | **1)** easy to read  
**2)** accurate graphics included  
**3)** appropriate level to convey information  
**4)** graphics well-explained  
**5)** presenter addresses the audience articulately and respectfully | **competencies relevance to environmental health** |  |  |
Form F available at