



SCHOOL OF PUBLIC HEALTH

DEPARTMENT OF KINESIOLOGY

MPH Project Handbook

KNES 786: Capstone Project in
Physical Activity and Public Health
February 2019

**Department of Kinesiology
School of Public Health
University of Maryland, College Park, MD 20742
MPH Project Guidelines**

I. General Information

All Master of Public Health (MPH) students are required to complete a culminating project (KNES786, 3 credits). The completion of the culminating project, along with the completion of the internship (KNES785, 4 credits) fulfills the “Capstone Experience” requirement for the MPH program. The culminating project should be completed during the final semester of the MPH program after all other required coursework is completed; project development and approval takes place the semester prior. The purpose of this document is to describe the requirements for the culminating project. The requirements for the internship (KNES785; practicum experience) are described in the MPH Internship Handbook (found on the KNES website).

If the culminating project is not completed in the semester for which the student registered (KNES786), an incomplete contract must be processed. Thereafter, the student must register for at least one credit of independent study (KNES789) each semester until the project is completed. Students enroll for KNES786 under the section number of their faculty advisor.

When designing the culminating project, students should review the MPH competencies for the specialization in Physical Activity. All of the MPH competencies must be addressed between the student’s coursework, culminating project and the practicum experience (e.g., internship). Students should work with their advisor to identify how each competency will be met during their time at the University of Maryland.

II. The MPH Project

The purpose of the culminating project (KNES 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 advisor) on a project related to a specific physical activity issue or problem. The final project illustrates the student's understanding of the chosen physical activity issue or problem as well as her/his ability to actively apply this knowledge towards the solution of the issue or problem. The final project must also adequately demonstrate MPH degree competencies.

Culminating projects are generally very *applied* in nature and provide some sort of materials, guide, or plan that can be used immediately by the community, agency or group that is facing the physical activity issue or problem at hand.

The MPH project is an independent project separate from the internship and current work experience. A student may identify a project based on his/her internship as long as it is a totally separate and independent activity. Any student who wants to complete his/her internship and project at the same location or on a similar topic must clearly state in the project proposal how the two experiences are distinctly different. If a student is conducting a project at his/her workplace, the project must be outside the framework of regular employment duties and responsibilities.

A. Designing the MPH Project

Nominating the Project Examining Committee

In consultation with your advisor, determine members of the Project Examining Committee. Complete and submit the Nomination form to the MPH Program Coordinator at least one month prior to the planned meeting date. Allow a minimum of two months for approval of non-UM faculty members.

Selecting a Project Topic

The topic of the culminating project must be relevant to the field of physical activity. Project topics and scope are mutually agreed upon by the student, advisor, and the Project Examining Committee. Use the Capstone Competencies Planning Form to ensure that you will cover all MPH in Physical Activity program competencies between your coursework, internship and project.

Developing the Project Proposal

After selecting a project topic, the student will prepare a written proposal (10-15 pages) that details what is to be accomplished and how it will be completed. The final proposal is created in consultation with the student's advisor and with input (and then final approval) from the Project Examining Committee. The components of a project proposal should include, at minimum, the following sections (sub-headings):

Title Page

Table of Contents

Abstract

Significance and Relevance of the Project to Physical Activity and Public Health (Literature review)

Purpose of the Project

Proposed Project Plan (Description of the project)*

Project Deliverables

Project Timeline

MPH Competencies to be Addressed

*If your project is to be conducted at the same location as your internship, you must include a statement on the relationship of the project to the internship experience.

Requesting Approval of the Project Proposal

The Project Examining Committee consists of graduate faculty members from the Department of Kinesiology or other Departments in the University and potentially off-campus, if approved. One of these must be the faculty advisor and two other members are chosen in consultation with the advisor. Consistent with the criteria for all KNES graduate committees, the majority of faculty on the committee must be full-time, tenure-track graduate faculty in the Department of Kinesiology who are currently conducting research in their discipline. The MPH Program Director is responsible for approving all committees.

Students must formally present and defend their proposal before the Project Examining Committee by December 1 for May graduation or May 1 for December graduation. During this defense, the student proposing a project will provide a 15-minute presentation, followed by discussion/questions by the Project Examining Committee. In addition to committee members, any member of the faculty or any student may attend this meeting.

Abstract and Proposal Circulation

Once the advisor has approved the proposal, the student must:

1. Circulate the abstract and proposal to the full committee a minimum of 7 working days prior to the proposal meeting. Include the Project Proposal Assessment form for your committee chair.
2. Distribute a copy of the abstract (1 page) to all KNES graduate faculty members (knesgradfac@umd.edu) and submit the abstract to the MPH Coordinator for distribution to the KNES graduate students. The student should state in the email to the graduate faculty that comments should be sent to the student's advisor and include the advisor's email address. For example the email to the faculty might read:
Consistent with department policy, I am forwarding a copy of my MPH Project Proposal abstract for your review. Please submit your comments to my advisor, Dr. Name (email) prior to the proposal meeting on date/time in location. Dr. Name and I welcome your comments and questions. Thank you in advance for your assistance in this matter.
3. The student should email the proposal to the MPH Coordinator (knes-grad@umd.edu) a minimum of 7 working days prior to the meeting. They will post a copy of the abstract on the Graduate Bulletin Board. The posting should include the student's and advisor's names, committee members, and date, time, and location of proposal meeting.

Proposal Meeting

1. A minimum of 7 working days prior to the proposal meeting, the student must schedule the Project Proposal meeting. The meeting must be held within the School of Public Health facilities.
2. Schedule the department conference room (or alternate location) for the meeting. To reserve the department conference room and equipment contact Ms. Joanna Han (hanj@umd.edu) at (301) 405-2450.
3. Following proposal approval, the advisor and committee members sign the KNES MPH Project Proposal Approval form and the advisor submits this form to the MPH Program Coordinator, along with a copy of the revised proposal.

The proposal presentation 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 (e-mail is acceptable) or oral communication with committee members. 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. 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. The proposal must be approved no later than the last day of the third week of classes in the semester in which the student intends to complete the project.

Institutional Review Board (IRB) Approval for Human Subjects Research

If the project involves human subjects, IRB approval should be requested only after the proposal has been approved by the Project Examining Committee. The student's faculty advisor is the actual IRB applicant on behalf of the student. The student may prepare the IRB application under the advisor's direction, but the advisor must take the ultimate responsibility for the student's work with respect to the protection of human subjects. 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>. Students collecting data from human

subjects also need to complete an online Collaborative Institutional Training Institute (CITI) course (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. **Be aware that a separate IRB may have to be submitted at the project site.**

B. Completing the MPH Project

After the project proposal has been approved (and the IRB approval obtained, 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 faculty advisor to determine which changes are substantive and require committee approval.

Students are allowed a MAXIMUM of two semesters of additional independent study (KNES789) to finish their project if they are unable to finish during the semester in which they initially registered for project credits (KNES786). If a student wishes to register for additional independent study credits to finish, he/she must be making better than satisfactory progress and must submit a timeline with due dates for deliverables that has been approved by all committee members. If a student is not making satisfactory progress while registered for independent study credits, he/she may risk being dismissed from the program regardless of whether his/her 5-year clock is close to expiring.

Once the project is completed, the student will prepare a written report (25 pages, minimum), 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 one’s 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 advisor and Project Examining Committee for final review.

Format of project paper and other deliverables

The project paper in final form should be a variation on the outline below. Students should consult with their advisors for the desired final format of the paper. Other project deliverables should take on a format agreed upon in the approved project proposal.

Title Page

Table of Contents

Abstract/Executive Summary

Introduction

- Purpose/aims of the project
- Significance of the project
- Review of relevant literature
- Relevance of project to public health

Methods

- Description of the project and deliverables
- Methods used in completing the project
- Actual project timeline

Results/Outcomes

- Findings from any analyses, if conducted
- Challenges and accomplishments

- Lessons learned

Discussion

- Implications of this project for public health
- Next steps required to further the aims of this project

References

Appendix

- IRB Approval/Waiver
- Copy of Competency Planning Form
- MPH competencies addressed by project
- Sample materials
- Statement on the relationship of the project to the internship experience (if completed at the same location)

C. Defending the final MPH Project

The final step in completing the MPH project is to pass an oral defense conducted by the Project Examining Committee at the end of the semester (**review graduate school deadlines, for example, Spring 2019 deadline for approval form =4/23/19 [last day of classes = 5/14/19]**). During this defense, the student will provide a 15-minute presentation of the project, followed by discussion/questions from the Project Examining Committee. In addition to committee members, any member of the faculty or any student may attend this meeting.

The meeting procedures will again be followed as in the proposal meeting. In short, once the advisor has approved the final paper, the student must:

1. Schedule the Project Defense meeting. The meeting must be held within the School of Public Health facilities.
2. Circulate the abstract and final paper to the full committee a minimum of 7 working days prior to the defense meeting; include the Project Final Defense Assessment form for your committee chair.
3. Distribute a copy of the abstract (1 page) to all KNES graduate faculty members (knesgradfac@umd.edu) and submit the abstract with meeting details to the MPH Program Coordinator for distribution to the KNES graduate students.
4. Bring copies of Capstone Competencies Faculty Evaluation Form to the defense meeting for committee members.

The final MPH project will be evaluated on the following criteria (and other criteria as deemed appropriate):

1. Organization, clarity, rigor
2. Inclusion of pertinent information (includes appendices)
3. Appropriate application of Physical Activity MPH competencies
4. Relevance to physical activity

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. This may require that the student return the next semester to repeat the project. 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 (MPH Project Evaluation Form). When final approval is granted, the Project Examining Committee will acknowledge this in writing and will forward to the KNES MPH Director. Following final approval, the student must provide one hard copy and an electronic file of the project paper to the MPH Program Coordinator.

Final defense and graduate forms deadline

The final oral defense and any changes that need to be made must be completed by the Graduate School's submission deadline. You do NOT have until the last day of classes or finals week. The Graduate School requires that you turn in your *Certification of Master's Degree without Thesis Form* (www.gradschool.umd.edu) no later than the first week of May or December (the month you intend to graduate). **Review graduate school deadlines, for example, the Spring 2019 deadline for the Certification form was 4/23/19 (last day of classes was 5/14/19)**. This form states that you have completed all degree requirements; therefore, your project must be completed by the time the form is due to the Graduate School. Review current Graduate School deadlines for graduating students at <http://www.gradschool.umd.edu/calendar/deadlines/academic-deadlines>

Note: Students are not required to submit a copy of the completed project to the Graduate School.

Timeline and Forms

Task	Timeframe	Form
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Develop project topic ideas Discuss with advisor Review competencies 	First half of semester prior to project completion	Capstone Competencies Planning Form
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Select Project Examining Committee 	Mid-semester prior to project	Nomination of Project Examining Committee
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Write proposal Consult with advisor for feedback 	Mid-semester prior to project	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Schedule proposal meeting 	Meeting no later than December 1/May 1	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Provide committee with proposal document Post abstract via email and on graduate bulletin board 	7 business days before meeting	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Propose and revise as needed 	Finalize no later than 3 weeks into final semester	Project Proposal Assessment (Committee chair) Project Proposal Acceptance Form (Committee Signature Form)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> IRB Review 	Immediately following project approval	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Complete project Consult with advisor for feedback Update Project Examining Committee if needed 	Final semester	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Schedule defense meeting 	Meeting no later than May 1 /December 1 (Review Graduate School deadlines)	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Provide committee with final document Post abstract via email and on graduate bulletin board 	7 business days before meeting	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Defend and revise as needed 		Project Final Defense Assessment (Committee chair) Capstone Competencies Assessment (Each committee member) MPH Project Evaluation (Committee Signature Form)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Submit Certification Form to Graduate School <p><i>*A copy of the MPH Project is not submitted to the Graduate School, only the Certification Form</i></p>		Certification of Master's Degree without Thesis

Dates reflect Spring/Fall graduation. Summer graduation can be planned; consult with your advisor and published graduate school deadlines.

After approvals, all forms are returned to the MPH Program Coordinator for the student file.