

**PHAP** MPH

UNIVERSITY OF MINNESOTA

School of Public Health

PUBLIC HEALTH ADMINISTRATION AND POLICY

Division of Health Policy & Management

# **Executive PHAP Master's Project Seminar Syllabus 2019-2020**

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**PubH 7784  
MP Seminar  
Spring 2019**

**Credits:** 1  
**Meeting Days:** Asynchronous  
**Meeting Place:** Online  
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Contact Stuart W Grande, seminar instructor or the E-PHAP program  
coordinator with questions related to this document.

## Welcome to your Master's Project Seminar

### Purpose of course:

This seminar is your chance to shine. To date you have learned about budgets, methods, policy, and management. Now, you get the chance to turn your attention to a content area that matters most to you. Over the next 15 weeks we will shape a culminating project of your choosing to show how much you have accomplished in your MPH. Think of this seminar as your personal canvas on which you can shape, mould, and narrate your hard work. I promise, our time together in this online environment will fully support and promote your efforts to design, build, implement, and disseminate your Master's Project. Every two weeks, you will be asked to build segments of your project. As you build, piece by piece, you will be guided to manage your writing and analysis processes. You have an exciting story to share and hard work to celebrate. We are providing this seminar to help you share that story and make completing your Master's Project, fun and efficient. Therefore, the purpose of this seminar is to mould each of you into competent and confident communicators. You have a large task ahead, and this seminar is charged with making the process as clear and transparent as possible.

### Recommended Texts (optional)

1. Graff, Gerald, Birkenstein, and Cathy. **"They Say / I Say": The Moves That Matter in Academic Writing** by Graff, Gerald, Birkenstein, Cathy. A Team Books." W. W. Norton & Company. [Amazon](#)
2. Albert T. **Winning the publications game**. Oxford: Radcliffe Medical Press, 1997. [Amazon](#)
3. Greenhalgh, T. **How to Read a Paper: The Basics of Evidence-Based Medicine**. 5th Edition, 2014. BMJ Books. [Amazon](#)

### Acknowledgement:

A special thank you goes to a close friend and colleague (Nicky Beaudoin) who helped me organize this syllabus to make it better for you. We all owe her a huge debt, having saved you from my excess and disorganization.

## Course Overview

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The Master's Project (MP) Seminar is a series of assignments due every two-weeks (totaling 1 credit) which runs throughout the semester (concurrent with all other courses); it will be the home of the most independent and self-directed learning activities within your MPH experience. In general the MP consists of two required program components: the Applied Practice Experience (APEX), and the Integrated Learning Experience (ILE) (i.e., Master's Project). **For this Seminar** we will be focusing on your Integrated Learning Experience (ILE). In this Seminar, students will work to develop their own health or healthcare-related culminating project that hones and refines the skills learned during the MPH program.

### Master's Project Goal

The goal of your MP will be to demonstrate in-depth work in a particular area of public health. Using systems thinking, qualitative and/or quantitative methods, and effective inquiry, your MP will provide actionable insights and feasible recommendations to improve health and/or health care, develop or refine policy, or generate new knowledge. According to the Council on Education in Public Health (CEPH) UMN SPH's accrediting body, the purpose of the Master's Project provides the opportunity to "produce an appropriately rigorous discovery-based paper or project at or near the end of the program of study" (From the Accreditation Criteria for Schools of Public Health, Amended June 2016: <https://ceph.org/assets/2016.Criteria.pdf>.)

### Master's Project Expectations

The MP is the final requirement for completing your Master of Public Health in E-PHAP. The MP should display your mastery of E-PHAP program competencies and your ability to effectively communicate, both in writing and in oral presentation.

The core competencies of the E-PHAP program are shown in Appendix 1. Keep these in mind as you start to explore projects. MP expectations vary in their content and scope. But no matter what you decide to do, the project must meet the following expectations:

- A high-quality paper and oral presentation.
- Demonstration of expertise in a content area (e.g., maternal health outcomes) and a methodology (e.g., qualitative data analysis).
- A minimum of 120 hours of work on the project. (Experience shows that it usually takes many more hours.)
- Work that is original and contributes something new to the field of public health.

### Individual Projects

Each student is required to spend a minimum of 120 hours of work on a project. Your MP may focus on one of a variety of public health approach areas, such as health policy, quality improvement, research, program planning, or program evaluation. During this Seminar you will

learn skills to translate and apply theoretical knowledge from your other coursework into a project that you build in partnership with your faculty advisors and your MP Seminar instructor.

### **Group Projects**

Two or more students may work together on a larger scale project, usually under one advisor, but each student must complete 120 hours. A project can be a larger piece of work, like a book or working paper with different parts. Each part might be considered a different product, for example. However, we would expect students to create a product that demonstrates their individual learning and synthesis of material.

Final products can be combined (e.g., separate chapters of a larger analysis) or independent. For combined products, each student should contribute approximately 15–25 pages to the final written product. However, for example, the introduction and reference list could be shared. Early in the project, students should meet as a group with the advisor to define shared and separate responsibilities (i.e., individual products). Students should consider a formal agreement on responsibilities, timelines, etc. We can provide templates for group agreements.

### **Learning Community**

School of Public Health courses ask students to discuss frameworks, theory, policy, and more, often in the context of past and current events and policy debates. Many of our courses ask students to work in discussion groups. Leveraging our different backgrounds and experiences, we can build on what we already know about collaborating, listening, and engaging to improve our skills to work across groups and individuals.

In this course, students are expected to engage with each other in respectful and thoughtful ways.

In group work, this can mean:

- Setting expectations with your group about communication and response time and contacting the TA or instructor if scheduling problems cannot be overcome. We strongly recommend you set these expectations during the first week of the semester (or as soon as groups are assigned).
- Setting clear deadlines and holding yourself and each other accountable.
- Determining the roles group members need to fulfill to successfully complete the project on time.
- Developing a rapport prior to beginning the project (discuss/share: what prior experience are you bringing to the project, what are your strengths as they apply to the project, what do you like to work on?)

In group discussion, this can mean:

- Respecting the identities and experiences of your classmates. By this we mean, applying features of cultural humility, respecting differences, and permitting disagreements and welcoming difference without judgement.
- Avoid broad statements and generalizations.

- Apply the same rigor to crafting discussion posts as you would for a paper. Group discussions are another form of academic communication and your responses to instructor questions are evaluated, even in group discussions. Consider your tone and language, especially when communicating in text format, as the lack of other cues can lead to misinterpretation.

Like other work in the course, all student to student communication is covered by the Student Conduct Code (<https://z.umn.edu/studentconduct>).

## Course Learning Objectives, and Goals

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By the completion of this course, all students will:

- Gain confidence to write and revise project related work
- Employ critical thinking skills in the synthesis of material, contexts, and contribution to new knowledge and understanding of issues.
- Critically appraise health and health care information from diverse sources with a healthy skepticism by questioning assumptions and considering alternative explanations and conclusions.

### Framing the steps to a successful MP

The following steps align with sessions (not perfectly, but close enough)

#### Guiding principles:

For our part, we will ensure each student has the tools and direct support they need to design, execute, and disseminate a high quality MP with confidence and alacrity. In order to achieve a high quality product, students should demonstrate the following characteristics/attributes to ensure a smooth flight :

- Professionalism (Communication with Faculty- and classmates)
- Integrity (Make deadlines- communicate barriers?)
- Reliability (Treat schoolwork like work)
- Reflection (Ask questions, be honest with yourself)
- Flexibility (Look for others to help, read, write, offer comments and be okay with being a new learner)
- Humility (accepting and receiving feedback)

#### Step 1: Stating a problem

Many of you come to the program with an area of interest in mind. This is good. What you need to do for your project is define a specific problem that you want to address. This comes from better understanding the literature around your area of interest. You have to show/demonstrate that a problem exists and more work is needed to fix the problem. The key feature of your problem statement, which we go over in the assignment itself, is how you present the GAP in the current literature.

**Step 2: Reviewing literature**

In order to demonstrate that the problem you highlight is worthy of our attention, you are required to show that it matters. To do this you have to read and synthesize the research literature, which means spending time on Google Scholar or PubMed going over published and grey literature on your area of interest. I am asking all of you to develop an annotated bibliography as a way to guide this process and show me that you can effectively search the literature and quickly synthesize clinical and public health research.

**Step 3: A bibliography and proposal**

Before we can let you loose to begin your Master's Project in full, each of you must write a proposal and submit it to the student's MP Committee for review. This proposal is a "mini" MP. It will include:

1. A statement of the problem.
2. The public health significance of the problem and project.
3. The methods the student will use to assess the problem. The "methods" will depend on the type of project.
4. A timeline for completing the project.

The project proposal should be 2-3 pages long (quality over quantity), and will form the basis for the introduction and "methods" sections of the final MP paper. (See assignment Session 6)

**Step 4: Framing your project (Conceptual Model)**

All research must be guided in some way by a conceptual framework or theoretical model. These models/theories can be from the published literature or they can be proposed from your planned approach. If you can demonstrate the GAP in literature and narrowly define how your work will fill this GAP, you can build a conceptual model to explain your project.

**Step 5: Summarizing the literature**

You have now completed a problem statement, proposal, and bibliography. The next step is for you to narrate each of these pieces into a coherent story. We often describe this as Background or Introduction. These are interchangeable. For your purpose, a synthesis of literature presents the GAP that you are trying to fill in a clear and concise way. It will serve as your justification for your project.

**Step 6: Writing a method**

Knowing what GAP you need to address in the literature is one step, the next and most important is what you plan to do in order to gain the knowledge or data necessary to fill the GAP you presented above. This will vary for all of you, but we have offered some succinct guidelines to help you along the way. Here, your advisor will be of particular help.

**Step 7: How to present results**

Once you have found some evidence to support your problem statement, you must be able to present your findings clearly and concisely. Here we like to use the term, parsimoniously. Essentially, your results section are your findings. They are what you uncovered while conducting the method you so eloquently presented in Step 6.

**Step 8: Why it matters**

The last step in the process is writing a summary of the results in the form of a discussion or conclusion. Many of you might be making recommendations for next steps, others of you may be summarizing key findings, and others still may simply present the most salient features of a program evaluation. All of you, no matter what your project, will have to talk about why your findings (what you found) matter. This means talking about the contribution your work has made to the world of public health knowledge - not a small feat. However, don't despair. You've already read the literature and know how your work adds to the general knowledge. In the discussion, this is where you have the chance to show how your work contributes.

## 2019-2020 Session Schedule

Session (Two Weeks)	Topic	Assignment Due (Date)	Big idea of the session
1 01/22 - 02/03	Overview of MP Seminar	Pre-proposal draft  Due - 2/3  Begin Bibliography	The MP is your opportunity to show us how much you've learned.
2 02/03 - 02/17	Stating a Problem  Continue Bibliography	Problem statement  Due - 2/17  Work on Bibliography	Framing THE problem as the basis for progress.
3 02/17 - 03/03	Annotated Bibliography	Final MP Proposal  Annotated Bibliography Due - 3/3	Organizing your literature will set you free.
4 03/03 - 03/17	Models and Conceptual Frameworks	Conceptual Model Framework  Due - 3/17	Making sense of your progress
5 03/17 - 03/31	Literature Review	Synthesized literature  Due - 3/31	Synthesizing the literature and making sense of a public health challenge.
6 03/31 - 04/14	Writing a Method	Method Section  Due - 4/14	Planning your approach for collecting, analyzing, and characterizing data.
7 04/14 - 04/28	Writing up Results  Revising a Method	Revised Method  Discussion Board  Due - 4/28	Why editing and revision are so important for better writing.
8 04/28 - 05/06	Your message	Overview of results  Due - 5/6	Effectively presenting your evidence, findings, data, and sharing them for different audiences.

## Detailed description of sessions

### Overview of session (Each “session” is 2 weeks)

Each session lasts two weeks – more than enough time for each of you to complete the required work. For each session a guiding question (Big Idea) will frame the work for the session. The work will include one or two of the following: a writing assignment, a supporting reading, a discussion post, and/or a voice-over powerpoint (lecture). Depending on the assignment for that session, there will be varying levels of directions provided for how to complete each assignment.

### Session 1 – Overview of MP Seminar

#### **Session Goals/Purpose/Overview:**

Present Shared Expectations and go over the Master’s Project process

**Question to be answered:** What is the MP and how will this seminar help me?

### Section 2 – Stating a problem

Here we will present you with example drafts and an outline for you to follow, which will give you a sense of direction and organization to pull your thoughts together. The key feature of your problem statement, which we go over in the assignment itself, is how you present the GAP in the current literature. This might be presented in a literature or systematic review that you find doing a search online, or it might come from your own experience at work, where you and others are trying to overcome a certain legislative or implementation challenge. However you define *your problem*, or *the problem*, you must put it into some context. Be that a context of setting, population, or condition, there must be some substantive grounding of *the problem*.

### Session 3 – Annotated Bibliography

In this session we will ask you to organize the literature that pertains to your problem statement into a meaningful collection of resources. This collection of resources will serve to guide you, like a flashlight through the dark, as you progress through your Master’s Project and continue to frame your literature review as well as your conclusion, once you’ve concluded your project. You see, the annotated bibliography serves multiple purposes some of which you may not benefit from until later in the semester. However, we do promise that if you work hard early your efforts will not be in vein. Ultimately, what is lost in many projects is the structure of current literature that informs the gap you described in your problem statement and gives it context. In other words, what the annotated bibliography does is organize your references in an easy-to-follow framework so that you can readily access it at anytime during your Master’s Project. You can add resources throughout the project, but for the purposes of this assignment we are asking that you submit a list of between 15–20 articles.

## Session 4 - Conceptual Framework

As you may recall, to build a research question you have to first get your hands dirty. I don't mean gardening or cleaning your driveway, I mean immersing yourself in the literature. Read books and journals and get comfortable with the current state of the art. As you spend time in the literature, with the guidance of a librarian, and a faculty mentor, certain ideas, themes, and concepts will start to coalesce into concepts and domains. These features reflect underlying principles and paradigms of your field of interest. As you develop your annotated bibliography, these emerging themes will start to come together and make more sense.

Developing a model to explain complex data is a technical way to reduce noise – in this case noise being extra data or observations that add little to knowledge. **A conceptual framework** by comparison is very similar to a model in that a conceptual framework does the following:

- it orients people to a particular way of seeing the world;
- it presents a certain set of assumptions about the world by giving order and structure to disparate ideas or concepts.

## Session 5 - Integrated Literature Review

A main feature of your work will be how you come to know what you know. Often this means putting your work and the work of others into context. As part of your ILE, we are asking that each student develops a robust background to their project. In the academic space this often is termed a literature review. It serves primarily two purposes: 1) demonstrates that you know enough about the subject being studied to speak to it in an authoritative way (expertise); and 2) clearly identifies the work that has been done by others and where that work has left gaps in knowledge and understanding (research gap). Every student must write a background section as part of their Master's Project. While many of you will have projects that are fundamentally unique and reflect different literatures, many of you will be using your background sections to give context to your research, project, evaluation, or community assessment. At the end of the day, the background should answer a few basic questions: 1) Why is this issue a problem, 2) What has been done to mitigate the problem; 3) Why haven't other efforts worked or been successful, 4) Who is the population being impacted, and 5) How is your work going to address this problem.

## Session 6 - Methods

The most important part of your work is being able to describe what you did in order to have someone else repeat it, flawlessly. In case some of you are up on the most recent literature on the replicability of research, it turns out that a majority of methods are not-reproducible. This is unacceptable. Therefore, we want students to be as clear and concise as possible when writing their methods. Many of you might not even have a clear sense of the right method to use while many of you might have already thought through your approach in its entirety. Both are okay at this stage, and to be sure you are all on the right track we have asked you to complete this

assignment, which is an outline of your method section. In its most basic form, each of you will fill in the following themes:

**What is the methodological approach for investigating your research problem?**

**Give brief background and a rationale for approach**

**How will you collect data?**

- Survey, Interviews, Observation, Historical or Secondary Data?

**Explain how you intend to analyze your results.**

- Statistics, Theory, Content analysis, Phenomenology?
- Are you expecting to see relationships or behaviors, patterns, distributions, in the data?
- If you are analyzing texts, which texts have you chosen, and why? If you are using statistics, why is this set of data being used?

**Sample, participants -**

- How did you choose this sample, patients, community, etc.?

## **Session 7 - Results and Data presentation**

As most of you will not have any data ready for sharing by the time this section is due, what we're asking you to do here is to provide an example of how you might present data that you hope to analyze from your project. What we're looking for is an example or two from the literature that demonstrates how your statistics or qualitative data might be presented. Here are some guiding questions to answer:

- 1) What tables might you include?
- 2) How would you display your quantitative data/qualitative data?
- 3) What have others done and why have their approaches worked or not?

## **Session 8 - Your message**

Given this might be the last thing you summarize in your work, it is a good idea to spend time early on in your process thinking about what your project hopes to gain or add to the field of public health. This process can be really intimidating, as I know it's been for me. Now, it is easy to fall victim to fear and anxiety of finding the right message or the most important message. This is a perfectly reasonable fear, but one we all have and one we can all overcome. However, in order to get better at writing, you must work on creating. Here I'm asking you to create a message, **your message**. What might be helpful is thinking back to when you begin this project, hoping to achieve a goal. That goal, that one goal, is what drives the question, the method, and the presentation of results. Ultimately, that goal is your hypothetical message. Although we don't know what that exact message is, we do have a pretty good idea of what it might be, or we'd never start. So, open your minds and give yourself a chance to write a very concise statement of what your main message is. Who knows, it might be a good one.

**NOTE: Online learning is self-paced.** This course covers a large amount of material in a short time. The emphasis in this course will be on learning by doing. Monthly deadlines will be bookended by material that will inform and goals that will motivate you. These activities, both reading and writing, will facilitate active learning and help to provide critical feedback as you work through the material. Monthly learning activities will focus on writing and preparing sections of your Master's Project. These activities will guide your progress as you wind your way through the semester.

### Communication Expectations

Communication is the key to success. Students are encouraged to reach out to faculty and staff as often as necessary. Don't forget your colleagues, fellow students, are some of your best advocates and support. Rely on each other and build supportive working relationships.

Email will be the primary source of communication, but we are happy to discuss concerns or questions over the phone or in-person. Stuart will be having weekly Zoom office hours for students to ask questions or present concerns regarding due dates or assignments.

Students are expected to turn in all assignments in a timely manner. Unresponsive students will risk losing points on their final projects. Faculty and staff are also responsible for getting back to students within 48 hours of an email or phone call.

### Session and Course Assignment Outline

Session	Resources	Assignment	Due Date (all due by 11:59pm)	Session Focus
1	How to read a paper ( <a href="#">Trisha Greenhalgh and BMJ</a> )  UMN Research <a href="#">Guides</a>	Pre-proposal draft  Begin Bibliography	2/3	Establish a starting point Get feedback from instructor Demonstrate project interest
2		Assignment - <a href="#">Writing your problem statement and proposal</a>  Work on Bibliography	2/17	Draft a problem statement Find a GAP in literature Demonstrate project goal
3	Cornell University: <a href="https://olinuris.library.cornell.edu/content/h">https://olinuris.library.cornell.edu/content/h</a>	<a href="#">Final MP Proposal</a>  Annotated Bibliography	3/3	Overcome major first step in completing MP Begin process of organizing literature

	<p><a href="#">ow-prepare-annotated-bibliography</a></p> <p>Purdue OWL:  <a href="https://owl.purdue.edu/owl/general_writing/common_writing_assignments/annotated_bibliographies/index.html">https://owl.purdue.edu/owl/general_writing/common_writing_assignments/annotated_bibliographies/index.html</a></p> <p>Sample <a href="#">Annotated Bibliography</a></p>	<a href="#">Annotated Bibliography</a>		
4	Models and Conceptual Frameworks	Assignment - <a href="#">Conceptual Framework</a> (examples included)	3/17	Produce visual display of project plan, determinants, outcomes, and interventions.
5	<p><a href="#">Shanda Hunt</a> (Biomed Librarian)</p> <p>Tutorial: <a href="#">Researching and Writing a Literature Review</a></p> <p><a href="#">Example Lit Reviews</a></p> <p>Torraco, Richard J. 2005. "<a href="#">Writing Integrative Literature Reviews: Guidelines and Examples.</a>" <i>Human Resource Development Review</i> 4 (3): 356-67.</p>	<p>Assignment - <a href="#">Literature Review</a></p> <p>Article: <a href="#">How to write a literature review</a></p> <p>Submit Literature Review Draft Integrated Literature Review</p>	3/31	Synthesizing complex research into meaningful and understandable messages, Building a strong foundation for a background section
6	<p>Sage publications <a href="#">Research Methods</a></p> <p>Glanz, K., and D. Bishop. 2010. "<a href="#">The Role of Behavioral</a></p>	<p>Assignment - <a href="#">Method Section</a></p> <p>Submit outline of Method section</p>	4/14	Construct a step by step process describing how you collected data, analyzed data, used tools and materials to conduct your research, and

	<a href="#">Science Theory in Development and Implementation of Public Health Interventions.</a> <i>Annual Review of Public Health</i> 31: 399–418.			describe participants and setting.
7	Table(s), Graphs, Charts, Quotes, Mixed Method Tables.	Assignment - <a href="#">Presenting your results/findings</a>  Discussion Board: "How might you organize your data?"	4/28	Demonstrate an understanding and awareness of high quality results (both qualitative and quantitative)
8	What is your main takeaway, what do you want people to remember?	Assignment - <a href="#">Why does your work matter?</a>  Submit - what might be your contribution?	5/6	Explain how the work proposed or completed in your project may contribute to the public health community.

## Types of Master's Projects

### Acceptable Master's Project Formats

1. Systematic /Literature review
2. Grant proposal
3. Intervention proposal
4. Quality improvement project
5. Program evaluation
6. Research manuscript
7. Decision/cost effectiveness analysis
8. Secondary Data Analysis
9. Community Needs Assessment
10. Other: Podcast/Vlog

"Set deadlines and milestones and then meet the deadlines for the milestones!"

### **Main themes across all projects**

1. Identify a problem with important public health/ health policy/ health system implications;
2. Identify a target population/setting;
3. Write a problem statement;
4. Prepare a clear conceptual framework/ concept map which conveys the problem within a relevant context;
5. Write a background which demonstrates a thorough understanding of the topical area, through reference to the literature;
6. Complete a review of the relevant evidence to support your approach for addressing the problem.

### **NOTE:**

Beyond these common components, each format has a distinct framework and associated expectations. As students settle into a chosen format, student advisors and faculty will work with you to provide guidance and oversight specific to each format. Details and instruction pertaining to each format will be provided as needed; however, a brief overview of each format follows:

#### **Systematic, Critical literature review ([PRISMA guidelines](#), [Critical Lit Review](#))**

Students may do a systematic, comprehensive, integrative review of the published literature in a specific area that is relevant to public health administration and policy. There are dozens of approaches, and students should work with their advisor directly on best practices, processes. A policy question or controversy (can be health-related policy of most any kind: e.g. institutional/practice policy, local/regional policies relevant to aspects of public health, or state/federal legislative policy) will be identified and a systematic review of the literature conducted. Through a structured synthesis of the evidence, you will convey evidence-based recommendations about the issue at hand.

#### **Research / Program / Grant / Intervention proposal ([Kellogg Resources](#))**

A full research proposal written in an NIH grant format. This framework is for those students who want to develop skills in research design and planning as well as the grant writing process. Students will develop specific aims and hypotheses to be tested as well as the methodology to test them in order to fill gaps in the literature on their topic of interest. Identify a public health problem upon which you'd like to intervene to directly improve health/well-being of a target population. Conduct a needs assessment of the population, and plan out an appropriate and effective intervention program that you will think through and write up in the context of an intervention grant proposal. As in the real world, you need to convince potential funders of the importance of the problem and the ability of your intervention program to have a positive and lasting impact.

### **Policy analysis ([Assessing quality of research](#))**

Policy analysis systematically examines policy alternatives to a public health issue or problem. Students evaluate the potential for various policies to achieve stated goals and objectives. This option may take several forms, including a case study, policy analysis, historical or ethical inquiry, or others. Students may include qualitative data collection (e.g. focus groups or key informant interviews) or secondary analysis of data as part of their policy analysis.

### **Quality improvement project ([SQUIRE 2.0 guidelines](#))**

Students may conduct a quality improvement project in a public health agency, health care setting, or community organization using the methods and techniques of quality improvement. Such projects include but are not limited to process mapping, statistical process control, lean and six sigma analysis, and rapid cycle improvement projects. This product will focus on an investigation of a clinical care system, evidence of best practices within the area of focus, recommendations for improvement, and a plan for ongoing evaluation of effectiveness.

### **Program evaluation ([CDC framework](#), [CDC standards](#))**

Program evaluation systematically collects and analyzes data (about processes and outcome) of health programs and policies to answer questions about their effectiveness. This format requires a willing partner in the form of a functioning program that is willing to have an external review. Generally the program will be working on a public health problem in the community, though potentially it could be a program within a health system (for instance, seeking to improve quality, efficiency, or patient-centeredness in some area of care). This format will follow a standard approach from the CDC to study and review the program – its goals, its methods, its effectiveness, among other things – and prepare a report which identifies opportunities for improvement and guides the program toward such improvements.

### **Research report/manuscript**

This format can be thought of as conducting and completing a research project and writing it up as a manuscript. The manuscript would be atypical from one submitted to a peer review journal in some respects (length and depth of the background, among other things). This format should be considered with great caution, as it is risky due to the limited time available in the program, versus the time required to refine the research question and methodology, conduct the analysis, and then write the paper. Any student considering this pathway should speak with the capstone faculty without delay. At a minimum, students must use secondary data and have a capstone advisor as well as an analytic advisor who is familiar with the data being used. Qualitative research has also been effectively completed within a one year timeframe, but again, there is risk in this approach.

### **Decision/Cost effectiveness analysis**

Cost-effectiveness analysis evaluates the costs and benefits of specific interventions—usually a new intervention versus existing practice, although several existing practices can also be evaluated. This framework is a specific form of research report involving the design of decision modeling to conduct comparative effectiveness research. Due to the complex nature of this analytical approach, students must have had previous exposure to the methodologies involved in their design.

### **Secondary analysis of data collected as part of another research project**

Students may do a secondary analysis of human subject data that has already been collected.

### Analysis of publicly available population data

Students may analyze publicly available population data (e.g., from IPUMS, NCHS, the census, or other public source); this type of project does not require IRB review but allows the student to formulate a hypothesis and organize, analyze, and interpret data.

### Community needs assessment

A community health needs assessment will often be done in partnership with a local organization or community group. There are many “how to” resources, including the Community Tool Box: <http://ctb.ku.edu/en/table-of-contents/assessment/assessing-community-needs-and-resources/conducting-needs-assessment-surveys/main>

### Other projects

In an effort to allow students with particular interests and opportunities to pursue these, the capstone faculty is open to other formats for the capstone project. Of course, these must be formally approved by the capstone directors and are likely to require close communication between student, capstone advisor, and capstone faculty in order to be successful in meeting the expectations of the program.

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## Project Format and Style

Papers should be typed, double-spaced, and approximately 25-30 pages in length, including references. Tables, charts and conceptual models can be used to illustrate and summarize information. Unless otherwise directed by the Master’s Project Advisor, the following guide(s) for style and reference is required:

American Psychological Association, Publication Manual of the American Psychological Association. 5th ed. Washington, DC: American Psychological Association, 2001.

AMA Manual of Style Committee. *AMA Manual of Style: A Guide for Authors and Editors*. 10th edition ed. New York, NY: Oxford University Press; 2007.

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## Projects should typically take the IMRaD format:

**Introduction** (Why did you start?) 3-5 paragraphs

- Why does this subject matter? *Convince your readers they need to keep reading.*
- State the current gap in research. Here is where you construct your “hook”. Cite a small but important number of resources that identify a gap in the research (Hook). *(e.g., While studies find that patients prefer making treatment decisions in partnership with their clinician, there is currently very little evidence showing that patients and clinicians agree on the definition of partnership)*
- State the purpose of your project

### Methods (What did you do?)

- 6-10 paragraphs
- What approach did you take?
- Was your approach informed by a conceptual model or framework
- What were the steps you performed in conducting your work
- Potential headings:
  - Approach, Design, Setting, Population, Data collection, Analysis

### Results (What did you find?)

### Discussion (What does it mean?)

## Advisor and Readers for the Master's Project

An HPM faculty project advisor and at least two readers need to read and evaluate the Master's Project. The E-PHAP Program Director, MP Seminar Instructor, and Coordinator will help you identify an appropriate advisor. E-PHAP students may have a co-advisor, a person who is not a faculty member but who is guiding the student with the project. The student, in consultation with the faculty Master's Project advisor, will also select the two readers.

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## SPH and University Policies & Resources

The School of Public Health maintains up-to-date information about the resources available to students, as well as formal course policies, on our website at [www.sph.umn.edu/student-policies/](http://www.sph.umn.edu/student-policies/). Students are expected to read and understand all policy information available at this link and are encouraged to make use of the resources available.

The University of Minnesota has official policies, including but not limited to the following:

- Grade definitions
- Scholastic dishonesty
- Makeup work for legitimate absences
- Student conduct code
- Sexual harassment, sexual assault, stalking and relationship violence
- Equity, diversity, equal employment opportunity, and affirmative action
- Disability services
- Academic freedom and responsibility

Resources available for students include:

- Confidential mental health services
- Disability accommodations
- Housing and financial instability resources
- Technology help
- Academic support

## Resources

Best Practices in Research Database: <https://ctb.ku.edu/en/databases-best-practices>

## Appendices

### Appendix 1. E-PHAP Core Competencies

#### Table 1. Public Health Administration & Policy Core Competencies

**Mission and Program Objectives: The Executive Public Health Administration and Policy (E-PHAP) major prepares individuals for leadership positions in administration, information and analysis, and/or policy and advocacy in public/population health, managed care or other organizations that focus on the health of populations.**

#### Competency Area:

- 1. Theoretical and practical knowledge of history and principles of delivery systems relevant to public/population health policy and administration**
  - a. Describe the historical development and underlying values of public/population health
  - b. Identify the main components and issues of the organization, financing and delivery of health services and public/population health systems
  - c. Recognize the roles and functions of organizations that work together to achieve public/population health goals
  - d. Understand the role of health systems in improving health outcome
  - e. Identify major gaps in access to health care and the reasons for these gaps
  - f. Identify sources of disparities between social and cultural groups in public/population health outcomes
  - g. Demonstrate leadership skills for building partnerships

#### Competency Area:

- 3. Management and leadership of public/population health care organizations or systems**
  - a. Apply quality and performance improvement concepts to address organizational performance issues
  - b. Apply the principles of program planning, development, budgeting, management and evaluation in organizational and community initiatives
  - c. Apply systems thinking for resolving organizational problem
  - d. Identify the competencies of effective public/population health leaders
  - e. Development and communicate a statement of mission/vision/values for an organization
  - f. Demonstrate leadership skills for building partnerships
  - g. Identify own leadership strengths and weaknesses
  - h. Ability to develop a business plan and budget for public/population health program
  - i. Ability to communicate to diverse audience issues related to health management and policy
  - j. Apply principles of strategic planning and marketing to public/population health

**Competency Area:**

**3. Development and Analysis of Public/population Health Policy**

- a. Use evidence to respond to moral issues related to public/population health practice and policy making
- b. Analyze public/population policy debates
- c. Advocate for public/population health issues
- d. Understand the context in which health policy is created at the state and federal level
- e. Identify, analyze and resolve ethical issues related to allocation of resources and balancing individual and community concerns in public/population health
- f. Identify key stakeholders in US health care policy
- g. Understand the constitutional and regulatory powers governing public/population health
- h. Ability to communicate policy issues to diverse audiences

**Competency Area:**

**4. Application of high quality, scientifically rigorous research to address problems in public/population health policy and administration**

- a. Develop skills in ethical analysis and understanding of public/population health research ethics
- b. Apply research principles to understanding health policy problems and policy issues
- c. Formulate and solve a decision analysis problem
- d. Understand the principles of cost-effectiveness analysis
- e. Describe the calculation and interpretation of a variety of measures of public/population health care disparities
- f. Understand and plan an evaluation study
- g. Design a research study to answer questions of interest
- h. Apply evidence-based scientific knowledge to decision making in public/population health
- i. Understand strengths and weaknesses of existing public/population data sources for public/population health research
- j. Understand the role of communities in research and the production of knowledge
- k. Evaluate and use quantitative and qualitative data to address public/population health problems

**Competency Area:**

**5. Communication Skills**

- a. Considers the health literacy of populations that the organization/program/service in
- b. Ensures that a variety of communication approaches are used to communicate public/population health information
- c. Applies communication strategies (e.g. conflict resolution, active listening, etc.) in interactions with groups and individuals
- d. Linguistic and cultural proficiency in all written and oral communication