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Community Health Education
Integrative Learning Experience for the MPH Degree
Student Handbook

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I. Overview

All Community Health Education students enrolled in the MPH degree complete an *Integrative Learning Experience* that demonstrates the synthesis of foundational and concentration competencies (see Appendix). In consultation with faculty, each student will select foundational and concentration-specific competencies appropriate to the student's educational and professional goals.

The *Integrative Learning Experience* represents the culminating experience of the MPH degree program. You will produce a high-quality written product that is appropriate to your educational and professional objectives.

You are encouraged to carry out your *Integrative Learning Experience* project in conjunction with the *Community Applied Practice Experience*, although this is not a requirement, and it is not always feasible. In some cases, the *Community Applied Practice Experience* and *Integrative Learning Experience* projects are two entirely different projects, in terms of the topic, setting, community partner involvement, etc.

Competencies for the *Integrative Learning Experience*

You must select at least three (3) competencies—comprising of at least two (2) foundational competencies and one (1) that is specific to Community Health Education—that you will gain through the *Integrative Learning Experience*. These may or may not be overlapping with the competencies gained through your *Community Applied Practice Experience*. Appendices A and B provide a list of the foundational and concentration-specific competencies.

II. Credit Hours

You will formally enroll in **HPP 696D** (3 credits) for your *Integrative Learning Experience* in the final semester of study. For full-time students, the final semester is typically the Spring semester of the second year.

HPP 696D is essentially a continuation of HPP 698 *Community Applied Practice Experience*. It will continue to meet in-person every other week during the spring semester, led by a faculty member in Community Health Education. You must pass HPP 698 *Community Applied Practice Experience* at a Satisfactory level to continue to HPP 696D *Integrative Learning Experience*.

III. Types of *Integrative Learning Experience* Projects

There are many different types of projects that may be acceptable for your *Integrative Learning Experience* project. You must consult with your faculty advisor for the type of project you will undertake. Table 1 provides general guidance, but is not meant to be an exhaustive list.

Table 1. Table of Acceptable and Not Acceptable *Integrative Learning Experience* Projects

Generally Acceptable Projects	Generally NOT Acceptable Projects
Needs assessment	Any project(s) that involve(s) group work The <i>Integrative Learning Experience</i> project absolutely <u>cannot be the same project</u> you conducted for your <i>Community Applied Practice Experience</i> .*
Program plan	
Program development	
Program implementation	
Program evaluation	
Health communication campaigns	
Research involving a secondary analysis of an existing dataset; should have a clear research question and/or be hypothesis-driven	Literature reviews that are not systematic nor scoping, such as a conceptual review.
Research involving primary data collection; should have a clear research question and/or be hypothesis-driven	
Literature reviews; must be considered a systematic literature review or a scoping literature review; should have a clear research question with replicable methods.	

*In cases in which students work with the same organization for both their *Community Applied Practice Experience* and the *Integrative Learning Experience*, competencies may overlap, but demonstration of competencies must be unique. For example, the *Integrative Learning Experience* project might be developed through the knowledge and experience you gained through the *Community Applied Practice Experience*.

IV. Your Committee

Your *Integrative Learning Experience* committee consists of two (2) faculty members, although it is allowable to have more. In most cases, your faculty advisor will serve as the Chair. You must identify at least one (1) additional faculty member (within or outside of CHE) who will serve on your committee. All committee members must be members of the graduate faculty. Committee members will ideally be someone with expertise in the particular subject and/or methodological area.

You are encouraged to consult with your faculty advisor to identify (an) appropriate individual(s) to serve on your committee. Ultimately it is your responsibility to identify potential committee members and to contact them in a timely manner.

V. Project Proposal

You will develop an *Integrative Learning Experience* project proposal (4-5 double-spaced pages) to circulate to your committee members. The proposal serves as an important process to clarify the project's goal(s), scope, feasibility, and methods. It is also an opportunity to gain formal feedback and advice from your committee members.

A proposal includes the following sections:

1. **Statement of need.** This can also encompass a *problem statement*, and delineates the *significance* of the issue at hand.
2. **Objectives.** This section outlines clear objectives (or goals, or aims) that align with your statement of need. It is typical to have 2-3 objectives, and you might have a primary objective and a secondary objective. Well-defined objectives are achievable within the scope of your project.
3. **Background.** This section provides a *literature review* that aligns with your stated objectives, and also provides relevant information about the *context* (e.g., if you are describing the characteristics of a particular organization).
4. **Theoretical framework.** This section provides a description of the *theoretical framework* or a *logic model* for your project.
5. **Methods.** This section provides a clear description of your project design, outlining how the objectives will be accomplished. This is the central feature of the proposal and should be carefully crafted.
6. **References.** References must be formatted according to American Psychological Association (APA) or American Medical Association (AMA) style. You will choose one and use it consistently throughout.

Although each of the sections above will be brief for your proposal, keep in mind that you will need to expand on each section for the final *Integrative Learning Experience* project report.

VI. Defense of Proposal to Your Committee

Once you have submitted the *Integrative Learning Experience* proposal to your committee, you will defend it. A *defense* is a formal oral presentation in which you will present the key elements of the proposal, followed by Q&A. By the time of the defense, you must be knowledgeable enough about your topic to be able to answer questions from your committee about the overall topic, the extant literature, the theoretical framework, and the methods you have proposed. You must be able to justify important decisions you have made, and understand the strengths and limitations of your project. This is also an important opportunity for your committee to help you craft a stronger project.

Format

Generally, defense presentations are 30-40 minutes in length. Using PowerPoint, you will present for 15-20 minutes, followed by a 15-20-minute Q&A session.

Approval

There are two (2) levels of approval for the proposal defense. Your committee will agree to either *Approve As-Is with No Changes Necessary*, or they will *Approve with Changes*. If your committee decides to *Approve with Changes*, they will provide you with a date by which you should integrate the changes and recirculate the proposal to the committee.

Timing of Proposal Defense

You will present and defend to your committee between November 20 – December 10. It will be your responsibility to schedule a time with your committee and request assistance from the department administrative staff to book an appropriate room. For extenuating circumstances, exceptions to the proposal defense timeframe are granted on a case-by-case basis.

VII. Full Project Report for the *Integrative Learning Experience*

A final written *Integrative Learning Experience* report serves as your Master's thesis project. It is a minimum of forty (40) pages double-spaced, not including references. The University has specific formatting requirements, found here:

https://www.umass.edu/graduate/sites/default/files/files/thesis_and_dissertation_guidelines.pdf

(The link is accurate as of October 2019. In case the link becomes broken in the future, search the Graduate School's website for "Guidelines for Masters Theses and Doctoral Dissertations")

Below are the key sections that must be included. Sections 1-5 are drafted during the proposal stage, and are updated, expanded, and finalized for the final report.

Key Sections

Bold text indicates new sections that will become a part of your final report, whereas the regular text indicates sections from your proposal that should be updated for the final report.

1. Statement of need
2. Objectives
3. Background
4. Theoretical framework for the project
5. Methods
6. **Results**. This section provides a description of your major findings/results (e.g., findings from a program evaluation, or findings from a needs assessment), or provides a description of the process and/or major product (e.g., process of devising a program plan and description of the plan).
7. **Discussion**. This section discusses the outcomes of your project, with thoughtful discussion on its implications and applications. This section must include subsections on *Limitations* and *Conclusions*. You should discuss what you have learned, any difficulties encountered, and what might be done differently in the future.
8. **Table of competencies**. This is a table that must be included in your final report. It not only outlines the foundational and concentration-specific competencies you have targeted for your project, but it delineates how you have gained the competencies.
9. References

First Full Draft

By March 15, you will submit your first full draft of the *Integrative Learning Experience* Project to your committee members. The expectation is for faculty members to provide feedback within two (2) weeks.

Final Version

By April 15, you will submit the revised and final version. This version incorporates the comments that you received from your committee members. You must submit: (1) a tracked changes version, showing where you made changes since the first full draft; (2) a clean version; and (3) a written summary of how and where you made edits. Refer to *Table of Key Due Dates* for other important dates.

VIII. Final Presentation

All students are required to make an oral presentation of their *Integrative Learning Experience* projects. Each student is allotted one (1) hour, which includes time for Q&A and discussion.

This presentation is open to the public. It will be attended by your committee members, and you are encouraged to invite the community agency, organization, or individual(s) with whom you worked.

IX. Key Due Dates

Fall Semester	
Due Date*	Major Task
October 15	Your <i>Integrative Learning Experience</i> topic is chosen and discussed with your faculty advisor. You should discuss proposal sections 1-5.
November 1	A second committee member is identified and contacted
November 15	Your proposal is submitted to your committee
Between November 20 – December 10	Your proposal defense is scheduled and completed
Spring Semester	
February 15	Report sections 1-5 drafted and submitted to your committee members. (This is an expansion from your proposal)
March 15	First full draft is completed and submitted to your committee members
April 15	Revised and final draft is completed and submitted to your committee members. In addition, you must submit a 'tracked changes' version and a written summary of changes.

*Next business day when due dates occur on a weekend, a University holiday, or other observed religious holidays

Appendix A: MPH Foundational Competencies

Evidence-based Approaches to Public Health

1. Apply epidemiological methods to the breadth of settings and situations in public health practice
2. Select quantitative and qualitative data collection methods appropriate for a given public health context.
3. Analyze quantitative and qualitative data using biostatistics, informatics, computer-based programming and software as appropriate.
4. Interpret results of data analysis for public health research, policy or practice

Public Health and Health Care Systems

5. Compare the organization, structure and function of health care, public health and regulatory systems across national and international settings
6. Discuss the means by which structural bias, social inequities and racism undermine health and create challenges to achieving health equity at organizational, community and societal levels

Planning & Management to Promote Health

7. Assess population needs, assets and capacities that affect communities' health
8. Apply awareness of cultural values and practices to the design or implementation of public health policies or programs
9. Design a population-based policy, program, project or intervention
10. Explain basic principles and tools of budget and resource management
11. Select methods to evaluate public health programs

Policy in Public Health

12. Discuss multiple dimensions of the policy-making process, including the roles of ethics and evidence
13. Propose strategies to identify stakeholders and build coalitions and partnerships for influencing public health outcomes
14. Advocate for political, social or economic policies and programs that will improve health in diverse populations
15. Evaluate policies for their impact on public health and health equity

Leadership

16. Apply principles of leadership, governance and management, which include creating a vision, empowering others, fostering collaboration and guiding decision making
17. Apply negotiation and mediation skills to address organizational or community challenges

Communication

18. Select communication strategies for different audiences and sectors
19. Communicate audience-appropriate public health content, both in writing and through oral presentation
20. Describe the importance of cultural competence in communicating public health content

Inter-professional Practice

21. Perform effectively on inter-professional teams

Systems Thinking

22. Apply systems thinking tools to a public health issue

Appendix B: Concentration Competencies, Community Health Education

1. Describe the role of social and community factors in both the onset and solution of public health problems.
2. Identify the causes of social and behavioral factors that affect health of individuals and populations.
3. Identify basic theories, concepts and models from a range of social and behavioral disciplines that are used in public health research and practice.
4. Apply ethical principles to public health program planning, implementation and evaluation.
5. Specify multiple targets and levels of intervention for social and behavioral science programs and/or policies.
6. Identify individual, organizational and community concerns, assets, resources and deficits for social and behavioral science interventions.
7. Apply evidence-based approaches in the development and evaluation of social and behavioral science interventions.
8. Describe the merits of social and behavioral science interventions and policies.
9. Describe steps and procedures for the planning, implementation and evaluation of public health programs, policies and interventions.
10. Identify critical stakeholders for the planning, implementation and evaluation of public health programs, policies and interventions.
11. Conduct health needs assessments at both the individual and community level, including analysis of social, political and bureaucratic barriers that impede health promotion efforts.
12. Identify, analyze and interpret factors influencing people's health status through a strong foundation in epidemiology and social and behavioral theory.
13. Demonstrate sensitivity to diversity in communities.
14. Plan, develop, and implement community health education programs using a variety of strategies to improve a community's health.
15. Develop, analyze and evaluate public policies that have an impact on people's health.
16. Manage and administer fiscal and organizational resources to insure optimal program and service delivery.
17. Evaluate the process and outcome of community-based health education programs.
18. Identify and articulate the ethical dilemmas inherent in planned, intentional social and behavioral change strategies.
19. Communicate the mission of public health effectively.