

Public Health Leadership Program – MPH in Leadership

PUBH 992: Master's Paper

The Master's Paper is considered a culminating experience, which means it should be a learning experience. You are not just demonstrating what you learn. Rather, you are applying what you have learned to further your understanding. *Please note: Nothing in this document is meant to replace the guidance on the PHLP Master's Paper Sakai site. Visit that site early and often to be sure you are complying with university guidelines and PHLP processes for the Master's Paper.*

Selecting your topic

You may write your paper on any topic that relates to public health. This is your opportunity to focus on an area of interest. Many students elect to write a paper on a topic related to their practicum, which is perfectly fine. Your topic needs to be approved by your adviser BEFORE you start your paper.

Types of papers

The Master's Paper should demonstrate synthesis of knowledge and advance or contribute to the field of public health. Here are six ways to satisfy this requirement:

- ◆ A systematic review of literature and research related to a specific topic. This must be a critical review and summary for the purpose of making recommendations for development of a program, change in policy, establishment of standards, program evaluation, etc.
- ◆ A program plan which addresses a significant health problem in a community (community may be defined by geography, ethnicity, worksite, medical practice or insurance plan, etc.).
- ◆ A research design complete to the data collection phase, including construction of data collection instruments, plans to pilot test the instrument, and methods of analysis of data.
- ◆ A research paper involving data analysis to address a specific problem. These data may be acquired by the student's participation in a faculty investigator's research project, using pre-existing data sources, or by primary data collection.
- ◆ A program evaluation or other research project involving primary data collection and analysis.

- ♦ A policy analysis in which a current or pending health policy is analyzed from two or more perspectives using data from a variety of sources, including original data..

A Master's Paper can be developed in conjunction with a field practicum. This approach is often the most efficient way to meet program requirements in a limited time frame.

The general format for a Master's Paper

- Properly formatted title page
- Abstract
- Introduction (Purpose of paper & why issue is urgent and important to write about)
- Literature Review (The Literature review should be an objective look at the research about your study question. Mellanye Lackey at the UNC Health Science Library can provide more information about conducting a literature review.)
- Analysis of Literature Review or Findings (This is where you tell your readers the important points and concepts you found in the literature review)
- Recommendations
- Conclusions and Future Steps

Your paper outline should contain these items or something similar to help organize your paper.

Finding a second reader

Your adviser will serve as the primary reader on your master's paper, but you will also need a second reader. You have the freedom to select your second reader, although your adviser may suggest a certain type of reader. The second reader should be a content expert – someone with expertise in an area needed by your inquiry. Sometimes the content expert will be someone with deep knowledge of the topic of your research (e.g. HIV obesity, influenza, infant mortality) or it may be someone with a methods expertise (e.g. a particular type of project or research method) or, it may be someone who has expertise in the setting (e.g. a school setting or in a particular country, etc.).

If you do not already have an idea of who to ask to serve as your second reader, our adjunct faculty list is a good place to start. We have adjuncts with a variety of interests and most of them have volunteered to serve in this role.

Preparation of the Paper: To meet the requirements of the course, students work with their first and second readers to write the paper. This may stretch over a month or a semester. Students are expected to write at least three drafts. The final paper is

expected to be considered for publication by the adviser and the student or, if a proposal, considered for submission for funding. These discussions should take place in planning the Master's Paper.

The Master's Paper should represent the independent effort of the individual student; however, its development should involve discussions of format and content with other students and faculty. Papers should use a consistent standard reference style, such as APA (American Psychological Association Publication Manual, Latest Edition, Washington, DC, 2001) or the Journal of American Medical Association (JAMA).

Deliverables:

1. One paragraph describing your research question and how you plan to address it. You and your adviser need to have agreement on this before you move forward with any of the other deliverables.
2. Timeline - a realistic timeline with dates for when you will complete the components of the Master's Paper process (outlined in #3 and 4 below).
3. You will need to submit each of the following to your adviser, in the timeframes agreed to in your timeline and referenced on the Schedule and Responsibilities Document. Your adviser will review and provide feedback on each of these steps:
 - a. Identification of a second reader
 - b. Paper outline
 - c. Search criteria for literature review
 - d. Beginning data tables from your literature review with at least 3 articles entered.
 - e. First draft of the Master's Paper
 - f. Second draft of the Master's Paper
 - g. Final draft of the Master's Paper
4. Depending on the type of paper you are doing, you may need to submit additional items for review prior to your first draft, including a logic model (for program planning papers), a methods section (for research papers) and other sections as dictated by the topic or approach.

Master's Paper requirements differ from a thesis in the following ways:

- ◆ No formal proposal defense is required, and the paper is not registered with the Graduate School or UNC.
- ◆ Only one electronic copy is required to be submitted to the Program Registrar.
- ◆ The paper should be double-spaced, with 1-inch margins on top, bottom, left and right.
- ◆ Space should be reserved on the right side of the title page for signatures of the "Adviser" who is the first reader, and the second reader or "Content Reader." Typed

names of both the Adviser and the Reader should be included below their signature lines. (See sample in Appendix)

- ♦ The abstract should not exceed two pages, although one page is preferred

For leadership concentration students

Your paper should include a section where you reflect on your leadership training and discuss the role for leadership in the topic area of your paper. Draw on readings and lessons learned from the core leadership courses and describe how they might apply them to your question. You can do this from a personal perspective or in terms of recommendations for leadership at the organizational level (such as leadership needed to promote policy, to set the research agenda, to implement needed programs....) as long as it is tied into what you learned through this review. This section can go after the discussion but before your conclusions and recommendations.

The final, signed Master's Paper must be submitted to the Public Health Leadership Program Registrar approximately three to four weeks before the end of the semester in which the student expects to complete the paper. The Graduate School establishes the deadline for the Master's Paper each semester. General deadlines are: mid-April (May graduation), early to mid-July (August graduation), and mid-November (December graduation). **Check specific deadline dates with Public Health Leadership Program Registrar** at 919-966-5305. The paper must also be uploaded to the Carolina Digital Repository (https://cdr.lib.unc.edu/forms/sph_phlp_masters_papers.form) before the final day of classes.

Students are expected to comply with the UNC Honor Code in particular as it relates to plagiarism, and falsification, fabrication, or misrepresentation of data. The Health Science Library has an excellent tutorial on plagiarism and citing sources: <http://guides.lib.unc.edu/plagiarism-citing>