The goal of our master’s programs is to produce the next generation of organizational and policy leaders who can assess, develop, manage and lead effective, equitable and responsive health systems. To accomplish this goal, we have designed our curricula to ensure that students attain a set of core competencies that enable them to successfully perform in professional settings. Our objective is for all students to demonstrate proficiency in the core competencies at graduation, and eventual mastery after several years of experience.

A competency-based curriculum differs from a traditional curriculum. Rather than simply imparting knowledge and skills to students and assessing what students know, a competency-based curriculum focuses on assessing what students can accomplish with the knowledge, skills and behaviors they acquire during the program. In simple terms, competencies reflect the extent to which students can apply knowledge, skills and behaviors effectively in a variety of situations and environments.

The HPM Competency Model was originally developed in 2009 based on key stakeholder input and review of existing models from AUPHA, NCHL, and CEPH. In 2018, the competency models for each of HPM’s master’s degree programs were updated using a similar methodology. This document describes the current competency model and assessment methodologies for the UNC HPM Master of Health Administration (MHA) program.

The MHA Competency Model

The MHA competency model guides the program’s curriculum and priorities as well as the design of individual courses. MHA competencies are developed and reinforced at multiple points during the program though coursework and experiential-based learning opportunities. Attainment of each MHA competency will be formally assessed at the individual student level by either a course instructor, team of faculty, internship preceptor or a combination of the former. Additionally, competency attainment will be assessed through student self-assessments at least once, and in some cases multiple times, during the program. It is the program’s goal that students and their faculty mentors will be able to track student progress toward competency attainment throughout the program and use this feedback to help inform the students’ professional and career development. The program will use aggregated student competency attainment data to identify areas for programmatic improvement, which may include identification of new courses, modification of existing courses, and/or evaluation and revision of teaching or assessment methods.

The HPM department has established a set of core MHA competencies that comprises five domains and 26 competencies identified as relevant for MHA graduates. The five competency domains include: 1) Knowledge of the Healthcare Environment 2) Communications and Relationship Management; 3) Leadership & Professionalism; 4) Management; 5) Finance & Analytics. The competency domains, individual competencies, and definitions are described below.
MHA Competency Domains & Definitions

Domain 1: Knowledge of the Healthcare Environment. This domain encompasses the foundational knowledge and skills required for graduates to work in the healthcare sector. It includes the following competencies:

- **Public Health Principles**: Understand the role of social determinants, environment, and individual behaviors on the health of populations
- **U.S. Healthcare System Structure and Financing**: Examine past, current, and emerging issues related to the organization, financing, and management of health delivery in the U.S.
- **Health Policy**: Discuss multiple dimensions of the policy-making process
- **Population Health Management**: Apply tools and strategies to manage the health of a population
- **Healthcare Legal Principles**: Analyze health-related legal principles and their impact on health administration and policy

Domain 2: Communications & Relationship Management. This domain reflects key interpersonal skills that are required for graduates to grow and succeed as leaders. It includes the following competencies:

- **Communication Skills**: Demonstrate effective oral and written communication skills
- **Interpersonal Awareness**: Develop an accurate view of one’s strengths and limitations, including the impact one has on others
- **Team Citizenship**: Engage effectively as an accountable team member

Domain 3: Leadership & Professionalism. This domain encompasses those skills that are required to help groups make decisions that motivate others to advance organizational goals that help drive change. In short, this domain includes all the skills and politically savvy necessary to be effective in advancing organizational agendas openly and ethically. These competencies include:

- **Accountability**: Hold self and other accountable to standards of performance
- **Innovative Thinking**: Develop creative solutions to complex problems or adapt previous solutions in new ways
- **Organizational Dynamics**: Develop organization structures and processes to achieve desired outcomes
- **Professionalism**: Exhibit attitudes and behaviors consistent with a professional environment
- **Systems Thinking**: Assess the potential impacts and consequences of decisions across a variety of system stakeholders
- **Ethics**: Recognize the role of ethics in organizations and professional communities

Domain 4: Management. This domain encompasses operational skills required to effectively run healthcare organizations. These competencies include:

- **Governance**: Analyze models of governance structures, roles, and responsibilities as they apply to different organizational types
- **Human Resource Management**: Apply methods and techniques related to management of health care organizations, employees, and healthcare professionals.
- **Performance Evaluation & Quality Improvement**: Apply concepts of process and quality improvement to the administration of health care organizations
• **Project Management:** Propose a plan to manage a project involving resources, scope and impact.

• **Strategic Management & Analysis:** Develop competitive and collaborative strategic alternatives that continually improve the sustainability of the organization

**Domain 5: Finance and Analytics.** This domain encompasses quantitatively-oriented data and skills required to make informed business decisions.

• **Statistical Analysis:** Apply basic statistical methods relevant to public health and health care

• **Data Analytics:** Apply quantitative and modeling techniques to the analysis of data in order to make informed business decisions for healthcare organizations

• **Financial Accounting:** Interpret basic financial accounting information

• **Financial Management:** Conduct financial analyses to make capital acquisition and allocation decisions.

• **Managerial Accounting:** Apply management accounting concepts to measure costs, plan, assess performance and recommend managerial actions

• **Reimbursement:** Differentiate payment methods used to reimburse health service providers

• **Economic Analysis & Application:** Apply economic theory, concepts and decision making to understand how stakeholder incentives affect behavior, costs, and other outcomes.

**Levels of Competency Attainment**

Each MHA competency is targeted for development at one of five levels: Level 1: *Emerging*; Level 2: *Progressing*; Level 3: *Proficient*; Level 4: *Partial Mastery*, and Level 5: *Mastery*. Definitions for each level are as follows:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Competency Level</th>
<th>Attainment Definition</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Level 1: <em>Emerging</em></td>
<td>Students can perform or accomplish this competency in limited situations with significant support or practice.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Level 2: <em>Progressing</em></td>
<td>Students can recognize what is required to carry out this competency, and could perform or accomplish it consistently in familiar situations with minimal support or practice.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Level 3: <em>Proficient</em></td>
<td>Students can articulate the steps for implementing the competency and know how to get information for a better understanding of it; students can apply the competency consistently to address unfamiliar problems or in new situations. <em>Most students are expected to attain proficiency in a majority of competencies during the program. For most competencies, partial mastery and/or mastery may require several years of experience.</em></td>
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<tr>
<td>Level 4: <em>Partial Mastery</em></td>
<td>Students are able to integrate knowledge and skills of this competency in a variety of situations, and do so consistently and independently.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Level 5: <em>Mastery</em></td>
<td>Students are able to integrate knowledge and skills of this competency in complex situations, and do so consistently and independently. <em>Depending on the competency and your prior experience, mastery may not be achieved for many years.</em></td>
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</table>
Students are expected to attain *proficiency* (Level 3) in a majority of competencies upon graduation. Most students will not achieve partial mastery (Level 4) or mastery (Level 5) upon graduation, as true mastery for most competencies requires several years of practice and feedback. Thus, we expect the MHA competencies will continue to be developed over time as graduates become integrated into their professional roles. Our competency model is, therefore, one that describes levels of achievement *towards* mastery, in recognition that competency attainment is a journey that requires practice, feedback, and development.

**Competency Assessment**

Faculty, preceptors, and students will have the opportunity to assess students’ competency progress and level of attainment. Depending on the competency, assessment may occur through activities that can be quantitatively measured (e.g. assignments, examinations), qualitatively measured (e.g., instructor observations, classroom participation, self-assessments) or a combination of both.

Each competency is mapped to at least one (and often multiple) course or experiential learning opportunities in the MHA curriculum. In each course, competencies will be designated as primary or secondary. Multiple competencies may be developed in a course or experiential learning opportunity, and all assessment activities will be mapped to the competency and course learning objectives. However, only assessments of *primary* course competencies will be included in the formal tracking of competency attainment by the program. Secondary course competencies may or may not be formally assessed in the course.

For example, HPM 742 (Healthcare Finance I) includes the following course competencies:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>MHA Competencies Developed in HPM 742</th>
<th>Primary or Secondary Course Competency</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Financial Management</td>
<td>Primary</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Conduct financial analysis to make capital acquisitions and allocation decisions</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Data Analytics</td>
<td>Secondary</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Apply quantitative and modeling techniques to the analysis of data in order to make informed business decisions for healthcare organizations</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Innovative Thinking</td>
<td>Secondary</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Develop creative solutions to complex problems or adapt previous solutions in new ways</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Team Citizenship</td>
<td>Secondary</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Engage effectively as an accountable team member</td>
<td></td>
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</tbody>
</table>

Among the competencies noted above, the primary competency integrated into the HPM 742 curriculum is *financial management*. The expectation is that upon completion of HPM 742, students will have attained *proficiency (Level 3)* in *financial management*. This competency will be specifically assessed in HPM 742 and included in the formal tracking of student competencies by the program. The remaining secondary competencies (data analytics, innovative thinking, and team citizenship) will be developed and assessed, but not formally reported, during HPM 742.

The *financial management* competency is assessed at the individual student level based on a combination of objectively scored assessments (e.g. exams); performance-based assessments (e.g. cases, team projects and/or presentations), and instructor observations (e.g. meaningful contribution to
classroom discussions, ability to relate or implement concepts to practical experiences). Each student’s collective performance across these assessment activities in HPM 742 will be used to help determine individual competency attainment in financial management.

**Level of Competency Attainment versus Grades**

Depending on the competency, level of attainment may be highly correlated with the overall course grade (e.g. statistical analysis). Cross-cutting competencies, such as team citizenship, may not be correlated with any particular course grade.

Students are not required to attain all program competencies at the expected level (typically, proficiency) in order to graduate. Graduation is determined based on successful completion of all program requirements following the rules governing academic standing as designated by the Graduate School. The reporting of student competency attainment is intended to be developmental for the student, and support programmatic improvement for the MHA curriculum.

**Competency Tracking and Feedback**

Faculty who teach required MHA courses will report each student’s level of competency attainment at the end of each semester. Competency attainment will be recorded and tracked using Sakai, the UNC course management site. Ultimately, students will be able to access their own records in Sakai in order to track their progress.

In addition, the faculty will meet at the conclusion of each semester to review student progress toward MHA degree and competency attainment. The faculty meet to collectively consider each student’s academic performance as well as other relevant performance issues. Following the review, each student will receive a letter from their advisor and/or program director with summarizing feedback of the review.

**Next Steps**

The HPM department will begin implementing the MHA competency model beginning Fall 2019 and piloting various competency assessment and reporting methods. Assessments, reporting, and tracking methods will continue to evolve based on the competency-based education and performance literature, and feedback from faculty, alumni, and students.