

MPH SPECIAL PROJECTS

SUMMARY

The MPH Special Project is designed to give students the opportunity to apply lessons learned in the classroom and develop hands-on skills in addressing a public health concern in their concentration area. The project is usually completed in the student's final semester in the program and may involve either a research project or an internship. The type of project is determined by the concentration area chosen and must be approved by the student's supervisory committee.

All students are required to develop and present oral and written reports, which focus on the place of their work in the larger field of public health. These reports are designed to assess understanding of the basic principles and theories underpinning the five core areas of public health and to assess the student's ability to apply this knowledge to contemporary issues. This experience provides students with the opportunity to demonstrate broad-based knowledge in the field and represents the culmination of the academic experience in the program.

MPH Special Projects require between 5 and 9 credit hours (approximately 250-450 clock hours) of PHC 6946 Public Health Internship or PHC 6912 Independent Research Project.* Although students are responsible for identifying their own special projects, you should work closely with the Assistant Director of Public Health Programs and your Supervisory Committee Chair to ensure the best match between your career goals and the learning experience.

Students may find internship opportunities in the Special Project Resource book located in the Assistant Director's office (Room G229). In addition, each year Suwannee River Area Health Education Center offers special projects specifically for MPH students. For more information on AHEC projects, please see the Assistant Director or go to www.srahec.org.

Two forms are required for each project. Students complete the *Special Project Proposal Form* prior to beginning the Project. The student's preceptor/mentor must complete the *Evaluation Form* at the end of the project. All forms are located in your student handbook. Copies of completed forms must be submitted to your Supervisory Committee Chair and to the Assistant Director of Public Health Programs.

In addition to a Special Project, which is required of all MPH students, you may complement your learning experiences through a Public Health Practicum or a Supervised Research Project. These do not replace the required Special Project, but are available for students who wish to receive additional experience in public health. Descriptions of these courses are in the *MPH Plans of Study* section of this handbook.

Descriptions of the *Special Project* courses are on the following pages.

* Students in the Biostatistics concentration register for PHC 6913 Biostatistics Project.

MPH STUDENT SPECIAL PROJECT SELECTION PROCESS

Three months before Special Project

- Complete Special Project Questionnaire
- Attend Special Project Orientation
- Attend Professional Development Series events as needed.
- Begin researching and contacting potential sites or research projects using resources given at orientation.

Two months before Special Project

- Make a final site or research selection, submit a letter of interest and resume, and request an interview with the site supervisor or research mentor. Be sure to identify projects that you would like to work on at that particular site in your letter of interest.
- Take your resume and writing/work samples to the interview. Use this time to determine the scope of potential field experiences and activities available at the site. Discuss goals, objectives, possible projects and outcomes.
- Once the interview is complete, notify Mischka Garel as to the outcome. If the field site does not meet your expectations, be prepared to discuss alternate sites.
- Meet with Mischka Garel or Supervisory Chair to determine the number of credit hours based on her knowledge of your prior academic and professional background in public health, as well as the College and Concentration guidelines for Special Projects.
 - 1 credit hour = 48 contact hours
- If you are accepted by the field site and the placement seems satisfactory, then develop a *Special Project Work Plan* in consultation with your project supervisor and Supervisory Chair.

One month before Special Project

- Complete the Special Project Proposal Form, including a description of the project with goals specific to you. Sign forms and get original signatures from your Supervisory Chair, your project supervisor and Mischka Garel.
- Submit the completed and signed *Special Project Proposal Form* and *Special Project Work Plan* with original signatures, along with a current resume to Brigitte Hart.

PUBLIC HEALTH INTERNSHIP (PHC 6946)

Purpose: To enable the student to apply knowledge and skills acquired in the classroom setting to public health practice through experiential activities.

Description: The internship provides an opportunity for each student to work in a public health setting in a position that carries responsibility and is of particular interest. Each placement is different, but all of them depend upon completion of most concentration coursework, the ability to work with minimal supervision, and permission of the student's supervisory committee.

Objectives: At the completion of the Public Health Internship, the student will be able to:

1. Describe newly acquired knowledge in one or more specific public health area;
2. Demonstrate skills in analyzing, synthesizing and integrating public health information;
3. Develop, implement, manage, and/or evaluate public health programs or projects;
4. Present a public health project in oral and written forms;
5. Describe the internship project in the larger context of public health as a cross-disciplinary field; and
6. Demonstrate professional work habits.

Course Design: This is a variable (1-9) credit course reflecting the number of hours the student is engaged at the internship site. One credit = 48 internship hours. MPH students are required to complete at least 5 special project credits.

Requirements:

To begin an internship...

1. Prepare a *Special Project Proposal Form*, including a description of the project with goals specific to the individual student, which must be submitted to your Supervisory Committee and to the Assistant Director of Public Health Programs at least 4 weeks before the start of the internship. Goals must incorporate general public health principles and/or skills relevant to the specialization area of the student.
2. Obtain authorization from the site and identify an on-site preceptor at least 4 weeks prior to engaging in activities at the internship site.

During the internship...

3. Maintain a log of hours worked throughout the internship period and have it signed by the preceptor.
4. Participate in a formal evaluation session with the Supervisory Committee Chair and preceptor at about mid-term in order to receive feedback and modify the project, as appropriate.
5. Consult with your Chair on development of the final report and presentation 3-4 weeks before completion of the internship.

Upon completion of the internship...

6. Request that your preceptor complete the *Evaluation Form*.

7. Develop a 10 page written report consistent with the guidelines below.
8. Prepare an oral presentation consistent with the guidelines below and in collaboration with your Chair
9. Submit 2 copies of the written report to the Supervisory Committee Chair and deliver the oral report on Public Health Day

Guidelines for written and oral reports:

The written and oral reports of MPH special projects are intended to provide each student with the opportunity to organize and present the details of his/her internship. The reports are further intended to encourage students to understand their projects in the larger context of public health as a cross-disciplinary field. The oral and written reports constitute the culminating experience in the MPH program.

Written reports should be no longer than 10 pages, exclusive of graphics, references, and log of hours. The first section should include a signed log of hours, names of projects/assignments, and whether or not they were completed during the internship. The second section will include the content listed below for both oral and written reports.

Oral reports should be 20 minutes in length, followed by a 10-minute question and answer period. Students should use appropriate audio/visual aids in the delivery of their reports. Oral presentations will be made during one or two “Public Health Days” at the end of each semester. The dates will be announced at the beginning of each semester. Specific times for each presentation will be posted no less than two weeks before Public Health Days. All students and preceptors will be invited to attend. Three faculty members will attend each presentation and provide feedback to the student and Supervisory Committee Chair.

Content expected in both written and oral reports

Background

- Summary of critical literature
- Rationale and/or need for the project
- Objectives or specific aims

Description of methods

- Specific identification of methods used in needs assessments, policy analysis, financial management, program planning, evaluation, etc., noting especially how methods of concentrations other than your own were used.

Results

Discussion

- Strengths and limitations
- Generalizability
- Relationship of this project and its results to practice or research within your concentration area (e.g., environmental health, epidemiology)

Implications

- Relationship of this project and its results to practice and research in the larger field of public health, focusing, as appropriate, on each of the other concentrations.
- Implications for social justice, equity, and other ethical concerns

Identification of stakeholders and their involvement in the project; advantages and disadvantages of involvement
Lessons learned from this project/recommendations for future projects

Presentation methods evaluated during the oral report

Presentation style:

- Energy/enthusiasm
- Appropriate body movements
- Voice projection
- Inflection
- Appropriate eye contact
- Avoidance of “um,” “ah,” etc.
- Ability to hold the attention of the audience
- Appropriate drama

Delivery methods:

- Organization of the material
- Clarity of delivery
- Appropriate use of time
- Appropriate audio-visual materials

As necessary, students should consult with their Supervisory Chairs and Preceptors as they develop their reports.

Grading: This course is graded as Pass/Fail (S/U). Evaluation of the Special Project is based on student performance in three areas: written report, oral report, and preceptor's evaluation. The written report is graded the student's Supervisory Committee Chair. The oral report is graded by the Supervisory Committee Chair and two other faculty members. Each area is assigned one of three grades: Pass (P), Low Pass (LP), or Fail (F). In the case of the written report and oral report, a Pass (P) indicates that the student covered the required content adequately and used appropriate presentation methods; a Low Pass (LP) indicates deficiencies in content and/or style; and a Fail (F) indicates below average or poor performance. In the case of the preceptor's evaluation, a Pass (P) reflects a "good" or "excellent" rating; a Low Pass (LP) reflects an "average" rating; and a Fail (F) reflects a "below average" or "poor" rating. Students are expected to earn a Pass (P) in the three areas. A student who earns a Low Pass (LP) in two areas and/or a Fail (F) in one area will receive an overall grade of Fail (F) on the Special Project.

INDEPENDENT RESEARCH PROJECT (PHC6912)

Purpose: This course is designed to provide students with extensive hands-on experience applying the public health knowledge acquired in the curriculum to the development and implementation of an applied independent research project representative of their public health specialty area.

Description: The independent research project provides an opportunity for each student to undertake a significant responsibility for all or part of a research project of particular interest. Each project is different, but all of them require completion of most concentration coursework, the ability to work with minimal supervision, and permission of the supervisory committee.

Objectives: At the completion of the Independent Research Project, the student will be able to:

1. Describe research issues in his/her area of specialization at a deeper level than before;
2. Develop a complete research proposal;
3. Identify potential funding sources for research in his/her area of interest;
4. Demonstrate effective problem solving skills, including the selection and use of data sources and responses to unexpected circumstances;
5. Demonstrate effective use of supervision, including modification of the proposed research approach in response to feedback;
6. Describe the research project in the larger context of public health as a cross-disciplinary field;
7. Demonstrate professional work habits; and
8. Present research findings in written and oral forms.

Course Design: This is a variable (1-9) credit course reflecting the number of hours the student is engaged in the research project. One credit = 48 research project hours. MPH students are expected to complete at least 5 special project credits.

Requirements:

To begin a research project...

1. Submit a research proposal on the *Special Project Proposal Form* to your Supervisory Committee for approval at least 4 weeks before the anticipated start date of the project. The proposal should include an abstract of the research project being proposed, the student's goals in conducting the research, the basic research design, and timeline for completion of the research project. Students can design a project that requires more than one semester for completion. However, the specific arrangement must be agreed upon by the Supervisory Committee, and the concrete steps to be accomplished each term must be specified. The progress agreed upon will be graded each term.

2. Obtain appropriate authorizations (e.g., for projects that are off-site, involve human subjects, etc.).
3. Meet with Supervisory Committee to obtain approval of proposal, develop a contract that delineates scope of work, including expected amount of time required to complete the project, and outline for the final report (journal article format).

During the project...

4. Participate in a formal evaluation session with your Supervisory Committee Chair and your mentor at about mid-term in order to receive feedback and modify the project, as appropriate.
5. Consult with your Chair on development of the final report and oral presentation 3-4 weeks prior to completion of the research project.

Upon completion of the project...

6. Request that your mentor complete the *Evaluation Form*
7. Develop a 10 page written report in the form of a journal article and consistent with the guidelines below.
8. Prepare an oral presentation consistent with the guidelines below and in collaboration with your Chair.
9. Submit 2 copies of the written report to the Supervisory Committee Chair and deliver the oral report on Public Health Day.

Guidelines for written and oral reports:

The written and oral reports of MPH special projects are intended to provide each student with the opportunity to organize and present the details of his/her research project. The reports are further intended to encourage students to understand their projects in the larger context of public health as a cross-disciplinary field. The oral and written reports constitute the culminating experience in the MPH program.

Written reports should be no longer than 10 pages, exclusive of graphics and references. The first section should include a signed log of hours, names of the projects/assignments, and whether or not they were completed during the timeframe of the course.. The second section will include the content listed below for both oral and written reports.

Oral reports should be 20 minutes in length, followed by a 10-minute question and answer period. Students should use appropriate audio/visual aids in the delivery of their reports. Oral presentations will be made during one or two “Public Health Days” at the end of each semester. The dates will be announced at the beginning of each semester. Specific times for each presentation will be posted no less than two weeks before Public Health Days. All students and mentors will be invited to attend. Three faculty members will attend each presentation and provide feedback to the student and Supervisory Committee Chair.

Content expected in both written and oral reports

Background

Summary of critical literature

- Rationale and/or need for the project
- Objectives or specific aims
- Description of methods
 - Research methods specific to your concentration
 - Methods of other public health concentrations used in the project
- Results
- Discussion
 - Strengths and limitations
 - Generalizability
 - Relationship of this project and its results to practice or research within your concentration area (e.g., environmental health, epidemiology)
- Implications
 - Relationship of this project and its results to practice and research in the larger field of public health, focusing, as appropriate, on each of the other concentrations.
 - Implications for social justice, equity, and other ethical concerns
 - Identification of stakeholders and their involvement in the project; advantages and disadvantages of involvement
 - Lessons learned from this project/recommendations for future projects

Presentation methods evaluated during the oral report

Presentation style:

- Energy/enthusiasm
- Appropriate body movements
- Voice projection
- Inflection
- Appropriate eye contact
- Avoidance of “um,” “ah,” etc.
- Ability to hold the attention of the audience
- Appropriate drama

Delivery methods:

- Organization of the material
- Clarity of delivery
- Appropriate use of time
- Appropriate audio-visual materials

As necessary, students should consult with their Supervisory Chairs and mentors as they develop their reports.

Grading: This course is graded as Pass/Fail (S/U). Evaluation of the Special Project is based on student performance in three areas: written report, oral report, and preceptor's evaluation. The written report is graded the student's Supervisory Committee Chair. The oral report is graded by the Supervisory Committee Chair and two other faculty members. Each area is assigned one of three grades: Pass (P), Low Pass (LP), or Fail (F). In the case of the written report and oral report, a Pass (P) indicates that the student covered the required content adequately and used appropriate presentation methods; a Low Pass (LP) indicates deficiencies in content and/or style;

and a Fail (F) indicates below average or poor performance. In the case of the preceptor's evaluation, a Pass (P) reflects a "good" or "excellent" rating; a Low Pass (LP) reflects an "average" rating; and a Fail (F) reflects a "below average" or "poor" rating. Students are expected to earn a Pass (P) in the three areas. A student who earns a Low Pass (LP) in two areas and/or a Fail (F) in one area will receive an overall grade of Fail (F) on the Special Project.

**Master of Public Health Program
Special Project Oral Report**

Student _____ **Project** _____

Content*	P	LP	F	Comments
Background Summary of critical literature Rational/need for the project Objectives or specific aims				
Description of methods				
Results				
Discussion Strengths and limitation Generalizability Relationship to concentration area				
Implications Relationship to larger field of Public Health Social justice, equity, ethical concerns Stakeholder involvement Lessons learned/recommendations for future projects				

* See PHC 6946, PHC 6912, and PHC 6913 syllabi for descriptions of each content item.

Presentation	<i>P</i>	LP	F	<i>Comments</i>
Presentation style Energy/enthusiasm Appropriate body movements Voice projection Inflection Appropriate eye contact Avoidance of “um,” “ah,” etc. Ability to hold the attention of the audience Appropriate drama				
Delivery methods Organization of the material Clarity of delivery Appropriate use of time Appropriate audio-visual materials				

Reviewer _____

Date _____

