MASTER OF PUBLIC HEALTH
INTEGRATED LEARNING EXPERIENCE
(CAPSTONE PROJECT)
The Final Culminating Experience

All MPH students are required to complete a final culminating experience in which they will have the opportunity to synthesize and apply skills and knowledge they have learned throughout the MPH program. This final culminating experience will either take the form of a capstone or applied course or a final concentration research project. Students should reference their concentration's section below to learn more about their culminating experience options.

CULMINATING EXPERIENCE CONCENTRATION OPTIONS

Environmental Health Science
Students in the Environmental Health Science concentration must complete a final concentration research project and enroll in PBHL-A703.

Epidemiology
Students in the Epidemiology concentration may choose to enroll in either the two-semester Applied Epidemiology course, PBHL-E711 and E712, or they may choose to complete a final concentration research project and enroll in PBHL-E704.

Health Policy and Management
Students in the Health Policy and Management concentration will enroll in the one semester Capstone course, PBHL-H711. If a student has plans to pursue a PhD or some other research-oriented track, they may meet with their Faculty Advisor to request to complete a final concentration research project (PBHL-H705) in place of the Capstone course.

Social and Behavioral Science
Students in the Social and Behavioral Science concentration will enroll in the one semester Capstone course, PBHL-S711. If a student has plans to pursue a PhD or some other research-oriented track, they may meet with their Faculty Advisor to request to complete a Final Concentration Research Project (PBHL-S702) in place of the Capstone course.

THE CAPSTONE AND APPLIED EPIDEMIOLOGY COURSE OPTION

Students planning to enroll in a Capstone course or the two semester Applied Epidemiology course must have 200 hours of their MPH internship completed to be given authorization to enroll.

When 200 hours have been reached, students must fill out the 200 Hours Completed Form (https://iu.co1.qualtrics.com/jfe/form/SV_1St3HWqYdVvs2bz) online to let Student Services know this has been accomplished. Upon receipt of this form, Student Services will provide authorization for the student to enroll in the class designated on the form. Please contact Shawne Mathis (snmathis@iu.edu) if you are having trouble enrolling in the Capstone (H711 or S711) or Applied Epidemiology (E711 or E712) course.

THE FINAL CONCENTRATION RESEARCH PROJECT OPTION

The final concentration research project option will be conducted as an independent study course where the student will work individually with their faculty advisor and preceptor as they complete their research project and draft their final research paper and poster. The project is expected to require a substantial time commitment and will result in a 20-40 page research paper and poster presentation to faculty students and guests during the Project Poster Session.

Many students opt to do their final concentration research project with the same organization/agency and preceptor as their internship. Combining the two experiences streamlines the requirements for the student and provides the precepting organization with a product that is useful in their work. In this circumstance, students can begin planning the project while working on their internship. Students should begin developing the research question for their project 5-7 months before they plan to graduate.

If a student plans to complete the final concentration research project at the same location as their internship, they must complete the 200 Hours Completed Form to let Student Services know they are eligible to enroll in the final concentration research project course. The student must register for the final project at the next enrollment period.
opportunity. Students may **not** register for their internship and final project in the same semester and may **not** register for the final project before their last semester in the program.

If students choose to conduct their final project where they are currently employed, the same policies as those for the internship apply. Final project activities must be completely separate from regular paid employment duties and conducted on their own time. Students must work under the guidance of a preceptor who is not their supervisor and not within the chain of command of their department or division. Some students prefer to conduct their final project with a different agency and preceptor than they used for the internship. Although there may be benefits in terms of learning experiences, it usually lengthens the time required to complete the project. Students who select this option should begin exploring alternative plans as soon they make this decision.

**CONCENTRATION CONTENT REQUIREMENTS**

Examples of projects include: research study, policy analysis, management plan, program evaluation, theoretical paper, health promotion curriculum or program plan, or grant proposal. Students from all concentrations must demonstrate the ability to define a problem, use appropriate methodology for understanding the problem, analyze the findings (raw or existing data), describe the significance of these findings, and offer appropriate solutions and/or recommendations. Specific criteria for each concentration are included below.

**Environmental Health Science**

Provides students the opportunity to synthesize and integrate knowledge acquired through coursework and the public health internship. Student projects will include components of environmental science analysis, research, and application.

**Epidemiology**

Students synthesize and integrate knowledge acquired through coursework and the public health internship by conducting an epidemiological study. Satisfactory projects include epidemiological research that involves protocol development, data collection and analysis and presentation of an oral presentation and written report.

**Health Policy and Management**

Provides students the opportunity to synthesize and integrate knowledge acquired through coursework and the public health internship. Student projects will include components of health policy analysis or management research and application.

**Social and Behavioral Science**

Provides students the opportunity to synthesize and integrate knowledge through coursework and the public health internship. Student projects will include components of behavioral health sciences research and application.
**Final Concentration Project Checklist**

**PLAN AHEAD**

- Students should schedule a meeting with their faculty advisor and final project preceptor to discuss their proposed project and develop a timeline.
  - During the meeting with the faculty advisor, the student and faculty advisor need to determine if IRB approval is required for the project. If required, IRB approval must be received before work on the project can begin. On the IRB application, the student's advisor is usually listed as the Principal Investigator on the project; the student's preceptor may be included as a co-investigator. Projects requiring full IRB approval can take several weeks. Approval for “exempt” projects can be received in 2-3 weeks. Students' whose projects require IRB approval should factor in the extra time needed to complete the process. For more information on the IRB, visit [http://researchadmin.iu.edu/](http://researchadmin.iu.edu/).

- Begin to draft the Final Concentration Research Project Proposal. [Form found online.](#)
  This should be done a few months before the semester during which you plan to complete the research project.

- Complete the following trainings and disclosures:
  - Collaborative Institutional Training Initiative (CITI) program modules ([http://researchcompliance.iu.edu/ep/ep_citi.html](http://researchcompliance.iu.edu/ep/ep_citi.html))
    - Select “Yes” at the bottom of the page and use your IU username and password to login. From there, select “Indiana University/IU Health Course” then “Social and Behavioral Researchers”. Complete all required modules and send the confirmation PDF along with your Project Proposal to the Project Coordinator.
  - Research-Related Financial Interest Disclosure ([http://researchcompliance.iu.edu/coi/coi_disclosure.html](http://researchcompliance.iu.edu/coi/coi_disclosure.html))

**OBTAIN APPROVAL AND REGISTER**

- Once you have discussed your project plan with your faculty advisor and drafted your Project Proposal, you will need to complete the Final Concentration Research Project Proposal by signing the form and obtaining signatures from your faculty advisor and preceptor.

- Email the completed and signed form to your faculty advisor and the Project Coordinator along with confirmation that you completed the CITI modules (see above). This step MUST be completed before you will be given authorization to enroll in the corresponding project course.

- The Project Coordinator will process your proposal and email you with the specific project course section in which you should enroll. **It is the student’s responsibility to register for the project course.**

**COMPLETE THE PROJECT**

- A list of deadlines will be sent to all project students the first week of the semester.

- Two drafts of the written report/paper will be submitted to the faculty advisor for review as will two drafts of the poster you will present. If you are unable to meet a deadline, you must work directly with your faculty advisor to request an extension. All drafts should be submitted to the faculty advisor.

- Submit the final versions of the research paper and poster to both your faculty advisor and the Project Coordinator on the deadline stipulated at the start of the semester.

- Complete your evaluation of the project experience online here: [https://iu.co1.qualtrics.com/SE/?SID=SV_b3nxqqdOU8yOaeV](https://iu.co1.qualtrics.com/SE/?SID=SV_b3nxqqdOU8yOaeV)
Remind your preceptor to complete their online evaluation of your work. They will be sent a link by the Project Coordinator roughly two weeks prior to the Project Poster Session.

Have your final poster printed and attend the Project Poster Session. A template will be provided by the Project Coordinator. The content of the poster will vary slightly depending on the scope of each student’s project. The dimensions of your poster will be 30 inches wide by 42 inches tall.

**PROJECT PRODUCTS**

During the Final Concentration Project, the student will complete the course deliverables as outlined in the Project Proposal. If the project is modified after it is started, the Project Proposal must be updated and signed by the student’s faculty advisor. If the project required IRB approval, changes must be submitted to the review board as well.

**FINAL PROJECT REQUIREMENTS**

There are three required products for the final project. These are:

1. A research paper
2. An abstract of the paper included in report (not more than 250 words)
3. A project poster that students will present to faculty, preceptors, and other MPH students.

Other products may be created in addition to the required items, such as a grant proposal, an article for publication, a public health intervention program, a program evaluation, or a policy paper. These products should be outlined in the Project Proposal.

**RESEARCH PAPER STRUCTURE**

The structure of the required paper should adhere to the following outline:

1. An abstract of no more than 250 words*
2. Background and literature review
   a. Including theoretical framework (if applicable)
   b. Hypothesis or study objectives or research questions
   c. Rationale for the project
3. Materials and methods, including at a minimum the study design, the sampling method, the data collection method(s), and a description of data analyses procedures.
4. Results
5. Discussion
   a. Study limitations
   b. Internal and external validity
6. Conclusion and future directions
   a. Public health practice implications
   b. Future research and/or program recommendations, and/or policy recommendations
7. References
8. Appendices, including all data collection instruments (if applicable)
The format of the written report should follow The School of Public Health’s Template or other style as appropriate to the student’s discipline.

*The abstract includes objectives, scope, and/or purpose of work; methods (design, population, analysis) or summary of the project; results; conclusions and recommendations.

**PROJECT POSTER GUIDELINES**

A template will be provided by the Project Coordinator. The content of the poster will vary slightly depending on the scope of each student’s project. The dimensions of your poster will be 30 inches wide by 42 inches tall.

**Title:** (1-2 lines)
- Letters should be at least 1 inch high
- Title should convey the issue
- Make it catchy in order to grab attention

**List of Authors:** Under the title, include the following names:
- Your name, credentials you already hold, plus “MPH Student”
- Your preceptor’s name and credentials
- Your faculty advisor’s name and credentials (if you are obtaining dual-concentrations, indicate your faculty advisors in both concentrations)

**Abstract:**
- Describe the aim of the project
- Brief synopsis of the project

**Introduction:**
- Why is this important?
- Provide background information and definitions
- Place your issue in the context of published, primary literature
- Provide description and justification of project

**Materials and Methods:**
- Briefly describe what you did
- Use figures, flow charts and tables to illustrate steps, if possible

**Results:**
- Highlight the impact of your project
- Explain how the impact should or could be evaluated over time
- Use charts, images, figures, photos

**Conclusions:**
- Remind the reader of aim of the project
- State whether you achieved the aim
- Compare what you did to what is in the literature

**Literature cited (optional-check with your advisor):**
- List references and journal articles used

**Acknowledgments:** (about 40 words)
- Thank individuals for their contributions to project

**POSTER PRINTING**

**Medical School’s Visual Media** – Emerson Hall 1st Floor, Room 102  Phone: (317) 274-7478
The Visual Media Department at the Medical School is open to students of any discipline. Call for more information on pricing and file formats. Their website also includes templates that are scaled to the various sizes. [http://visualmedia.medicine.iu.edu/research-posters/](http://visualmedia.medicine.iu.edu/research-posters/)

**Multimedia Production Center [MPC]** – IUPUI Campus Center, Suite 380  Phone: (317) 274-3429
The MPC is often able to print posters for half the cost of off campus retailers. However, the turnaround time on your projects may not be as fast.

**Plotter Printing on Campus**
At IUPUI you can find a plotter printer in Herron 185 (Eskenazi Hall) and Cavanaugh 008B. For questions about printing on these plotter printers, please contact (317) 274-0779.

**PRESENTING THE PROJECT**
Students are required to present their Final Concentration Project in poster format to the FSPH faculty before they graduate. Poster presentation sessions are held at the end of the spring, summer and fall semesters. Preceptors, other MPH students, family members and friends are also welcome to attend the poster presentation sessions. Below are some tips on what to expect and be sure to review the faculty reviewer rubric at the end of the handbook which outlines how faculty reviewers will evaluate our poster.

- You should arrive to the final project poster presentation room in professional attire at least 30 minutes before the session officially begins.
- Each poster display board will be numbered, so you should check in at the registration table and find the location number of your poster session.
- As the author of your poster, you should be attentive and self-confident throughout the entire session. Wear comfortable shoes, as you will be standing by your poster for approximately two hours.
- During the poster session, faculty, staff, students, alumni and community representatives will walk around the room at their own pace to see the posters.
- Let the guests have an opportunity to review your poster at their own discretion and pace. Be well-prepared to talk openly about your project and be ready to answer questions as they arise.
- When the faculty who are evaluating your poster approach you, begin by introducing yourself and providing a clear statement (~ 25 words or less) about the purpose of your project. Then provide a concise synopsis of your supporting information, pausing periodically to allow faculty to ask questions about your introduction, relevant literature, methods, outcome/results and discussion/conclusions.
- You might be asked the same questions over and over again, so be prepared to explain things repeatedly. While this will feel redundant, each reviewer is hearing it for the first time.
- Refrain from using specialized terms and acronyms, as some of the reviewers, including community representatives, will come from different disciplines.
- Pay attention to everyone who is standing at your poster and make eye contact with all reviewers as much as possible.
- Remember to have fun during this culminating event, as it will be one of the most memorable and rewarding experiences of your MPH education.

**Final Project Grades:** Students receive a letter grade (A-F) for the Final Project. The grade is based on the project paper (60%) and the poster presentation (40%). The paper and products (if applicable) are graded by the student’s academic advisor with input from the preceptor’s evaluation.

**Continuous Enrollment** If a student’s Final Project extends beyond the semester in which he or she registered for the course, the student is required to maintain continuous enrollment by registering for one hour under the course number P700, if they are not enrolled in any other courses.

**Questions?**
Latoria Thomas-Lee
MPH Internship and Final Concentration Project Coordinator
IU Richard M. Fairbanks School of Public Health
1050 Wishard Blvd. Indianapolis, IN 46202
thomalat@iupui.edu