

Thesis and Committee Guide

Master of Science in Public Health

Community and Family Health

2017-2018

Master of Science in Public Health

The Master of Science in Public Health (MSPH) degree is offered by each of the academic departments of the college. The MSPH provides a focus in research design, data collection, analysis and application of research in public health intended to improve and protect the health of populations. The program is designed for students with good quantitative and/or qualitative skills and an interest in the science of public health and a comprehensive research experience. Students are prepared for research roles in academic or professional public health careers by incorporating epidemiological principles and bio statistical methods with their focus within the core areas of public health.

The MSPH involves course work in biostatistics and epidemiology and one of the other three core courses. In addition to the core courses, CFH students further focus their skills by completing course work in one of several concentration areas: socio-health sciences, health education, maternal and child health, or behavioral health. The MSPH degree is a minimum of 42 credit hours. See the USF Graduate Catalog for more information (<http://www.grad.usf.edu/catalog.php>). See the College Website for information about each of the CFH concentration areas shown above (<http://health.usf.edu/publichealth/apply/~/~link.aspx?id=5914BD37954947519BD0B02C6D40C8AE&z=z>).

MSPH Supervisory Committee:

CFH will appoint the major professor (advisor) for each student upon admission. During the first semester of coursework, the student will identify and formalize a Supervisory Committee. The advisor will assist in the choice of MSPH committee members. The Supervisory Committee consists of a minimum of three members: two from the Department of Community and Family Health and one from another department. The committee chair must be a credentialed faculty member of the Department of Community and Family Health. The Supervisory Committee will approve the student's course of study and plan for research, supervise the thesis research, read and approve the thesis and participate in the thesis defense.

The department chairperson and the Office of Academics and Student Affairs must approve committee membership or changes in membership (See <http://health.usf.edu/publichealth/forms.html>). The Supervisory Committee may meet at any time to discuss or evaluate the student's progress or to suggest changes in the plan of study. The student may also request a committee meeting at any time. It is recommended that the Supervisory Committee meet with the student at least twice a year.

A. Responsibilities of Masters Student

In the Department of Community and Family Health, it is recognized that entering a master of science in public health degree program is an endeavor that is to be taken seriously by the student and the faculty. Since the students who enter the MSPH program bring a broad spectrum of academic and professional experiences and interests, they are encouraged to shape their MSPH program to meet their individual needs, goals and desires.

By working in cooperation with the faculty and members of the Supervisory Committee, the student has the responsibility to:

- develop and maintain the understanding that the MSPH program is a serious commitment of time and dedication;
- take the lead in designing the course of study;
- participate in intellectual and scholarly activities of the Department;
- demonstrate continuous progress through the MSPH program from start to finish;
- respect the many demands that are placed on the faculty;
- be responsible for knowing and adhering to mandatory deadlines, forms, signatures set forth by the department, college, and university;
- arrange and schedule committee meetings as deemed necessary;
- maintain continual contact with the Supervisory Committee throughout the MSPH process;
- be open and receptive to the challenges set forth by the Supervisory Committee; and
- assume a place in a community of scholars and family of learners.

2. Responsibilities of the Supervisory Committee

MSPH studies are a joint effort of the faculty and students. The faculty try to create the atmosphere and opportunity for each student to learn and explore new areas of knowledge. However, students must chart their own course, take responsibility for their own learning program, and use the faculty for guidance and support. In the Department of Community and Family Health, the faculty is committed to the serious obligation of mentoring and guiding students through the MSPH process. Thus, the Supervisory Committee Chair and members:

- advise on curriculum and course selection;
- guide and direct the thesis research;
- read and edit all drafts of the thesis in a timely manner;
- act as a liaison between the student and other committee members as needed;
- determine when the student is prepared to present the research proposal and thesis;
- prepare the student for the format and rigor of the thesis; and
- introduce students into the community of scholars and family of learners.

B. Research Requirements

Students who complete a MSPH should be able to design and conduct applied research projects (e.g., problem identification, community needs assessments, program evaluation and policy analysis).

Upon completion of the MSPH, students should be able to:

- Select appropriate research methods for problem identification and resolution, program planning and evaluation.
- Apply epidemiological concepts and techniques to address public health problems.
- Review and interpret data from vital statistics, census, surveys, service utilization and other relevant special reports.
- Design an applied research project.
- Collect qualitative/quantitative data.
- Design a reliable and valid survey.
- Assist in using appropriate techniques to analyze data
- Prepare a clear and accurate summary of research findings.
- Apply ethical standards to human subject's research.

C. Thesis Proposal and Oral Presentation

1. The Proposal

The student will work under the supervision of committee members to develop a proposal. The proposal should consist of the following sections: (Please note completed theses are available for review in the Dean's Office of the COPH and also on scholar commons (<http://scholarcommons.usf.edu/etd>).

- (1) Statement of the Problem (Chapter 1)
 - (2) Conceptual Framework and Hypothesis (or research questions) (Chapter 1)
 - (3) Review of Literature (Chapter 2)
 - (4) Methods (data collection and analyses) (Chapter 3)
- Appendices may also be included when needed.

The proposal will be subject to formal committee approval before the research begins. A tentative proposal date is scheduled by common agreement of the student and Supervisory Committee members and is shared with the Department chairperson. Approval for presentation is not necessarily an endorsement of the proposal as a completed research plan. The proposal is formally presented in a formal meeting to the Supervisory Committee. The Committee may decide to make the presentation open to the public.

The draft proposal must be distributed to committee members for review at least 4 weeks prior to the anticipated proposal defense date. The student is responsible for creating the advertisement (work with Department Administrator) and submitting it to the Department Chair for Approval at least 12 days prior to the presentation. Once approved, the Academic Administrator will post the announcement. The presentation must be advertised for 10 days prior to the scheduled date.

A copy of the final proposal, **as it is to be presented**, is provided by the student to members of the Supervisory Committee no less than seven days in advance of the proposal defense. No further changes can be made to the proposal at this time.

The purpose of the proposal defense is to refine the proposal and make final determination of the appropriateness of the research being proposed. Following the proposal meeting, the committee members convene to deliberate recommendations for change in the proposal. When a student's committee recommends modifications of the proposal, the student will make suggested recommendations under the supervision of the Supervisory Committee chairperson.

When the committee approves the proposal as an appropriate research study, formal notification that the proposal has been presented and approved is made to the Department chairperson. The committee may require that a proposal be presented for a second time before being approved, if actions taken after the initial proposal meeting indicate that substantive modifications in the proposal are necessary. Students are advised not to collect data for their research study until final approval of the proposal is completed by the Supervisory Committee and all required IRB training and documentation have been approved.

Acceptance of the proposal in its final form constitutes an agreement between the student and the Supervisory Committee and approval of the following:

- (1) Comprehensive understanding of the research subject areas as demonstrated by the literature review and framework for the study;
- (2) Research questions;
- (3) Data collection methods; and
- (4) Data analysis plan.

2. Thesis

Students are encouraged to meet individually with committee members, in addition to the chairperson, as needed. Preparation and distribution of preliminary copies of the thesis are the responsibility of the student. Copies should be received by the committee members at least 4 weeks prior to the anticipated defense date. Committee members are permitted two weeks to review the thesis and discuss changes. Once signed, the student is responsible for creating an advertisement (see <http://health.usf.edu/publichealth/forms.html>) for the presentation and submitting it to the Department Chair for approval at least 12 days prior to the defense. The advertisement must be posted for 10 days prior to the scheduled presentation date and will be posted by the Academic Coordinator after the Chair has approved it. .

This time period will allow for a thorough review by the committee and time for the student to make changes before and after the defense and for submission to the Office of Graduate Studies. In order to meet all timelines, a complete thesis draft needs to be submitted to the Department Administrator and committee no later than the USF graduation application due date for the fall and spring semesters. For the summer semester, drafts must be submitted during the first week before the start of classes so there is time for all processing before graduation. Consult the academic calendar for each semester's graduation application deadline date.

Prior approval does not preclude changes in the final form of the thesis, which may be suggested during or after the oral defense. The final thesis contains all sections found in the proposal along with Results (Chapter 4) and Discussion, Conclusions, and Recommendations (Chapter 5). Appendices may also be included.

3. Oral Defense

Read the USF Office of Graduate Studies' information for preparing for your final semester. See http://www.grad.usf.edu/ETD_ProcessChecklist_Thesis.php). It includes the Thesis Checklists and all Electronic Thesis and Dissertation Requirements of the University for Graduation. All requirements of the USF Office of Graduate Studies must be met.

A tentative defense date is scheduled by common agreement of the student and Supervisory Committee members and is shared with the Department chairperson. The student provides a copy of the final draft of the thesis for each committee member at least one week prior to the scheduled oral defense date. The student also provides a copy of the thesis to the Department Chairperson (if the Chair is not already a member of the Supervisory Committee). No changes should be made to the document after that time. Successful completion of the oral thesis defense is the final culminating step of the MSPH program. This is the student's opportunity to present his/her thesis in a public forum where faculty, other students and guests are invited.

During the oral defense, the student presents his/her research. At the completion of the presentation, the committee members will ask questions of the student. Following the committee questions, the audience has an opportunity to ask additional questions.

The student's Supervisory Committee has final approval of the oral defense presentation and the written product. Following the oral defense meeting, the Supervisory Committee convenes without the student present to assess the student's performance in defending the research. The Supervisory Committee may require modifications of the thesis following the defense and before granting its approval. If the modifications are extensive, the committee may ask the student to undergo another formal presentation and/or committee meeting.

A student is recommended for the MSPH only if the members of the committee, with at most one exception, judge both the thesis and the performance of the student in the oral defense to be satisfactory. Signature/s on appropriate forms indicate approval and submission of the thesis (See College form (<http://health.usf.edu/publichealth/forms.html>)). The student has sole responsibility for assuring that all forms related to the proposal and thesis are completed, and all work related to the thesis conforms to the accepted style and format of the Department, College, and Office of Graduate Studies.

4. Publish Work

The Department of Community and Family Health encourages students to submit their theses (or portions of) to scholarly journals for peer review and publication. Consult with your Supervisory Committee for guidance.

THESIS CHECKLIST

- _____ Prepare Thesis Proposal
- _____ Submit Written Proposal to Supervisory Committee (minimum of 4 weeks prior to presentation)
- _____ Create advertisement for Presentation and Submit to Chairperson within 12 days of presentation
- _____ Advertise Proposal Presentation - to be posted by the Academic Coordinator (within 10 days prior to presentation)
- _____ Distribute final draft to Supervisory Committee and Department Chairperson. No additional changes should be made. (seven days prior to presentation)
- _____ Present Proposal
- _____ Complete/Update IRB Training (if appropriate)
- _____ Complete IRB Approval Documents for Thesis research
- _____ Conduct Research
- _____ Review ETD requirements of the Office of Graduate Studies
- _____ Write, Edit and Meet with Committee members
- _____ Submit Final Thesis to Committee and Department Chairperson (at least four weeks prior to anticipated defense date)--Submit complete draft also to the Department Administrator at least by the USF graduation application date for fall and spring semesters and during the first week before classes start for the summer semester.
- _____ Create Advertisement and Submit to the Department Chair for Approval 12 days prior to defense
- _____ Advertise Proposal Presentation - to be posted by the Academic Administrator (10 days prior to defense)
- _____ Oral Defense Presentation
- _____ Turn in Completed *Thesis Submission* form
- _____ Complete all ETD requirements of the USF Office of Graduate Studies