Public Health/BCHS Special Requirements for MSW/MPH Students

Essay/Thesis
Students typically finalize the essay/thesis topic with their advisor and draft a proposal during the semester prior to graduation. The student determines whether the project shall be an essay or thesis, and request faculty to serve as readers/committee members (2 for essay, 3 for thesis). The completed proposal should be emailed to faculty at the time of request, and signatures must be obtained from all readers/committee members. For those completing a thesis, a date for the defense must be arranged with committee members, and room and A/V support should also be secured. Signature page, timeline, and proposal should be submitted to the Graduate School of Public Health. This should all be completed by the end of the semester prior to graduation. At this time, students should also schedule to attend an ETD workshop.

Requirements:
Essays require two readers, do not require an oral defense and are submitted in hard copy to the student’s advisor and to Office of Student Affairs. The thesis, on the other hand, requires a minimum of three readers, an oral defense and electronic submission – there is absolutely no difference with respect to quality, content or length. Either document should be 40-80 pages in length. The essay or thesis can be any of the following general types, which are not entirely mutually exclusive:
• Original investigation
• Critical literature synthesis
• Position paper
• Program development
• Program evaluation
• Case study
• One-article option

Students should use the above only as a general guideline. Students must carefully review the MPH Manual for more detailed information.

BCHS 2503 Credit Options – (The Summer Evans Fellowship for DP students satisfies the practicum requirement. The practicum may be 1 or 2 credits) The Evans Summer Leadership Placement requires Direct Practice Fellows to complete 360 hours, approximately 26 hours per week during the 14 week placement from May 9th to August 15th.

Option #1 - Independent Study
The student identifies a faculty member who will work closely with them to design a course of study and oversee the work involved. When students take this option for earning credits, they must complete the independent study form found in Appendix V of the BCHS MPH Handbook, which involves identifying the faculty advisor, outlining the work to be completed and establishing a timeline. Students will not be allowed to register for independent study credits without this paperwork. Upon completion of the agreed-on work, students can request that independent studies be given a formal name, to more accurately reflect the content of the work completed.
Option #2 - Supervised Community Practicum
The supervised community practicum provides the student with a practical public health experience. This involves 70 hours of work for one credit. It is intended that students use the knowledge and skills they have acquired through their studies and benefit the agency where the student is placed. A practicum requirement might also be met by a student assuming extra (unpaid) responsibilities in the student’s employment site or by the student spending non-employed hours on a special work-related project. Another option is for the student to add on 70 hours of work to their social work field placement. This must involve a responsibility that is separate from responsibilities associated with the field placement and this must be approved. The two objectives of the practicum requirement are to fill gaps in the student's experience and to augment and enrich a developing field of interest in the student. The student can use the practicum as the basis for the MPH essay or thesis.

With the help of Dr. Martha Terry, Dr. Elizabeth Felter and the faculty advisor, the student selects the type and location of field experience, based on interests of the student and on relationships between the department and organizations and agencies in and around Pittsburgh. Some students may identify practicum experiences on their own, in the area or outside of Pittsburgh, either domestically or internationally. In these cases the student should consult with Dr. Terry or Dr. Felter to verify that the opportunity qualifies for practicum credit. After the practicum site has been chosen, an agency or organization preceptor is identified and the project designed. Students are required to maintain a log of all work completed. An evaluation of the student’s performance is to be completed by the placement preceptor at the conclusion of the practicum. Additionally, the student completes a final self-evaluation. These and other required forms are available in the Community Practicum Handbook (on-line at the BCHS site).

Option #3 - Students may produce a poster presentation based on their field work experience in social work. For more information about this, speak to your BCHS advisor.

Dr. Martha Terry's Informational Sessions
Dr. Terry holds informational sessions about the practicum and thesis/essay each semester. Look for email communications from the GSPH regarding dates. (Fall workshops are typically held in October/early November).

PUBH 2016 Capstone Course: Problem Solving in Public Health
This is the final course in the public health core curriculum. Students will learn and apply a problem solving methodology to analyze current public health issues from local, national, and global perspectives. Working in interdisciplinary groups, students will recommend interventions and evaluation methods to address specific problems.

Please refer to the BCHS MPH Handbook for further details. Concerning additional questions regarding MPH requirements, please contact the BCHS Administration Coordinator.