Virginia Commonwealth University
Master of Public Health Program

Student Handbook and Guide to Academic Policies,
Expectations, and Guidelines

2016-17
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Purpose

The purpose of this handbook is to familiarize MPH Program students with Virginia Commonwealth University policies and student services and major academic and university policies and guidelines necessary to navigate administrative and program requirements. Each student is responsible for reading and familiarizing themselves with this document as well as the policies in the VCU Graduate Bulletin.

University and Program Overview

Virginia Commonwealth University

As the premier urban, public research university in Virginia, VCU’s mission is to advance knowledge and student success through its commitments to:

- an engaged, learner-centered environment that fosters inquiry, discovery and innovation in a global setting;
- research that expands the boundaries of new knowledge and creative expression and promotes translational applications to improve human health;
- interdisciplinary collaborations that bring new perspectives to complex problems and mobilize creative energies that advance innovation and solve global challenges;
- health care that strives to preserve and restore health for all people, to seek the cause and cure of diseases through groundbreaking research, and to educate those who serve humanity;
- diversity that provides a climate of inclusion, a dedication to addressing disparities wherever they exist, and an opportunity to explore and create in an environment of trust;
- sustainable, university-community partnerships that enhance the educational, economic and cultural vitality of the communities VCU serves in Virginia and around the world.

More information can be accessed at [http://www.vcu.edu/about/leadership](http://www.vcu.edu/about/leadership).

School of Medicine

The mission of the School of Medicine is to provide preeminent education to physicians and scientists in order to improve the quality of health care for humanity. Through innovative, scholarly activity and a diverse educational context, the School seeks to create and apply new knowledge, and to provide and continuously improve systems of medical and science education. Furthermore, it is our mission to develop more effective health care practices to address the needs of the diverse populations we serve, and to provide distinguished leadership in the advancement of medicine and science.

More information can be accessed at [http://www.medschool.vcu.edu/about/index.html](http://www.medschool.vcu.edu/about/index.html).

Division of Epidemiology – Department of Family Medicine and Population Health

The Division of Epidemiology has been training public health students for over 20 years, resulting in more than 400 graduates. The Division has close ties to faculty in Departments across VCU as well as public health practitioners in state and local health department settings. Philosophically, we believe in fully immersing students into their chosen career
path as quickly as possible in the training experience. Linking didactics immediately to context is extremely important for adult learners.

Our Division also firmly believes in the value of creating a community of learning that values diversity. Toward that goal, we participate in “pipeline” educational programs to make visible careers in public health. We also actively work to create opportunities for students to work across degree programs, across years in training, with other VCU Schools and Programs, and with the community. Through applied research positions, seminars, and journal clubs, students from all backgrounds come together as teams to work toward achieving their educational goals.

The research programs in the Division are diverse and reflect the diversity of our faculty. Our philosophy in research is grounded in team science. We believe discovery occurs more quickly when teams representing different disciplines work together to solve public health problems. Cross-fertilization of ideas beyond disciplinary boundaries leads to more rapid discoveries and translation of science to practice and policy to promote population health.

**MPH Program Organization and Administration**

The MPH Program is administered by the Division of Epidemiology in the Department of Family Medicine and Population Health. Although the other public health departments (Biostatistics, Healthcare Policy and Research, and Social and Behavioral Health) teach courses in the program, the Division Epidemiology has ultimate administrative authority for the MPH Program and coordinates program administration and needs with these departments. Figure 1 is an organizational chart of the MPH Program including participating faculty at the start of the 2015-16 academic year.
Figure 1. General Organization of VCU MPH Program
**MPH Program Mission and Values**

The mission of the Virginia Commonwealth University MPH Program is to engage students in an experiential, learner-centered environment, collaborate with public health partners in central Virginia to promote health equity and community wellness, and foster life-long inquiry and discovery in interdisciplinary, translational research that improves human health.

The MPH Program is governed by the following values.

1. **Achievement** – commitment to ensuring distinction in learning, research and scholarly pursuits by training students to be competent public health practitioners who effectively contribute to promoting, preserving, and restoring health in the communities they serve.

2. **Collaboration** – emphasis on fostering collegiality and cooperation to advance learning and inquiry through strong ties with diverse University researchers, state and local public health agencies, and private organizations.

3. **Innovation** – dedication to cultivating interdisciplinary, translational research to bring novel and best practices to population-based settings.

4. **Service** – a commitment to the application of learning and discovery to improve the human condition and support the public good, with an emphasis on understanding and working to meet the needs of underserved populations and a dedication to addressing inequities wherever they exist.

5. **Diversity** – ensuring a climate of trust, honesty, and integrity in which all people are valued and differences are recognized as an asset, through the composition of the Program faculty and staff, a student body with varying backgrounds and interests, and sustained links with diverse University and community public health researchers and practitioners.

6. **Integrity** – adherence to the highest standards of honesty, respect, and professional and scholarly ethics.

**Accreditation**

The VCU Master of Public Health Program is fully accredited by the Council on Education for Public Health (www.ceph.org/). This organization accredits all programs and schools of public health in the United States as well as some programs located abroad. The program was first accredited in 1996, followed by re-accreditation in 1999, 2007, and 2014. The next accreditation review will take place in 2021.

**Committees**

The program is governed by the following committees. Student representatives are included on the MPH Admissions, Curriculum, and Assessment Committees, as well as the Division of Epidemiology Curriculum Committee. Students are encouraged to volunteer to serve on these committees.

- The MPH Curriculum Committee, with representatives from all public health departments, to review overall issues related to MPH Program courses and degree requirements
- The MPH Admissions Committee with representatives from all public health departments to assess MPH Program applications and a sub-committee of student representatives
- The MPH Assessment Committee—to regularly assess and evaluate the MPH Program’s operations and performance
• Within each of the public health departments, a curriculum committee that governs development of departmental-level curricular issues

Ad hoc committees are created as needed, and students may also be invited to participate in these committees, as well.

**Important VCU Policies**

All VCU students should be aware of certain VCU policies particularly applicable to students. For a complete listing of university policies, visit [http://www.students.vcu.edu/policies.html](http://www.students.vcu.edu/policies.html).

**VCU Guidelines for Student Conduct**

VCU policies and procedures are designed to create an environment conducive to academic excellence. The primary policy related to student conduct is available at [http://www.students.vcu.edu/studentconduct/students/student-code-of-conduct/](http://www.students.vcu.edu/studentconduct/students/student-code-of-conduct/).

These guidelines are intended to encourage classroom behavior that does not detract from the quality of each student’s educational experience. Please read the document and think about your role in promoting a university culture based on mutual respect and civility. As a reminder, both faculty and students should turn off cell phones and pagers while in the classroom.

**VCU Honor System**

Virginia Commonwealth University recognizes that honesty, truth, and integrity are values central to its mission as an institution of higher education. The Honor System is built on the idea that a person’s honor is his/her most cherished attribute. A foundation of honor is essential to a community devoted to learning. Within this community, respect and harmony must coexist. The Honor System is the policy of VCU that defines the highest standards of conduct in academic affairs.

The Honor System states that faculty members are responsible for:

• Understanding the procedures whereby faculty handles suspected instances of academic dishonesty. Faculty members are to report any infraction of the VCU Honor System according to the procedures outlined in our policy.
• Developing an instructional environment that reflects a commitment to maintaining and enforcing academic integrity. Faculty should discuss the VCU Honor System at the onset of each course and mention it in course syllabi.
• Handling every suspected or admitted instance of violation of the provisions of this policy in accordance with procedures set forth in the policy.

The Honor System in its entirety can be reviewed on the Web at: [http://www.students.vcu.edu/studentconduct/students/honor-system/](http://www.students.vcu.edu/studentconduct/students/honor-system/)

**VCU Americans with Disabilities Act Notice**

The Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990 requires VCU to provide a "reasonable accommodation" to any individual who advises us of a physical or mental disability. If you have a physical or mental limitation that requires an accommodation or an academic adjustment, please go to the Americans with Disabilities web site: [http://www.ada.gov/](http://www.ada.gov/)
VCU Statement on Safety

Know what to do to be prepared for emergencies at VCU:

- Sign up to receive VCU text messaging alerts (www.vcu.edu/alert/notify). Keep your information up-to-date.
- Know the safe evacuation route from each of your classrooms. Emergency evacuation routes are posted in on-campus classrooms.
- Listen for and follow instructions from VCU or other designated authorities.
- Know where to go for additional emergency information (www.vcu.edu/alert).
- Know the emergency phone number for the VCU Police (828-1234). Report suspicious activities and objects.

Immunizations

The Code of Virginia (Section 23-7.5) requires all full-time students to provide documentation of their immunizations. All students attending VCU must submit a completed VCU Certificate of Immunization. Students who cannot provide documented evidence of all required immunizations must see their health care provider, health department or Student Health Services to complete all requirements. Questions and concerns should be communicated with Student Health Services; contact information can be found on their web site: http://www.students.vcu.edu/health/immunizations/.

The VCU Certificate of Immunization is available at the immunization web page or directly at http://www.students.vcu.edu/media/student-affairs/ushs/docs/SHS1415-24CertificateofImmunization4.pdf.

In addition to submitting the VCU Certificate of Immunization, students whose work or research will bring them into contact with individual patients or patient populations are required to submit the VCU Health Science Student Immunization Requirements form, available on the VCU Immunization web page at http://www.students.vcu.edu/health/immunizations/ or directly at http://www.students.vcu.edu/media/student-affairs/ushs/docs/SHS1415-24Ammendments8.pdf.

Health Insurance

Health insurance is required for all School of Medicine graduate students, who must provide documentation of coverage, consistent with federal law and the School’s position in a major health sciences center. VCU does not provide a university health plan. Insurance options may be chosen through the Health Insurance Marketplace (https://www.healthcare.gov/), as long as the student has health insurance. Students will be asked to provide documentation of health insurance coverage to the Division Administrator (see the “Faculty and Staff” section in this handbook for contact information). The Division of Epidemiology will inform students about the type of documentation acceptable for demonstrating insurance coverage and deadlines for providing this documentation.

http://www.students.vcu.edu/health/health-insurance/
The Office Building

The MPH Program and VCU Public Health academic departments reside in the One Capitol Square Building.

Mailing Address of One Capitol Square

830 East Main Street
PO Box 980212
Richmond, VA 23298-0212

Important Phone Numbers

Security desk phone number: 804-628-6329
Main Division phone number: 804-828-9785

Sending Mail to VCU Departments

To send information via the interoffice mail system, use an interoffice or manila envelope. Write the staff/faculty member’s name and P.O. Box number on the envelope, and put it in the VCU Mailbox located near the student/staff mailboxes.

Gaining Access to the Building

The OCS Building houses classrooms used by the MPH Program and a computer lab as well as designated student study and resource space (including a kitchen) on the 5th floor. Building operating hours are from 7:00 a.m. – 6:00 p.m. on weekdays. The building is officially closed on weekends. Students who need access after these hours to complete work for a part-time job should request special access by asking their faculty supervisor to email the Educational Program Director to request such access.

Evening and Weekend Access

The Department of Family Medicine and Population Health’s Division of Epidemiology has an established policy for the appropriate times to be in One Capitol Square. While the building is open 24 hours, 7 days a week, it is the policy of the department that faculty, staff and students should only be in the building between the hours of 7 AM and 12 midnight.

Employees, including faculty, staff, and students are not to be in the building between 12:00 midnight and 7:00 AM. Building management considers normal work hours to be Monday – Friday, 7:00 AM – 6:00 PM. Anyone who enters the building outside of this time must sign in and out at the front desk and must leave before midnight.

Graduate students who are not employees in One Capitol Square and who wish to remain in the building after normal work hours (for purposes such as computer lab use) must be in the building prior to the building closing time of 6:00 PM. These students will not be allowed to re-enter the building once they leave after 6:00 PM.

Violations of this policy may result in after-hours access being revoked.
Exceptions
Any exceptions must be pre-approved by the supervisor and department administrator.

Computer Lab

The Division provides a computer lab, located in Room 827 on the 8th floor. Computer lab policies are as follows:

- Computers for graduate student use only.
- Use student space on servers.
- Back up work: files on servers are deleted at the end of each term—see “File Storage and Flash Drives”
- Printing limited to Epidemiology course work only.
- No food or drink around computers.
- Report broken equipment immediately to the Graduate Programs Coordinator.
- Lab available for use between 7:00 a.m. – 12:00 midnight. Students must exit the building before midnight.
**File storage and Flash Drives**

In using computer lab equipment, be aware that the lab computers do not preserve files stored on their hard drives. The Division provides a set of student folders on a network drive where students may store files from course work, etc. Use your personal student file for storage. Also be aware that these folders are cleared out at the end of each semester, so you should copy any files that you want to keep before a semester ends.

Students should be aware that all School of Medicine computers, including those in the computer lab, use an encryption program that will be installed on any portable storage device inserted into the computer. The encryption is required on School of Medicine equipment to protect sensitive research or patient data that may be downloaded by faculty and staff. The user will be requested to use a password to access the device thereafter. This encryption application may inhibit use of the flash drive on some equipment or in other non-computer USB ports, such as those found in cars. To avoid making a personal flash drive inaccessible on certain non-VCU equipment, it is recommended that students email files to themselves or use the VCU FileDrop (https://filedrop.vcu.edu) for larger files.

**Gaining Access to the Computer Lab**

Access to the computer lab is available anytime during One Capitol Square business hours (7:00 a.m. to 6:00 p.m.) that does not conflict with reserved classroom times. These reservations for class times are posted next to the door to the computer lab at the start of each term. The access code for the computer lab is 241.

**Student Use of Personal Laptops**

The Division of Epidemiology offers a computer lab on the 8th floor of the One Capitol Square Building. Computers are equipped with the Microsoft Office suite and SAS and may be used when the facility is not in use for a class.

Students are welcome to use their own computers or laptops for their course work. However, students should be aware of minimum requirements for the software application SAS, which is used in two required courses (EPID 547, 548) and may be used in elective courses and for the MPH Capstone. To support SAS, a laptop should run a Windows operating system with a recommended 8 gigabytes of RAM and a minimum of 4. Running SAS on a Mac is possible only if a Windows environment is installed.

Student copies of the SAS application are available on a flash drive for a small fee ($20) for download from VCU Technology Services, which offers information and links for SAS at the following site.

http://www.ts.vcu.edu/software-center/data-analysis/sas/

**Poster Plotter**

The Division has a poster plotter and can print posters for students presenting at referred conferences with sufficient advance planning. Last-minute requests will likely not be fulfilled. Submit files to the Graduate Programs Coordinator a minimum of one week in advance of the date that the poster is needed. Files should be submitted in PowerPoint format and set for a poster size of 42 by 56 inches. All comments and notes must be deleted (or they will print on the poster). Any images on the poster must be of high resolution; low-resolution photos will be pixelated on the printout and therefore are unsuitable.
Faculty and Staff

Academic Program Faculty and Staff

Saba W. Masho, MD, MPH, DrPH
Graduate Programs Director
E-mail: saba.masho@vcuhealth.org
Phone: 804-628-2509

The Graduate Program Director oversees the direction of the PhD and MPH Programs. She serves as the ultimate authority for decisions related to coursework and PhD and MPH Program policies and governance before they are forwarded to the Chair if necessary.

Lisa S. Anderson, MPH
Director of Educational Programs
E-mail: lisa.s.anderson@vcuhealth.org
Phone: 804-628-2512

The Director of Educational Programs facilitates the implementation of both the PhD and MPH Programs but works more closely with the MPH Program.

Shana Ryman, M.S.Ed.
Graduate Programs Coordinator
E-mail: shana.ryman@vcuhealth.org
Phone: 804-828-9785

The Graduate Programs Coordinator is primarily involved with the day-to-day operations of the MPH Program, but coordinates the following PhD Program-related items: distribution and collection of all Division course evaluations, submission of course information in e-Services, coordination of the Division and Public Health Seminars and related professional development for PhD students with invited speakers, and coordination of written comprehensive exams.

Maria V. (Vicki) Humphreys, MBA, CRA
Administrator, Research and Graduate Program Operations
(Division Administrator)
E-mail: vicki.humphries@vcuhealth.org
Phone: 804-628-2227

The Division Administrator handles grant, fiscal, and human resources issues for the Division of Epidemiology and Department of Family Medicine and Population Health.

Division Faculty and Staff Directory

Contact information for Faculty and Staff can be accessed by visiting the Division’s web site (http://www.epidemiology.vcu.edu/index.html)
Emergency Information

Emergency Evacuation Plan

One Capitol Square is equipped with an emergency alarm system that displays a flashing light if an emergency is occurring on a floor other than the one you are on. If the emergency is on your floor, lights flash and an audible alarm sounds. If this happens, evacuate the building. When exiting the building, always use stairwells; never use an elevator. After evacuating the building, meet in the Capitol Square Park by the Bell Tower building; the Bell Tower is located in the Capitol Square Park near the intersection of Bank and 9th Streets. Turn left when exiting the building, turn left onto 9th Street and walk up the hill to the next intersection. Cross 9th Street and Bank Street, entering Capitol Square Park by the gate at the corner. The Bell Tower is a short distance inside the Capitol Park grounds.

Representatives on the 5th and 8th floors will ensure evacuation during an emergency situation. Lori Davis of the Biostatistics Department (room 5048) is responsible for the 5th floor, and Lisa Anderson, Director of Educational Programs, is responsible for the 8th floor. If you have any questions concerning emergency procedures, please follow up with either previously listed individual.

Reporting an Emergency in the Building

If there is an emergency in the One Capitol Square building, contact the security desk for assistance via phone 804-628-6329. Tell the Security Guard your location and type of emergency.

Maintenance Issues

Broken or malfunctioning equipment should be reported to the appropriate floor contact. If equipment is broken on the 8th floor, contact the Graduate Programs Coordinator.
Academic Policies and VCU Graduate Bulletin

All graduate students are governed by the administrative policies in the VCU Graduate Bulletin. Each student is responsible for familiarizing her/himself with the Graduate Bulletin, as noted in the excerpt below from the bulletin.

The VCU Graduate Bulletin website documents the official admission and academic rules and regulations that govern graduate education for all graduate programs at the university. These policies are established by the graduate faculty of the university through their elected representatives to the University Graduate Council.

It is the responsibility of all graduate students, both on-and off-campus, to be familiar with the Graduate Bulletin as well as the academic regulations in individual school and department publications and on program websites; however, in all cases, the official policies and procedures of the University Graduate Council, as published on this Graduate Bulletin website and on the Graduate School website, take precedent over individual program policies and guidelines.

The archived copies of current and past bulletins (catalogs) reflect all policies and procedures in effect at the beginning of the stated academic year. The online Bulletin is updated regularly to reflect changes that occur throughout the academic year.

Students who maintain continuous enrollment are subject to the curricular requirements of the bulletin in effect at the time of admission, and to subsequent policy changes approved by the University Graduate Council for immediate implementation.

Students who do not maintain continuous enrollment must reapply for admission and will be subject to the requirements of the bulletin in effect at the time of readmission, and to subsequent policy changes approved by the University Graduate Council for immediate implementation. (See policy on Exceptions.)

Graduate students should contact the Graduate School at any time regarding questions relating to graduate study at VCU.

The Graduate Bulletin is accessible on the main VCU web page by clicking “Academic Programs” and selecting “Bulletin” from the menu or at: http://bulletin.vcu.edu/

It is particularly important for students to be familiar with the general academic regulations for all graduate students. Included in these regulations are the following topics:

- University rules and procedures
- Academic advising
- Exceptions
- Appeal process, students terminated from a VCU graduate program
- Student load
- Attendance and enrollment policies
- Change in registration
- Auditing graduate classes
- Leave of absence and withdrawal policies
- Change of graduate degree program
- Transfer credit
• Degree candidacy
• Satisfactory academic progress Time limit for completion of requirements and eligibility of courses
• Graduation requirements
• Grades

If the guidelines and policies in this handbook conflict with the policies and procedures established by the VCU Graduate School, precedence will be given to the policies of the VCU Graduate School.

Selected Graduate School Policies
Although the following information is not exhaustive, it provides key descriptions of important VCU Graduate School policies that frequently affect student situations. Students are responsible for being familiar with the full policies as listed in the VCU Graduate Bulletin.

Continuous enrollment
University and program policy require students to maintain continuous enrollment, meaning that they enroll in at least one class during the fall and spring semesters. Continuous enrollment helps the student maintain progress in the program and maintain status with the university as a student. Students who fail to register for classes for three consecutive semesters without an explanation for their absence will be terminated from the program and will have to re-apply to the program if they wish to continue their course of study.

Enrollment status—part-time versus full-time
Full-time enrollment requires registration in 9 or more academic credits each semester. Part-time enrollment is defined as enrollment in fewer than 9 academic credits in a semester.

Leave of absence
Students who must interrupt their program of study for legitimate reasons (e.g., long-term personal or family illness, service in military reserves) may request a leave of absence from the Director of Educational Programs. The request must be submitted in writing (email is appropriate) and explain the need for the absence, and the absence start and end dates. Students given approved leave of absence will not be able to access VCU resources such as email during their leave, nor will they be able to register for courses. Access to VCU resources will be restored shortly before the end date of the leave of absence.

It is important for students going on a leave of absence to provide the Graduate Programs Coordinator and Director of Educational Programs with contact information, including a non-VCU email address and a phone number where the student may be reached while on leave.

Transfer credit
Students may request transfer of graduate level courses completed at other institutions or at VCU for credit toward the MPH degree. These courses must not have been applied to another degree or certificate program at the other institution. According to VCU Graduate School policy, no more than 30% of the degree total didactic credits, or, for the MPH Program, 12 credits, may be transferred. Requests must be made in writing to the Director of Educational Programs and must be accompanied by an official transcript of the courses taken. Students should include, if possible, each course syllabus and information on whether the course was taken on a semester or quarter basis. Requests will be reviewed by the Director of Educational Programs and the Graduate Program Director, at a minimum. Other faculty with expertise in the particular area covered by the courses may be consulted, if appropriate. Students will
be notified of the outcome of the review by email. If the transfer request is approved, the Director of Educational Programs will submit a formal request to the Graduate School. The Graduate School is responsible for assessing credits earned and assigning equivalent credits to the student’s VCU transcript. Once the request is approved, the Graduate School will notify the student and the MPH Program, and the transfer credits will be added to the student VCU transcript.

**Student Concerns and Grievances**

Students who have concerns related directly to a class should initially address these with the instructor. However, the MPH Program realizes that there may be times when this may be awkward for the student. In these cases, the student should discuss the concerns with the Director of Educational Programs. If further consultation is required after a meeting with the Director of Educational Programs, the director will advise the student on the appropriate path to follow in pursuing the concerns. In addition, all students must be aware of the Graduate School Bulletin policies related to for grievances (Listed under General academic regulations for all graduate students may be found at http://bulletin.vcu.edu/graduate/study/general-academic-regulations-graduate-students/)

This on-line survey collects anonymous feedback from students on their graduate programs and experiences in the Division of Epidemiology. This online “suggestion box” is for your ideas, critique, and concerns as a student.

Please feel free to access this brief, anonymous survey at any time if you would like to provide suggestions. Program administration will monitor the survey regularly and provide responses to the student body according to the nature of the feedback received.

https://redcap.vcu.edu/surveys/?s=EWAD3AMAMN

**Tuition and Fees**

Graduate students registered for 9 to 15 credit hours are billed as full-time. Graduate students registered for more than 15 hours during any term are charged an overload fee above the full-time tuition rate on a per-credit-hour basis. Graduate students registered for fewer than 9 hours are considered part-time. For more detailed information regarding tuition and fee charges consult the Tuition and Fees web page on the VCU Enrollment Services web page: http://www.enrollment.vcu.edu/accounting/tuition_fees.html

**Billing**

Student bills may be viewed online through e-Services. Instructions on how to access this information can be found on the Student Accounting web site. http://www.enrollment.vcu.edu/accounting/
Communication with Students
The MPH Program and VCU have several ways of communicating with students. Students are responsible for establishing the required accounts and passwords to access these communication resources regularly.

E-mail
E-mail is the primary form of communication between the VCU Graduate School, the School of Medicine, the MPH Program, individual departments, and students. As stated in the VCU Graduate Bulletin, “all students are required to obtain an official VCU student e-mail account within one week of the beginning of the first semester of enrollment and are responsible for reading in a timely fashion university-related communications sent to their official VCU student e-mail accounts.” The department cannot be expected to maintain an ongoing list of students’ personal accounts through Gmail, Yahoo, or other e-mail providers. Students must maintain and regularly check their VCU e-mail accounts.

Email messages can include announcements about guest speakers in the department or the university, information related to safety at the university, information on unexpected building closure or class meeting relocation, notification that a student account has been placed on hold, information on administrative requirements students must meet for graduation, or information from a professor related to an ongoing class. It is critical that students regularly check their VCU email accounts to remain informed and avoid missing deadlines related to their graduate programs.

Blackboard
The MPH Program uses Blackboard not only for course operation but to provide information on the items listed below. Check the Family Medicine and Population Health organization when you log into Blackboard.

Announcements related to:
• Special research seminars
• Workshops
• Logistical information such as computer lab closings
• Opportunities to meet with visiting faculty candidates or distinguished visiting scholars
• Requests for student feedback about the graduate program and department
• Regularly updated short-and long-term job opportunities for current students
• Regularly updated long-term job opportunities for students preparing to graduate

Critical reference materials for the MPH Program, such as
• Guidelines for the MPH capstone project, including report templates
• Student guide to the required internship
• Guidelines for the required service-learning assignment
• Information on the requirement for public health seminars, including access to the on-line reporting form
• Templates for the capstone proposal and final report
VCU eServices

VCU eServices is an automated system for maintaining student records and other administrative data. Students use eServices to register for classes, check grades earned, check unofficial transcripts, and more. VCU eServices is accessed by using your eID and password, and logging in through “myVCU.”

DegreeWorks

Degree Works is a computerized report that tracks the completion of a student’s declared degree by course and requirement. It outlines in concise form the university core, general education, major, collateral requirements and electives for a student’s degree program (and concentration or minor), and the way in which the student is completing those requirements. This report is not intended to replace contact with academic advisors. It will, however, provide accurate, up-to-date information to assist students and advisors in making wise academic choices. Students can access Degree Works by logging into eServices through the myVCU Portal and selecting Degree Works on the Student tab.

You can access more information about Degree Works at the following site: http://rar.vcu.edu/degreeworks.html

GradTrak

GradTrak is the School of Medicine’s automated system for tracking student records and progress in a degree program. The program identifies students and advisors and information related to student progress toward degree completion. Students can view their own information fields. GradTrak is accessible through VCU’s eServices access portal. Look for the School of Medicine tab to locate GradTrak.

General Requirements for the MPH Degree

The MPH degree requires students to complete didactic and applied, experiential coursework as well as attend public health seminars and complete service in the community.

MPH Program Competencies

The MPH Program has a set of competencies that students must attain through coursework and experiences in the MPH curriculum. These competencies were derived in part from the Association of Schools of Public Health’s Core Competency Model published in 2007. Students are asked to self-assess on their level of competence (on a four-point scale) for each competency on the list, beginning with entry into the MPH Program and submitting the final assessment in their last semester in the Program. The Program monitors students’ self-assessed scores for improvement over their time in the Program. In addition, faculty advisors and student mentors assess student performance in applicable competencies for the Public Health Internship and the MPH Capstone Project. The MPH Program competencies for 2015-16 appear in Appendix A.

Basic MPH Degree Program Curricular Requirements

The MPH degree requires completion of 45 credits of coursework, including core and required coursework, a 3-credit-hour, 180-contact-hour public health internship, and a capstone project of at least 3 credit hours. Students also complete a minimum of 2 hours of practicum placement during the first year of study. Students should consult Degree Works or the curriculum planner available in Blackboard and in Appendix B and work with their faculty advisor to ensure timely and appropriate completion of degree course requirements. The VCU Graduate Bulletin lists course requirements; the VCU Course database provides descriptions of individual courses by academic department.
MPH Practicum
The MPH Practicum is predominantly a self-directed course under the guidance of one or more advisors. Students will be asked to work a minimum of 90 hours in a professional public health setting during the first year in the program and engage in selected training to develop a foundation of basic skills in areas such as communication, leadership, and professionalism. The practicum placement will be made according to student area of interest. Students will work as members of collaborative public health teams fulfilling varied missions. Students will complete assigned team tasks, shadow public health professionals, attend meetings and take part in other organizational activities that will provide a basic foundation of knowledge and experience in public health research and/or practice.

Students attend class for the Practicum in the fall semester and complete required training to prepare them for the experience, including an overview of public health practice and research training in literature search techniques by the VCU Libraries and career planning information. Students also will be required to complete the Collaborative Investigator Training Initiative (CITI) training in the Ethical Conduct of Human Research and Health Information Privacy and Accountability Act (HIPAA). These are self-paced and are available on line. Information for the MPH Practicum course, including links to on-line training, the course syllabus, and information on the scheduled library training dates, will be available in Blackboard.

Public Health Internship
The Public Health Internship is a supervised experience designed to expose MPH graduate students to a real-world public health practice setting, requiring them to integrate classroom knowledge and skills in practical applications in a professional environment. Each student intern works with a practice site supervisor who assigns tasks, instructs the student in new skills, and evaluates the student’s progress. Students work a minimum of 180 hours in a professional public health organization. See Appendix C for a comprehensive guide to the Public Health Internship. See the Appendices to this Handbook for detailed guidance on the Public Health Internship.

MPH Capstone Project
The capstone experience synthesizes knowledge gained through the classroom and practical processes and is the degree’s culminating work, completed during the last one to two semesters of study. This project is a practical experience which allows the student to apply what has been learned in the didactic components of the curriculum to a focused project. Students are required to synthesize the literature, apply theory, and integrate knowledge gained and principles in situations that approximate some aspect of professional practice. With this mentored experience, students are able to both broaden their skills and hone their proficiency in a specific area of public health. The major product of this culminating experience is expected to vary depending on the educational goals of the student, but could include one of the following:

- Manuscript suitable for publication in a peer-reviewed journal
- Comprehensive disease-related report
- Policy analysis report
- Health promotion materials (e.g. brochures/posters/fliers, educational video games, web site content, etc.), on a specific disease area
- Needs assessment for a specific population
- Development, implementation, and analysis of target population surveys
- Program evaluation
At a minimum, the capstone experience will require the integration of multiple major competencies used by a public health professional. The Capstone Project should cover competencies from all five of the core domains of public health, the VCU Program-specific competencies, and from some of the cross-cutting areas. Details are in the Guide to the Capstone Project. In fulfilling the capstone requirement, each candidate must: (a) submit a formal written paper of sufficient depth and rigor; and (b) satisfactorily complete an oral or poster presentation of the project chosen as the basis for the written paper at an appropriate venue (e.g. stakeholder meeting, departmental seminar, research forum, etc.) approved by the Educational Program Director. See the Appendices to this Handbook for detailed guidance on the Capstone Project.

Non-curricular MPH Program Requirements
All students complete required coursework under the guidance of their faculty advisor. In addition to the minimum 45 credits required to complete the degree, students are required to complete the following elements:

**Attendance at 12 public health seminars.** The public health departments offer regular seminars that are appropriate to meet this requirement. Students are expected to spread attendance across their time in the program, depending on their status. Full-time students are expected to attend 6 seminars per year, while part-time students are expected to attend 3-4 seminars per year of study. Six of the seminars attended must be offered by the Division of Epidemiology. Students may also attend up to six non-departmental research presentations but must obtain approval for credit by contacting the Director of Educational Programs prior to attendance.

To receive credit for attendance, students must sign in on the attendance sheet circulated at Division of Epidemiology seminars. Students attending seminars not sponsored by the Division of Epidemiology or other professional conferences may receive 1 seminar credit per event but must submit a summary of the seminar to MPH Program administration. An event is defined as a seminar lasting approximately 1 hour or, if a day-long conference is attended, 1 seminar credit may be earned. Students may be able to earn more credits for attendance at the APHA annual meeting at the discretion of program administration. Any time a student wishes to obtain seminar credit for attending a presentation outside of the department, the student must submit a brief written summary using an on-line form available through Blackboard. This form documents student attendance at the seminar, and is located at [https://redcap.vcu.edu/redcap_sensitive/redcap/surveys/?s=1a05f2](https://redcap.vcu.edu/redcap_sensitive/redcap/surveys/?s=1a05f2)

**Completion of 20 hours of service-learning.** MPH students must complete a minimum of 20 hours of community service and prepare a presentation (either traditional PowerPoint or digital story) summarizing their experience for presentation at an annual forum. The Community Campus Partnership for Health has defined service-learning as “...a structured learning experience that combines community service with preparation and reflection. Students engaged in service-learning provide community service in response to community-identified concerns and learn about the context in which service is provided, the connection between their service and their academic coursework, and their roles as citizens.” Service-learning often requires students to work outside of their comfort zones, involving them in learning experiences they would not normally encounter in the classroom.

Service-learning is most effective when all hours are completed at the same organization, as the student has a greater opportunity to learn about the organization and the population served, gaining deeper insight into the organization and its community. However, to encourage student participation in service events organized by the Public Health Student Association, students are required to complete 12 of the 20 hours at a single organization and may complete the
remaining hours at one or more additional sites or events. To help students select a site, the MPH Program may list eligible organizations or events for student participation on Blackboard, or students may look at websites such as Connect Richmond or Hands On Richmond. The type of service provided will vary with the organization or event, but could include activities such as preparing health promotion materials, helping to plan and execute a community day or health fair, manning a health education table or providing a demonstration at a health fair, assisting with a health screening program, collecting data or conducting surveys on community health during a study abroad trip, or assisting with construction of new housing for a Habitat for Humanity project. Additional resources on service-learning and guidelines on preparing a digital story are available on Blackboard (Family Medicine and Population Health organization).

**Time to Degree Completion**

The MPH degree program is expected to take 2 calendar years to complete, for full-time students. For part-time students, the degree may be completed in 3-5 years, depending on the number of credits taken each semester. The VCU Graduate Bulletin of record lists the maximum number of years allowed for completion of a degree; see http://bulletin.vcu.edu/graduate/study/general-academic-regulations-graduate-students/time-limit-completion-requirements-eligibility-courses/. At the time of this manual’s development, the VCU Graduate School placed a time limit of 6 years on degree completion for master’s degree students. Students should consult the bulletin in effect during their year of matriculation for the time limit on degree completion.

**Academic Calendar**

Students should be aware of important dates in each semester, as posted in the VCU Academic Calendar, available at http://academiccalendars.vcu.edu/ This calendar lists first day of classes for each semester, drop/add deadlines, semester breaks, exam weeks, and related dates.

**Student Responsibilities Related to Academic Progress**

**Advising.** All students are assigned a faculty advisor and are responsible for maintaining regular contact with their advisors. Advisors are assigned by the beginning of the student’s first semester in the program. Students should arrange meetings with their advisors at least once a semester, particularly when preparing to register for courses for the next semester. At this time, students and advisors may discuss the semi-annual self-assessment that students complete regarding their level of mastery of the MPH Program competencies. Advisors may also provide guidance related to career paths and choices, internship placements and related opportunities, part-time job opportunities for students, and potential topics for the MPH capstone project. While advisors may initiate meetings with students, it is the primary responsibility of the student to maintain regular communication with the faculty advisor. See Appendix C for a compact between students and advisors.

The program strives to match students with advisors according to their indicated area of interest. Occasionally, an advisor change may be necessary if a student changes her/his concentrated area of interest. These situations are rare, but if they occur, the student must inform the Director of Educational Programs about their desire to change advisors, as the Program must approve such administrative changes. In addition, the faculty member must agree to advise the student (considering her/his current advisee, teaching, and research obligations). Faculty members therefore may not always be able to accommodate additional student advisees if a change is requested.
**Course Registration**. Students are responsible for checking course registration each semester to ensure that they have registered for the appropriate number of credits in each course and selected the appropriate courses and course sequence. It is critical to observe the registration drop/add dates. The Graduate School policy on requests to change registration after the drop/add deadline is stringent, and requests will likely be declined. The Graduate School holds students responsible for checking their registration records for the correct course selection and number of credits per course. Curriculum planners are available in Blackboard to guide students through the requirements of the MPH Program. Students also are encouraged to consult with their faculty advisor or the Director of Educational Programs for guidance.

Note that students cannot register online for variable credit courses (courses that list 1-3 or 1-6 credits, such as the internship or MPH capstone project). To register for one of these courses, submit an emailed request to the Director of Educational Programs, stating the course for which you want to register, the course CRN (five-digit number associated with the course), your V number, and the number of credits for which you wish to register.

**Course overrides**. Students may require a course override to enroll in some courses. This could be due to many reasons, such as restrictions on the type of student that can enroll in the course or the need for prerequisite courses. In such cases, the student must obtain written permission from the course instructor to enroll, then contact the Director of Educational Programs to request an online override for the course. Once the override is entered, the Director of Educational Programs will e-mail the student with directions on how to register for the course in eServices.

**Class attendance**. Regular attendance is necessary to keep up with all class instruction and assignments, and students are expected to attend all classes unless unavoidable circumstances (e.g., student illness, family emergency) prevent attendance. Students are responsible for communicating with the instructor if special arrangements are necessary regarding test re-scheduling due to unavoidable class absence. Students who are aware of unavoidable absences in advance (e.g., attending a funeral) are expected to contact the instructor to make arrangements for submission of assignments due during the period of absence.

**Grades**. Students are expected to maintain a GPA of 3.0 or higher in the MPH Program and may receive only one grade of C in the program for courses graded on the A/F scale. More than one grade of C will result in consideration of dismissal from the program. A single grade of D or F will result in dismissal from the program. Similarly, for courses graded satisfactory/unsatisfactory/failure (S/U/F), students are expected to earn a grade of S. More than one grade of U may result in consideration of dismissal from the program.

**Student progress review and advising letter**
The MPH Program faculty conducts a semi-annual review of student progress that results in an advising letter that is sent to students in January and June of each year. This letter assesses student progress to date and provides guidance on next steps to take in the program. Students are responsible for reviewing these letters carefully and responding to any guidance provided or contacting their advisors or the Director of Educational Programs if they have questions about the letter.

**Student self-assessment**
Students are asked to complete two self-assessments per year. The first occurs upon matriculation. These assessments are based on the student’s knowledge and practical skills related to the MPH Program competencies. Each fall and spring semester, students assess themselves against the competencies. It is anticipated that students will rate their knowledge and applied skills in the competencies higher each semester as their skills and knowledge increase from their studies.
each semester. Students should discuss their self-assessment results with their advisors and use the self-assessment as a tool for identifying courses that they may want to take to improve their knowledge in areas where they self-assess at a lower level than in other areas.

**Major program milestones and deadlines**

Students are responsible for familiarizing themselves with program milestones and deadlines and adhering to these. While these are not great in number, several are critical to student progress in the program and to ensuring timely graduation. Milestones and deadlines include:

- **Drop/add period**
  During the fall and spring semesters, usually one week after the start of classes. For example, if classes begin on a Monday, the drop/add period usually ends at midnight on the following Sunday. In summer, the drop/add period is very brief: midnight on Tuesday of the first week of class. Therefore, students must decide quickly about drop/add. Students should verify the end point of the drop/add period each semester. Requests for changes after drop/add ends are very likely to be denied. Each semester, students should verify that they are registered for the proper course sections and number of credits before the end of the drop/add period.

- **Internship**
  A guide to the internship is available in this Handbook (see appendices). Students must familiarize themselves with this guide as they begin planning for the internship. With very few exceptions, the internship must be conducted outside of the university environment, so most internships are completed at locations like the Virginia Department of Health, local non-profit public health organizations, or in other settings students identify through competitive internship programs offered in the Washington, DC area, through study trips abroad, or other locations. Students doing their practicum at professional public health organizations may identify potential internship sites through these practicum placements. Students whose practica are focused on academic research settings may request assistance from their advisor and/or the Director of Educational Programs about an internship placement. Students must contact the director before the mid-point of the semester prior to the one in which the student intends to begin the internship (e.g., if the student plans to do the internship in the summer semester, they should contact the director before March in the spring semester). Planning time is necessary to: identify one or more potential sites; determine if the site can accommodate an intern in the coming semester; allow the student to interview at one or more sites to determine if the internship site is a good fit; and allow the internship site to plan administratively for the arrival of a student intern.

- **Capstone Project**
  All students must complete a Capstone Project, in the second year of study. The first step in this process is submitting a project proposal and agreement form that is signed by the student, faculty advisor, and Director of Educational Programs. This proposal must be prepared and submitted prior to registering for the Capstone Project (EPID 694). Typically, the project proposal is submitted at the end of the semester prior to the one in which the student intends to begin the project (e.g., if planning to start the Capstone Project in the fall semester, submit the project proposal/agreement form by the end of the summer semester). See the appendices in this handbook for guidelines for the Capstone Project.

- **Master's Candidacy**
  Students who file their Capstone Project proposal/agreement form must also file an
Admission to Master’s Candidacy form at the same time. This form is required by the VCU Graduate School and indicates that the student has completed the majority of required coursework and is ready to embark on the applied/research portion of the degree program. Students obtain signatures from their faculty advisor and the Director of Educational Programs, and the form is forwarded to the School of Medicine Associate Dean for Graduate Education. Admission to Candidacy forms can be found on the VCU Graduate School “Forms” website or through logging in to the student’s account in GradTrak.

**Capstone Project**

The Guide to the Capstone Project is included as an appendix in this handbook, and related critical deadlines are posted in Blackboard. Students are required to familiarize themselves with the information in the guide and the deadlines that ensure timely completion of the Capstone Project final report and presentation. All students must present their Capstone Project Poster in a setting appropriate for their project, as agreed with the faculty advisor. The MPH Program sponsors a poster forum at the end of the fall and spring semesters. All Capstone Project deadlines require consultation with the faculty advisor for input on preliminary and final drafts of the capstone report and poster. Capstone Project guidelines include templates for required elements of the capstone final report, formatting instruction, and other useful advice critical to successfully completing the project. Students must familiarize themselves with the information in the capstone guide.

MPH students are not required to file their final project report online with the VCU Electronic Thesis and Dissertation (ETD) service, which is a requirement for many other graduate students. Instead, they must submit an electronic copy (in pdf format) of the Capstone Project Report and Poster to the Graduate Programs Coordinator. This file must include all signed approval pages plus the original project proposal submitted to initiate the project, with all signatures completed to the Graduate Programs Coordinator.

**Graduation application**

All students are required to file an application to graduate at the beginning of the semester in which they intend to complete the degree requirements. The application indicates a student’s intent to graduate; completion of requirements must be verified by each degree program at the end of the semester. If a student files a graduation application but does not complete graduation requirements in the intended semester, the student must file a new graduation application in the next semester in which graduation is expected. The graduation application is usually due within the first 3-4 weeks of the semester. Email notices from the MPH Program and the School of Medicine will provide specific due dates.

The MPH Program provides an on-line graduation workshop in Blackboard. MPH students do not attend the School of Medicine graduation workshop. The MPH workshop session explains how to complete the graduation application and helps students ensure that they are completing all program requirements. The Program also provides a checklist to assist students in completing all requirements for graduation. See the appendices in this Handbook.

**Exit survey**

All students are required to complete an exit survey before leaving the MPH Program. This survey collects feedback from students on their experience in the MPH Program. The exit survey is a program assessment tool, so information may be used to address issues identified
Potential Elective Courses

Following is a listing of graduate level courses by discipline that MPH students may consider to satisfy their elective requirements. Electives based in the public health departments are listed first, followed by courses are offered by departments across VCU's two campuses. This list is not exhaustive. New courses are developed regularly, and some may be offered as "special topics" courses. If you see a graduate course that appears to be an appropriate elective, please contact your advisor and the Director of Educational Programs (Lisa Anderson) to confirm that the course will qualify as an MPH elective.

Note that for some disciplines, there are restrictions about course enrollment procedure or “caveats” about frequency of course offering. Where these exist, a notation will appear.

Electives Offered By Public Health Departments

Epidemiology & Community Health

EPID 600 Introduction to Public Health  Semester course; 3 lecture hours. 3 credits. Describes the public health system in the United States. Explores the disease prevention and philosophy and foundations of public health management, economics, law, ethics and education. Examines the use of epidemiology and statistics to determine personal, environmental, and occupational health problems.

EPID 603 Public Health Policy and Politics  Semester course; 3 lecture hours. 3 credits. Provides an understanding of the public health policy development process, the influence of politics and special interest groups on this process, and current governmental policies for the provision of major public health services. The legislative process is a major focus of the course.

EPID 606 Epidemiological Methods  Semester course; 3 lecture hours. 3 credits. Prerequisite: EPID 571, minimum grade of B. Focuses on examining the design, conduct and analysis of major epidemiologic studies and the methods to deal with the problems of bias, confounding and effect modification; using multivariate modeling techniques focusing on applications of logistic regression and Cox proportional hazards models to answer relevant research questions; solving meta-analytic problems using fixed and random effects models; understanding specific research areas of disease screening and exposure assessment; writing a research paper based on literature review and data analyses of a large dataset demonstrating application of essential epidemiologic and biostatistical principles.

EPID 620 Cancer Epidemiology  Semester course; 3 lecture hours. 3 credits. Prerequisites: EPID 560 and 571. Covers general principles of carcinogenesis and the genetics of cancer; domestic and international patterns in cancer incidence and mortality; cancer surveillance and screening, and their relation to cancer prevention; epidemiologic characteristics and risk factors for cancers to the lung, breast, prostate, gastrointestinal tract, pancreas, bladder, endometrium, ovary, cervix and skin, as well as cancer in children and young adults; and the public health implications of cancer. Additional focus on critical evaluation of different methodological approaches used in cancer research and potential biases inherent given study designs.
EPID 622 Maternal and Child Health  Semester course; 3 lecture hours. 3 credits. Prerequisites: EPID 560 and 571. Exposes students to current issues in maternal and child health (MCH) primarily using a domestic perspective. Students will learn about key MCH topics including intergenerational risk factors, low birth weight, infant mortality, developmental disabilities and childhood obesity. Students will use epidemiological methods to evaluate MCH data to determine risk and protective factors for women and children, and describe how these data guide public health policy and program-planning efforts.

EPID 624 Chronic Disease  Semester course; 3 lecture hours. 3 credits. Covers the effects of chronic disease upon the health of the population in terms of Years of Life Lost, disability, economic effect on the health care system, and the points at which primary and secondary prevention work. Identifies likely interventions that will improve the outcome of particular chronic diseases and the transitional research needed to accomplish these outcomes.

EPID 646 Epidemiology of Psychiatric and Substance Use Disorders  Semester course; 3 lecture hours. 3 credits. This course is intended to introduce the descriptive and analytic epidemiology for major mental disorders of childhood, adulthood, and late adult life. The course will also examine issues of classification and the nosology of psychiatric disorders as well as operational case definitions and the measurement techniques for field surveys and risk factor research. Students will become familiar with epidemiologic surveys appropriate for risk factor research for psychiatric and substance use disorders. EPID 571 is required, or permission from instructor.

EPID 648 Behavioral Epidemiology  Semester course; 3 lecture hours. 3 credits. Prerequisites: EPID 571; SBHD 605 with a minimum grade of B; and BIOS 543 or BIOS 547 and EPID 547 with minimum grades of B; or permission of instructor. Covers behavioral epidemiology and its role in public health. Students will be able to identify and explain the appropriate methods for measuring health-related behaviors and related psychosocial constructs; critically analyze the appropriateness of methods used within published studies on behavior as well as determine appropriate methods for behavior-related research questions; and apply behavioral theory/models to current public health problems including, but not limited to, intervention development and evaluation.

Biostatistics

BIOS 571 Clinical Trials  Semester course; 3 lecture hours. 3 credits. Concepts of data management and statistical design and analysis in single-center and multicenter clinical trials. Data management topics include the collection, edition, and validation of data. Statistical design topics include randomization, stratification, blinding, placebo- and active-control groups, parallel and crossover designs, and power and sample size calculations. Statistical analysis topics include sequential and group sequential methods.

Social and Behavioral Health

SBHD 632 Health Disparities and Social Justice  Semester course; 3 lecture hours. 3 credits. This seminar is designed to provide students with an understanding of the concept of health disparities, reasons for disparities and how social factors contribute to disparities in health care and outcomes. The material will cover the research and theories in contemporary medical, epidemiologic and social justice literature.

SBHD 636 Community-based Participatory Research  Semester course; 3 lecture hours. 3 credits. Prerequisite: doctoral student in social and behavioral health or permission of instructor. This seminar provides students with an understanding of the theories, principles and strategies of conducting CBPR. This class will meet once a week for approximately three hours. Although some lectures will be presented, the main format for the class will reflect the
participatory as well as critical reflectiveness required to conduct CBPR. Co-learning will be emphasized against a backdrop of health research. The second major component of this class will be an interactive and hands-on field experience where students will experience the context and learn the methods to use when conducting participatory research for health. Students will work closely with a community partner and will use participatory research methods to address a community partner need.

**Electives Offered Outside Public Health Departments**

*Clinical and Translational Research*

**CCTR 630 Design Implications in Clinical Trials**
Semester course; 3 lecture hours. 3 credits. This course focuses on designing intervention studies to achieve research objectives by selecting appropriate study samples, end points and trial designs. Specific topics include efficacy versus effectiveness trials and critiquing clinical trial protocols, with emphasis on evaluating strengths and weaknesses of trial design.

*Psychology*

**PSYC 660 Health Psychology**
Semester course; 3 lecture hours. 3 credits. Prerequisites: PSYC 629 and graduate standing in psychology, or permission of instructor. Provides an overview of research in and applications of the principles of behavioral psychology with respect to the fields of medicine, health maintenance, and illness. Emphasizes the integration of theoretical research and applied issues in these areas. Surveys major topics in behavioral medicine, including psychophysiological disorders, compliance and adherence with health care regimens, psychological adjustment to illness and pain, behavioral dentistry, pediatric psychology, cardiovascular risk reduction, eating and sleeping disorders, behavioral pharmacology, biofeedback. Explores roles of psychologists.

*Sociology*

**SOCY 510 Domestic and Sexual Violence in Social Context**
Semester course; 3 lecture hours. 3 credits. Students will learn about the experiences of and responses to sexual and domestic violence in specific social contexts, with a focus on less visible contexts and underserved populations. Examines violence within various family structures and intimate relationships including racial/ethnic minority and immigrant groups and gay/lesbian/bisexual/transgender relationships, in various community settings including college campuses and the military, and among people with disabilities. Guest lectures provided by community experts in these areas.

**SOCY 603 Seminar in Population Studies**
Semester course; 3 lecture hours. 3 credits. Analysis of fertility, mortality, and migration from a sociodemographic perspective. Special attention will be paid to sociological determinants of demographic processes and their interrelationships.

**SOCY 607 Seminar in Racial and Ethnic Relations in America**
Semester course; 3 lecture hours. 3 credits. A study of intergroup relations in such areas as busing and school
desegregation, racism, minority and athletics, the emergence of white ethnic groups in the political systems, and the position of minorities in legal, economic, and medical institutions.

**SOCI 620/CRJS 620 Seminar in Criminology**

Semester course; 3 lecture hours. 3 credits. Examination and analysis of social, psychological, and economic theories and correlates of criminal behavior. Typologies of offenders.

**NOTE:** The following courses, which would be appropriate for MPH students, are listed as available through Sociology; however, they have not been actively offered for the past few years and, at last check with the Department, there are no plans to offer them in the near future. These are listed here simply to notify students of their status.

**SOCI 524 Aging and the Minority Community**

Semester course; 3 lecture hours. 3 credits. An analysis of the relationship between the aging process and American minority communities. In addition to the sociological factors, the course will examine demographic, physiological, and psychological aspects of minority aging. Attention will also focus on dominant social problems and federal policies toward the aged.

**SOCI 611 Studies in the Community**

Semester course; 3 lecture hours. 3 credits. The organization of the community with emphasis on major trends in urban development and growth. The interdependence of political, social, and economic geographic units. The need for cooperative planning and control.

**SOCI 624/GRTY 624 Community and Community Services for the Elderly** Semester course; 3 credits. A conceptual/theoretical overview of community focusing on the ecological, psychological, and social dimensions of community and on communities of the aged.

**SOCI 632 Intimate Partner and Sexual Violence: Medical Practice and Policy** Semester course; 3 lecture hours. 3 credits. Provides an overview of the sociological perspective on intimate partner and sexual violence as it relates to women’s health. Also covers practical responses to violence such as screening, assessment, treatment and referral behaviors of medical providers, as well as policy in the health care setting.

**SOCI 633 Application of the Policy Process to Issues of Violence**

Semester course; 3 lecture hours. 3 credits. Offers an interdisciplinary approach to understanding different models of decision making and the policy process found at all levels of American government. The focus is on the public sector with application to private and nonprofit settings. A six-stage model of policy initiation, selection, implementation, evaluation and termination is presented and explored through the use of case studies and examples of policy initiatives related to domestic violence, sexual assault and youth violence. Prepares students to recognize and understand the key stages of and influences on the policy process and apply them in their current and future work settings.

**SOCI 634 Social Contexts of Childhood Violence** Semester course; 3 lecture hours. 3 credits. Course will increase awareness and knowledge of children and adolescents as victims of violence, “absorbers” of violence and perpetrators of violence, as well as the victim-perpetrator dichotomy. Course is informed by an interdisciplinary framework to include neuroscience, trauma-informed practice, socioecological model, child development and resiliency. Topics include children and adolescents’ experience with domestic violence, sexual violence, physical abuse, neglect, human trafficking, teen-dating violence, violence against LGBTQ youth, school violence, neighborhood/community violence and violence in
the media. This highly interactive course will also consider innovative intervention and prevention strategies and discuss relevant policy issues.

**SOCY 635 Theorizing Gender Violence**  
Semester course; 3 lecture hours. 3 credits. Teaches students to think sociologically and structurally about gender and violence. Familiarizes students with sociological and feminist scholarship and explanatory theories related to preventing and responding to gender violence. Students will learn about the experiences of and responses to sexual and domestic violence in specific social contexts, with a focus on less visible and underserved populations. Guest lectures provided by community experts in these areas. Also examines social policy and research implications of various approaches.

**SOCY 645 The Sociology of Health and Illness**  
Semester course; 3 lecture hours. 3 credits. An examination of sociocultural factors in health and illness and the influence of social factors on recovery and rehabilitation. Special attention will be paid to the methodology found in current studies.

*Homeland Security MA On-line Program*

**NOTE:** There are no prerequisites to these courses, and MPH students are welcome to enroll in them. However, in some semesters, the Program Coordinator disables on-line enrollment and registers students manually to ensure that students enrolled in the MA program are able to enroll in the courses they need. If you are unable to enroll on line, please contact John M. Aughenbaugh, Coordinator for the Graduate Program in Homeland Security and Emergency Preparedness.

**HSEP 601 Emergency Management: Response Planning and Incident Command**  
Semester course; 3 lecture hours. 3 credits. An advanced analytical examination of emergency management, including mitigation (designing programs to reduce the risk to vulnerable targets/infrastructure), preparedness (response planning and training, particularly interagency and intergovernmental agreements on joint operations and burden sharing), response (actual operations during and after a terrorist attack or natural disaster) and recovery (maintaining services in the immediate aftermath of a disaster and the long term). Through discussions of theory and numerous case studies, students will be able to identify and investigate the strengths and weaknesses of the current practice of emergency management in the U.S.

**HSEP 602 Government, Industry and Community Strategic Planning**  
Semester course; 3 lecture hours. 3 credits. An examination of the guiding principles of strategic planning and the manner in which strategic plans can be used to better identify resource requirements and a prioritized acquisition process. Analyzes the strategic planning goal of designing a coordinated and unified effort that is all inclusive of the multiple agencies (governmental and nonprofit), distinct communities and private industries that have a role in and are impacted by natural disasters or terrorist incidents.

**HSEP 603 Risk Assessment**  
Semester course; 3 lecture hours. 3 credits. An introduction to the assessment and management of risk. Focuses on analytical techniques that assess risk; the primary application will be threats to critical infrastructure. Students will learn to conduct a risk and vulnerability analysis of a specific target, city or region using various assessment techniques and to manage that risk by assessing the efficacy of both prevention and response measures. The techniques covered will be both quantitative and qualitative.
**HSEP 650 Public Health Preparedness**
Semester course; 3 lecture hours. 3 credits. An examination of the role of the public health sector in preparing for and responding to natural disasters, emerging infectious diseases, catastrophic terrorism and bioterrorism. The class focuses on coordination and cooperation of federal, state and local government and the public-, private- and nonprofit-sector components of the public health infrastructure. Topics include epidemiological and mental health issues related to disasters, command/communication concerns, national stockpile management, surge planning, all-hazard planning and exercise design.

*Department of Urban Planning*

**URSP 521/GEOG 521/ENVS 521 Introduction to Geographic Information Systems**
Semester course; 2 lecture and 2 laboratory hours. 3 credits. An introduction to creating and using geographically referenced databases for urban and environmental analysis and planning. Includes geographic and remote sensing data structures, global positioning systems, spatial analysis, geographic data standards, public domain software and data resources, and principles of cartography design. Lab exercises in the use of geographic information systems software tools.

*Note:* The following course, URSP 621, Introduction to Geographic Information Systems, is open only to students in the Master of Urban Planning program or the GIS Certificate Program when offered in the fall semester. However, when offered in the summer semester, USRP 621 is open to all graduate students.

**URSP 621, Introduction to Geographic Information Systems**
Semester course; 2 lecture and 2 laboratory hours 3 credits. Introduces the components, capabilities, and functionalities of Geographic Information Systems. In addition to the concepts upon which GIS is based, how it works and what it does, this course introduces cartographic techniques necessary to design and construct effective maps with an emphasis on thematic mapping. It also examines the processing, compilation and symbolization of spatial data and the application of related analytical techniques. Laboratory work emphasizes practical applications and uses of ArcView GIS 3.x and the Spatial Analyst extension.

*Department of Gerontology*

**GRTY 501 Physiological Aging**
3 credits. This course is taught at an introductory level in contrast to the more substantive background required for GRTY 601. Distinguishes between normal aging and those chronic illnesses often associated with aging in humans. This course would be valuable to those interested in the general processes of human aging.

**GRTY 510 Aging**
Semester course; 3 lecture hours. 3 credits. Introduces the student to the biological, psychological, social, ethical, economic and cultural ramifications of aging. Presents an interprofessional approach to the complex issues and realities of aging. Discusses aging concepts and biopsychosocial theoretical frameworks relevant to the field of aging studies.
GRTY 604 Problems, Issues and Trends in Gerontology
3 credits. Application of knowledge in analysis of problems confronting aged persons; social issues and legislation; service delivery programs; current trends in gerontology.

GRTY 605 Social Gerontology
3 credits. Focuses on the sociopsychological and sociological aspects of aging. Various sociopsychological and social theories of aging will be discussed. The course will provide a broad overview of several general topics such as the demography of aging, politics and economics of aging, and cross-cultural aspects of aging. The course will offer an in-depth analysis of particular role changes that accompany aging (i.e., retirement, widowhood, institutionalization).

GRTY 625 Aging and the Minority Community (see also—SOCY 524)
3 credits. An analysis of the relationship between the aging process and American minority communities. In addition to the sociological factors, the course will examine demographic, physiological and psychological aspects of minority aging. Attention also will focus on dominant social problems and federal policies toward the aged.

School of Education, Health Movement Sciences

NOTE: Students are advised that the following Health Education/Movement Sciences courses are offered infrequently and thus, some may not be offered during a student’s tenure in the MPH Program.

HEMS 505 Contemporary Issues in Health
Semester course; 3 lecture hours. 3 credits. Focuses on contemporary issues related to lifestyle and health behavior. Emphasizes the factors that influence health and the lifestyle changes that promote and maintain optimal health. Issues may include sexuality, nutrition, chronic and communicable diseases, aging, environmental health, policy, and health care systems.

HEMS 550 Exercise, Nutrition and Weight Management
Semester course; 3 lecture hours. 3 credits. Provides an in-depth analysis of the scientific principles associated with weight management strategies. Emphasizes the separate and combined effects of exercise, nutrition and behavioral interventions relative to weight loss, weight gain and weight maintenance. Includes life cycle nutrition, childhood obesity, adult obesity and chronic disease, weight management intervention strategies, eating disordered behavior and the female athlete triad.

HEMS 604 Nutrition for Health and Physical Activity
Semester course; 3 lecture hours. 3 credits. Prerequisite: HPEX 350 or equivalent. Provides an in-depth examination of the basic nutrients and their effects on health, fitness and sport performance. Emphasizes an understanding of the biochemistry of metabolism and knowledge of the current research related to nutrition, health and exercise performance.

HEMS 605 Psychology of Physical Activity
Semester course; 3 lecture hours. 3 credits. Prerequisite: Introductory psychology, personal health or equivalent. Examines psychological issues related to exercise and physical activity. Includes individual and group motivation theory and techniques, leadership effectiveness, mental health, mental skills training, injury rehabilitation, eating disorders, exercise adherence, addiction, over training and use of ergogenic aids. Emphasizes examining current research and applications of psychological principles and knowledge in a physical activity setting.
HEMS 606 Psychosocial Aspects of Sport and Physical Activity
Semester course; 3 lecture hours. 3 credits. Examines social and psychological issues in sport and physical activity, with emphasis on socialization and motivation for sport and physical activity; patterns of participation and opportunities related to race, gender and social class; mental skills training for performance enhancement; aggression and violence in sport and society; and the role of sport and physical activity in the educational system. Emphasizes examining current research and applied methods in addressing these issues.

Department of Human and Molecular Genetics

HGEN 501/BIOL 530 Human Genetics
Semester course; 3 lecture hours. 3 credits. Prerequisites: BIOL 310 and CHEM 301-302 and CHEZ 301L, 302L or equivalents. Open to qualified seniors and graduate students only. Provides a comprehensive examination of the fundamentals of human genetics. Explores topics including Mendelian and non-Mendelian inheritance, pedigree analysis, cytogenetics, aneuploid syndromes, cancer, gene structure and function, epigenetics, gene expression, biochemical genetics and inborn errors of metabolism.

HGEN 603 Mathematical and Statistical Genetics
NOTE: Students interested in taking this course must have had coursework in human genetics (e.g., HGEN 501/502 or equivalent) along with the other prerequisites. This course is recommended for PhD students or advanced MPH epidemiology track students only.
Semester course; 3 lecture hours. 3 credits. Prerequisite: BIOS 543-544 or equivalent. Provides an introduction to the rudiments of theoretical and applied mathematical population genetics including the segregation of genes in families, genetic linkage and quantitative inheritance. Emphasizes the methods used in the analysis of genetic data.

HGEN 620 Principles of Human Behavioral Genetics
Semester course; 3 lecture hours. 3 credits. The theory of genetic and nongenetic transmission considered in relation to the design, analysis, and interpretation of studies to identify the principal genetic and environmental causes of behavioral variation. Included will be analysis of intelligence, personality, social attitudes, and psychiatric disorders.

School of Social Work

SLWK 601 Human Behavior in the Social Environment I
Semester course; 3 lecture hours. 3 credits. First of two foundation courses on human behavior in the social environment. Develops understanding of the complex interactions of biological, psychological, spiritual, economic, political and sociocultural forces operating at different system levels. Uses theory and empirical evidence to provide a multicontextual perspective on these systems. Examines contemporary challenges and mechanisms of oppression facing individuals, families, social groups, communities, social networks, formal organizations and social institutions in a multicultural society. Explores the effect of racial, ethnic, cultural, social class, disability, sexual orientation, religious and gender diversity on human behavior.

SLWK 603 Social Work and Social Justice
Semester course; 3 lecture hours. 3 credits. Examines social work's historical and current commitment to social justice as related to oppressed groups in a multicultural society. Enhances understanding of and appreciation for diversity in self
and others. Addresses issues of power, inequality, privilege, and resulting oppression. Analyzes oppression resulting from persistent social, educational, political, religious, economic, and legal inequalities. Focuses on the experiences of oppressed groups in the U.S. in order to understand their strengths, needs, and including those distinguished by race, ethnicity, gender, age, sexual orientation, disability, immigration status, and class. Considers ethical dilemmas faced by social workers in empowerment and advocacy roles.

**SLWK 610 Human Behavior in the Social Environment II**
Semester course; 3 lecture hours. 3 credits. Prerequisite: SLWK 601. Second of two foundation courses on human behavior in the social environment, covering the life course from conception through late adulthood and/or death. Includes the influences of biological, psychological, physical, spiritual, economic, political and sociocultural forces on individual and family coping and adaptation. Provides a multidimensional, multicultural perspective on the behavior of individuals and families based on theory and research. Examines contemporary challenges facing individuals and families at various life stages, identifying the risk and protective mechanisms that influence development. Focuses attention on the impacts of oppression, as well as racial, ethnic, class, cultural, disability, sexual orientation and gender diversity on human behavior; and the reciprocal nature of interactions of individuals, families and other social systems in a multicultural society.

**Student Credentialing**

**Certified in Public Health Exam**
The National Board of Public Health Examiners offers a professional credentialing exam in public health for MPH students in accredited programs and schools of public health. Becoming certified in public health (CPH) can give MPH graduates an edge in the job market, particularly in public health practice positions. Exams are given twice per year and cover the five core areas of public health plus multiple cross-cutting competency areas. Students may take the exam while finishing up their MPH curriculum or choose to take it after graduation. For more information, visit [http://www.nbphe.org/whygetcertified.cfm](http://www.nbphe.org/whygetcertified.cfm)
Student Services
VCU provides a variety of generalized and specialized student services across its two campuses, some of which are described in the following paragraphs.

Student Services Center – VMI Building: Financial Aid

The VCU Student Services Center provides assistance with issues regarding financial aid and records and registration on both VCU campuses. Services on the MCV Campus are limited to financial aid, and it is recommended that students start with the School of Medicine Financial Aid Office for assistance (see “Financial Aid” section in this handbook.) Full services, including records and registration, are available on the Monroe Park Campus. Additional information regarding the student services office location, transcript requests, specific financial aid information, academic forms and degree requirements can be found at http://www.enrollment.vcu.edu. On the MCV Campus, the Student Services Center is in the VMI Building at the corner of 10th and E. Marshall Streets. A map of this location is available at http://www.maps.vcu.edu/mcv/vmibldg/.

International Student and Scholar Services

The Global Education Office provides information to international students and scholars to find the appropriate suite of services tailored to their needs. Services include programs for academic success for international students, international admissions, immigration services, and connecting international students with external community partners. For more specific information, visit http://www.global.vcu.edu/students/index.html.

Special Services for Students

The Division for Academic Success on the MCV Campus works closely with students who have a documented disability to excel in academic endeavors. Resources that can be found at this web site include a handbook for students with disabilities that outline rights, responsibilities, and accommodations procedures for students with disabilities. If students are interested in receiving services from this office visit the following web site for more specific details: http://das.vcu.edu/.

VCU Writing Center

The Writing Center offers online or in-person consultations on report writing for all VCU students. The web site also outlines SafeAssign, a service employed by VCU to prevent plagiarism across VCU. Students can access more information by visiting the University College’s web site.

VCU Libraries

The VCU Libraries web site provides many resources for students in all disciplines. Information concerning hours of facilities, online research tools, borrowing, renewing, reserving and requesting materials from other universities and institutions can be found on their facility specific sites. In addition, students can access helpful information and training
resources with regards to search engines, research tools and resources, as well as dissertation and thesis submission. Online chatting with library professionals and one-on-one consultations are also available. Check out all of the libraries capabilities by visiting http://www.library.vcu.edu/.

**Student Health and Wellness**

**VCU Wellness Resource Center**
The Wellness Resource Center (The Well) provides information for students on how to live a healthy lifestyle. Programs designed to maintain health include educational programming, norm-setting social marketing approaches, peer education, policy advocacy, community coalitions, and individual counseling. The Well publishes “The Stall Seat Journal” which can be found in restrooms throughout the Monroe Park Campus. Visit their web site (http://www.thewell.vcu.edu/) to find out how to volunteer or to learn about the health resources available for students.

**University Counseling Services**
This web site provides information on services available through VCU University Counseling Services. These include one-on-one therapy sessions, case management and referral services, consultation and outreach, and psychological health support to international students. To schedule an appointment or learn more about services offered, visit http://www.students.vcu.edu/counseling/.

**VCU Recreational Sports**
This web site contains information on a variety of health and fitness services offered at VCU. These include sports and recreational programs, group exercise classes, outdoor trips, club sports, and certification programs. Here you will also find information on the many health and fitness facilities on both the Monroe Park and Medical campuses, including amenities, locations, and hours of service. Membership information is also provided at http://www.recsports.vcu.edu/.

**VCU Student Health Services**
All students may use resources provided by Student Health Services while enrolled full-time in coursework. Clinical and pharmacy services as well as routine and international travel immunizations are available. For more information about services and hours for the health clinic, immunization office, and pharmacy, go to http://www.students.vcu.edu/health/.

**Campus and Student Life**

This section contains basic information on campus resources and logistics.

**VCU Card**
The VCU Card is the official identification card for VCU and Health System. While on the Monroe Park or Medical campuses, all students, faculty and staff are required to carry their VCUCard, which provides easy access to residence halls, libraries, online resources, bus systems, meal plans, and departmental offices. The VCU Card web site provides information regarding how to obtain or replace lost cards, rules concerning use, how to deposit Rambucks and procedures for linking Wells Fargo accounts to a student’s card. More information can be found on the VCU Card web site http://vcucard.vcu.edu/index.html.
Parking and Transportation

Students can find information on parking and other transportation options on the VCU campuses including: how to obtain parking permit, maps of parking lots and garages, information about campus shuttles and maps, including the Campus Connector, which offers regular service between the Medical and Monroe Park Campuses. Parking and Transportation also provides information regarding Zimrides (shared commuting) and Zipcar rentals. Interested students can obtain a GRTC Bus Pass at reduced price [http://www.parking.vcu.edu/transportation/transit-pass/](http://www.parking.vcu.edu/transportation/transit-pass/). For more information, visit [http://www.parking.vcu.edu/vcupark/parking.htm](http://www.parking.vcu.edu/vcupark/parking.htm).

Larrick Student Center

The Larrick Student Center is the one-stop spot for food, coffee, exercise, and student lounge space; it houses Jonah’s dining hall, the MCV Campus Recreation and Aquatic Center, Starbucks and several meeting rooms for special events. Information regarding hours, special events, room reservations, and event planning resources as well as up-to-date building operational hours and menus can be found on the Larrick Student Center web site [http://www.parking.vcu.edu/vcupark/parking.htm](http://www.parking.vcu.edu/vcupark/parking.htm).

Hunton Student Center

At Hunton, students can find private study space, a computer lab, dining, and lounge space. Information concerning the center’s operational hours, menus for the food court, event calendar and directions for room reservations are on the web site at [http://www.usca.vcu.edu/facilities-dining/hunton-student-center/](http://www.usca.vcu.edu/facilities-dining/hunton-student-center/).

VCU Bookstore

There are two bookstores located on the VCU campuses, one at 610 North 10th Street (MCV Campus) and another at 1111 West Broad Street (Monroe Park Campus). Most books for courses taught through the public health Departments/Divisions can be purchased at the MCV Campus bookstore. Both bookstores offer a variety of supplies and VCU campus gear, as well. To view book and supply availability visit the VCU Bookstore’s web site [http://vcumedical.bncollege.com/webapp/wcs/stores/servlet/BNCBHomePage?storeId=55553&catalogId=10001&langId=-1](http://vcumedical.bncollege.com/webapp/wcs/stores/servlet/BNCBHomePage?storeId=55553&catalogId=10001&langId=-1).

VCU Technology Services

Technology Services provides a multitude of services for students including e-mail support, the helpIT Center, free software, software download information, seminars and trainings, as well as wireless network security aid. To learn about all of the resources Technology Services organizes visit [http://ts.vcu.edu/](http://ts.vcu.edu/).
**VCU Dining Services**

Here you will find information on locations of campus dining services, menus, function catering, nutrition information, and hours of service. There are three campus dining options on the MCV Campus; all are located in and around the MCV hospital area. Visit the Dining Services site to learn more about meal plan options and daily food menus http://www.bsv.vcu.edu/dining/.

**Office of Multicultural Student Affairs**

The Office of Multicultural Student Affairs (OMSA) is a resource for all VCU students, as well as faculty and staff. The primary mission of OMSA is to assist traditionally underserved and/or underrepresented student populations (i.e. race, ethnicity, sexual orientation, and gender) through advising, support, program development, retention, mentoring and by promoting an appreciation of diversity throughout the campus community. More information can be accessed on OMSA’s official web site (http://www.omsa.vcu.edu/).

**VCU Residential Life and Housing**

VCU “ResLife” provides students with several housing options on the MCV Campus. Applications for housing, rates, contracts, policies for University student housing can all be found on their web site: http://www.housing.vcu.edu/.

**VCU Maps**

Interactive maps of the Monroe Park and MCV Campuses can be found on the VCU Maps web site: http://www.maps.vcu.edu/. Simply enter the name of a VCU building or address.

**VCU Police**

Students can access information about bike registration programs, defense training, lost and found, emergency situation information, and much more when visiting the VCU Police’s web site http://www.police.vcu.edu/. The VCU Police emergency number is 804-828-1234; this phone number should be used when reporting any kind of emergency that occurs on or in VCU Property. For non-emergency situations that should be reported to the VCU Police, dial 804-828-1196.

**VCU Security Escort**

The VCU Police Department maintains this web site, which provides information on the Security Escort Services and Emergency Reporting Telephone System to assist students and other VCU community members with traveling to and from campus safely. VCU Security Escort Services are free of charge to students and can be accessed by calling 828-WALK. More information about this service can be found on the Security Escort web site https://police.vcu.edu/services/security-escort-service/.
VCU Career Services

Career Services provides a multitude of preparatory services to help students in career planning. Students can receive tips on how to interview, write a resume or curriculum vitae, and evaluate positions offered and many more things. Visit the Career Centers web site, http://careers.vcu.edu/, to find information regarding job openings and with general career counseling help.

Student Groups, Associations, and Societies

Student Groups

The Office for Student Organization Development provides resources and services to help students establish and maintain student organizations. The office provides leadership training, information on obtaining financial support for student organizations, as well as a listing of volunteer opportunities. For more information, visit http://www.usca.vcu.edu/slic/.

MCV Campus Student Government Association (SGA)

The MCV Campus SGA is the governing body of the MCV Campus of VCU. The organization plans social and community service events for the entire MCV Campus; advocates for students and voices concerns; and provides funding for programming done by other student groups. http://www.mcvcampussga.com/home

Public Health Student Association (PHSA)

The Public Health Student Association (PHSA) involves public health graduate students in service and social activities and gives a voice to student concerns. The PHSA organizes several community service activities each year and assists with planning and execution of National Public Health Week events.

Virginia Public Health Association (VAPHA)

The Virginia Public Health Association (VAPHA) is an organization that strives to bring together private and public health practitioners to improve the health of Virginia’s population. The VAPHA web site contains information about the Virginia Public Health Association. It lists volunteer opportunities, events, public health related career and education opportunities, policy and advocacy, and resources for public health in Virginia. The web site also provides the ability to register as a member or to donate to the VAPHA. Specific information for this organization can be found at: http://vapha.org/.

American College of Epidemiology (ACE)

The American College of Epidemiology is an organization of epidemiologists that serves the interests of the profession and its members through advocating for issues pertinent to epidemiology, a credential-based admission and promotion process, sponsorship of scientific meetings, publications and educational activities, and recognizing outstanding contributions to the field. Specific information for this organization can be found at: http://acepidemiology.org/.
American Public Health Association (APHA)

As the world’s oldest public health organization, the American Public Health Association (APHA) is dedicated to ensuring the safety and wellbeing of all Americans. The APHA web site provides a wealth of information regarding member benefits, publications, national events and initiatives, and the organization’s publications, just to name a few. More information can be found on their web site: http://www.apha.org/.

Society for Epidemiologic Research (SER)

The SER is committed to keeping epidemiologists at the vanguard of scientific developments. To this end, the Society sponsors the American Journal of Epidemiology and Epidemiologic Reviews, as well as the annual SER meeting which includes the John C. Cassel Memorial Lecture and contributed papers, symposia, and posters on a wide range of epidemiologic issues. SER was created in 1967 with the purpose of engaging students and new researchers with senior faculty in a meaningful way. More information can be found on their web site: http://www.epiresearch.org/index.php

Other Professional Organizations

Students and faculty also belong to professional organizations that are most relevant to their specific content area and research interests.

Alumni Societies

All Public Health graduates may join the MCV Alumni Association. Details pertaining to membership dues, volunteer events, and alumni news can be found on the Alumni Association’s web site: http://www.vcu-mcvalumni.org/index.html.
Appendices
Appendix A: MPH Program Competencies
# VCU MPH Program Competencies, Effective Fall 2015

## BIOSTATISTICS

**Competencies:** Upon graduation a student with an MPH should be able to…

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>BIO1</th>
<th>Explain the role of biostatistics in evidence-based research and the decision-making process.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>BIO2</td>
<td>Describe the theoretical concepts behind a number of commonly used statistical methodologies.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BIO3</td>
<td>Apply the appropriate statistical methodology for description and estimation to account for different measurement scales.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BIO4</td>
<td>Draw appropriate inferences from statistical analyses.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

## ENVIRONMENTAL HEALTH SCIENCES

**Competencies:** Upon graduation a student with an MPH should be able to…

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>ENV1</th>
<th>Describe the direct and indirect human, ecological and safety effects of major environmental features and the approaches to assess, prevent, and control risks to human health and safety. <em>(ASPH B.1, B.5)</em></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>ENV2</td>
<td>Describe genetic, physiologic, psychosocial, and environmental justice factors that affect susceptibility to adverse health outcomes following exposure to environmental conditions. <em>(ASPH B.2, B.7)</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ENV3</td>
<td>Describe federal and state regulatory programs, guidelines and authorities that control environmental health issues. <em>(ASPH B.3)</em></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
## EPIDEMIOLOGY

**Competencies:** Upon graduation a student with an MPH should be able to…

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>EPI1</th>
<th>Identify key sources of data for epidemiologic purposes. <em>(ASPH C.1)</em></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>EPI2</td>
<td>Apply basic terms and definitions of epidemiology in terms of magnitude, person, time, and place. <em>(ASPH C.3, C.6)</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EPI3</td>
<td>Explain the importance of epidemiology for informing scientific, ethical, economic and political discussion of health issues. <em>(ASPH C.4)</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EPI4</td>
<td>Calculate basic epidemiology measures. <em>(ASPH C.7)</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EPI5</td>
<td>Evaluate the strengths and limitations of epidemiologic reports. <em>(ASPH C.10)</em></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

## HEALTH POLICY AND MANAGEMENT

**Competencies:** Upon graduation a student with an MPH should be able to…

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>HPM1</th>
<th>Identify the main components and issues of the organization, financing, access and delivery of health services and public health systems in the US and globally. <em>(ASPH D.1)</em></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>HPM2</td>
<td>Describe the legal and ethical bases for public health and health services. <em>(ASPH D.2)</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HPM3</td>
<td>Discuss the policy process for improving the health status of populations. <em>(ASPH D.4)</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HPM4</td>
<td>Communicate health policy and management issues using appropriate channels and technologies. <em>(ASPH D.9)</em></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
## SOCIAL AND BEHAVIORAL SCIENCES

**Competencies:** Upon graduation a student with an MPH should be able to…

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Competency</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>SBS1</td>
<td>Identify basic theories, concepts and models from a range of social and behavioral disciplines that are used in public health research and practice. <em>(ASPH E.1)</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SBS2</td>
<td>Identify the causes of social and behavioral factors that affect health of individuals and populations. <em>(ASPH E.2)</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SBS3</td>
<td>Describe steps and procedures for the planning, implementation and evaluation of public health programs, policies and interventions. <em>(ASPH E.5)</em></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

## VCU PROGRAM-SPECIFIC COMPETENCIES

**Competencies:** Upon graduation a student with an MPH should be able to…

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Competency</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>VCU1</td>
<td>Discuss the effect of physical and social environment on health outcomes during the life course.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>VCU2</td>
<td>Discriminate between research questions and hypotheses and derive one from the other.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>VCU3</td>
<td>Accurately distinguish between epidemiological and biostatistical concepts and apply the appropriate method to analyze a public health research question using appropriate statistical software.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>VCU4</td>
<td>Access public and private data sets and assess their relevance in addressing a specific public health research question or evaluation need.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>VCU5</td>
<td>Work effectively in collaborative teams to develop public health projects.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>VCU6</td>
<td>Distinguish between public health ethics and medical ethics, discussing the values and beliefs inherent to a public health ethics perspective.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
## COMMUNICATION AND INFORMATICS

**Competencies:** Upon graduation, it is increasingly important that a student with an MPH be able to…

| COM1 | Describe how societal, organizational, and individual factors influence and are influenced by public health communications. *(ASPH F.2)* |
| COM2 | Demonstrate effective written and oral skills for communicating with different audiences in the context of professional public health activities. *(ASPH F.7)* |

## DIVERSITY AND CULTURE

**Competencies:** Upon graduation, it is increasingly important that a student with an MPH be able to…

| DIV1 | Explain how professional ethics and practices relate to equity and accountability in diverse community settings. *(ASPH G.2)* |
| DIV2 | Differentiate among availability, acceptability, and accessibility of health care across diverse populations. *(ASPH G.7)* |

## LEADERSHIP

**Competencies:** Upon graduation, it is increasingly important that a student with an MPH be able to…

| LDR1 | Engage in dialogue and learning from others to advance public health goals. *(ASPH H.4)* |
| LDR2 | Demonstrate transparency, integrity, and honesty in all actions. *(ASPH H.6)* |
**PUBLIC HEALTH BIOLOGY**

**Competencies:** Upon graduation, it is increasingly important that a student with an MPH be able to…

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>PHB1</th>
<th>Apply biological principles to development and implementation of disease prevention, control, or management programs. <em>(ASPH I.8)</em></th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

**PROFESSIONALISM**

**Competencies:** Upon graduation, it is increasingly important that a student with an MPH be able to…

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>PRO1</th>
<th>Apply basic principles of ethical analysis (e.g. the Public Health Code of Ethics, human rights framework, other moral theories) to issues of public health practice and policy. <em>(ASPH J.2)</em></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>PRO2</td>
<td>Apply evidence-based principles and the scientific knowledge base to critical evaluation and decision-making in public health. <em>(ASPH J.3)</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PRO3</td>
<td>Promote high standards of personal and organizational integrity, compassion, honesty and respect for all people. <em>(ASPH J.5)</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PRO4</td>
<td>Distinguish between population and individual ethical considerations in relation to the benefits, costs, and burdens of public health programs. <em>(ASPH J.8)</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PRO5</td>
<td>Appreciate the importance of working collaboratively with diverse communities and constituencies (e.g. researchers, practitioners, agencies and organizations). <em>(ASPH J.10)</em></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**PROGRAM PLANNING**

**Competencies:** Upon graduation, it is increasingly important that a student with an MPH be able to…

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>PPL1</th>
<th>Differentiate among goals, measurable objectives, related activities, and expected outcomes for a public health program. <em>(ASPH K.5)</em></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>PPL2</td>
<td>Differentiate the purposes of formative, process, and outcome evaluation. <em>(ASPH K.6)</em></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Appendix B: Curriculum Planner
### MPH Curriculum Planner

**45 Credits Minimum**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Courses</th>
<th>Cr</th>
<th>Semester/Year Taken</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>CORE COURSES (address core public health areas)</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td>Offered</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BIOS 543 – Statistical Methods I</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>Fall</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EPID 571 – Epidemiological Principles</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>Fall</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EPID 604 – Principles of Environmental Health</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>Spring</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SBHD 605 – Introduction to Social and Behavioral Health</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>Spring</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HCP 601 – Introduction to Health Policy</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>Fall</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>15</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>REQUIRED COURSES</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BIOS 544 – Statistical Methods II</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>Spring</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EPID 547 – Applied Data Analysis Lab I</td>
<td>1.5</td>
<td>Fall</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EPID 548 – Applied Data Analysis Lab II</td>
<td>1.5</td>
<td>Spring</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EPID 580 -- Public Health Ethics</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>Fall</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EPID 593—MPH Practicum (semester 1)</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>Fall/Spring</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EPID 593—MPH Practicum (semester 2)</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>Fall/Spring</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>9</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>APPLIED EXPERIENCE REQUIREMENTS</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EPID 693 – Public Health Internship</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>First Summer or</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EPID 694 – MPH Capstone Project</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>Second year, Fall</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Depending on project scope, capstone project may be completed</td>
<td>6</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>ELECTIVES</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.</td>
<td>3</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.</td>
<td>3</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.</td>
<td>3</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.</td>
<td>3</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.</td>
<td>3</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>15</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>TOTAL CREDITS</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>NON-DIDACTIC REQUIREMENTS</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Attendance at 12 public health seminars</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Minimum 20 hours service-learning and summary</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**NOTE:** The MPH Program reserves the right to change course offerings.
**SUGGESTED COURSE SEQUENCE**

### Fall 1
- **BIOS 543**  Statistical Methods I  3
- **EPID 547**  Applied Data Analysis Lab I  1.5
- **EPID 571**  Epidemiological Principles  3
- **EPID 580**  Public Health Ethics  1
- **EPID 593**  MPH Practicum  1

### Spring 1
- **BIOS 544**  Statistical Methods II  3
- **EPID 548**  Applied Data Analysis Lab II  1.5
- **EPID 593**  MPH Practicum  1
- **EPID 604**  Principles of Environmental Health  3
- **SBHD 605**  Introduction to Social and Behavioral Health  3

### Summer 1
- **EPID 693**  Public Health Internship (or Fall 2)  3

### Fall 2
- **HCPR 601**  Introduction to Health Policy  3
- **Elective 1**  3
- **Elective 2**  3
- **EPID 694**  MPH Capstone Project  1

### Spring 2
- **EPID 694**  MPH Capstone Project  2
- **Elective 3**  3
- **Elective 4**  3
- **Elective 5**  3

### Notes:
Core and required courses should be completed as soon as possible.
Course plans will vary by student; elective courses may be included in any semester where appropriate.
The MPH Program reserves the right to change course offerings.
Public health department course offerings are subject to change each semester. In addition, special topics courses and newly developed courses will be available in some semesters. Outside public health departments, courses may be available during varied semesters or even in alternate years. Special permission may need to be obtained from the instructor to enroll. This is just a short list of non-public health electives in which MPH students have enrolled frequently. A list of potential electives, including those offered outside of public health departments, is available in Blackboard under the “Course registration/curriculum planners” module.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Public Health Department Electives</th>
<th>Non-Public Health Department Electives Frequently Chosen</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>EPID 600  Introduction to Public Health</td>
<td>HSE 601  Emergency Management: Response Planning and Incident Command (on line)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EPID 603  Public Health Policy and Politics</td>
<td>HSE 650  Public Health Preparedness (on line)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EPID 606  Epidemiological Methods</td>
<td>PSY 660  Health Psychology</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EPID 620  Cancer Epidemiology</td>
<td>URSP 621  Introduction to Geographic Information Systems</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EPID 622  Maternal and Child Health</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EPID 624  Chronic Disease</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EPID 646  Epidemiology of Psychiatric and Substance Use Disorders</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EPID 648  Behavioral Epidemiology</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BIOS 571  Clinical Trials</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SBHD 632  Health Disparities and Social Justice</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SBHD 636  Community-Based Participatory Research</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Appendix C: Guide to the Public Health Internship
1. Introduction
The Public Health Internship is a supervised experience designed to expose MPH graduate students to a real-world public health practice setting, requiring them to integrate classroom knowledge and skills in practical applications in a professional environment. It provides a more in-depth experience than the MPH practicum and may help prepare students for the Capstone Project by introducing them to potential projects and mentors. Each student intern works with a practice site supervisor who assigns tasks, instructs the student in new skills, and evaluates the student’s progress. Site Supervisors are qualified public health professionals experienced in an area of public health that is of interest to the student and having skills to supervise and evaluate graduate student work. The Site Supervisor communicates with the Public Health Internship Director, who is the Director of Educational Programs and who guides students through the internship course. The Director of Educational Programs assigns a grade of satisfactory or unsatisfactory based on the Site Supervisor’s input as well as the student’s documentation of the internship experience.

2. Purpose
Many graduate students lack extensive professional work experience or work experience in the field of public health. In addition to the MPH practicum, the public health internship allows students to acquire hands-on, practical experience that complements the didactic curriculum and current professional knowledge and skills. Students will interact with other public health professionals and, in some cases, with the populations they serve. Students will have opportunities to integrate their knowledge and skills as they work on assigned tasks. The internship experience helps MPH students build their resumes in preparation for career plans after graduation.

3. Learning Objectives
Major learning objectives include the following:
- Relate theory to practice in a public health agency or organization
- Develop competencies in selected skills, according to topic areas covered in the internship, needed by public health professionals
- Increase understanding of advocacy to improve public health outreach and delivery programs
- Enhance oral and written communications skills through tasks accomplished while working in a professional public health setting
- Develop an enhanced sense of civic responsibility through actions taken in supporting a professional, community-based organization

4. Service-Learning
The Public Health Internship incorporates elements of service-learning through reflection activities and journaling. According to Learn & Serve America, a resource of the Corporation for National & Community Service, Service-Learning is “a teaching and learning strategy that integrates meaningful community service with instruction and reflection to enrich the learning experience, teach civic responsibility, and strengthen communities.” The Community Campus Partnership for Health has defined service-learning as “. . . . a structured learning experience that combines community service with preparation and reflection. Students engaged in service-learning provide community service in response to community-identified concerns and learn about the context in which service is provided, the connection between their service and their academic coursework, and their roles as citizens.” Service-learning is a collaborative process through which students and faculty work with community partners to achieve partner-identified goals. This learning approach integrates community service into academic instruction to support learning goals of a course or curriculum. Service-learning is reciprocal in that students and faculty learn from community
partners, and community partners learn from students and faculty. Through reflection, students synthesize their experiential learning with their didactic learning. Reflection offers the opportunity to process and learn from experiences. Reflective practitioners take time to assess what happened in a particular experience, the significance of an event, and different approaches or responses that the practitioner might apply in future, similar situations to produce a better outcome.

5. Benefits of the Internship Program
In addition to giving students a structured experience in a public health field site, the Internship Program is designed to create relationships between students, faculty, and practice site personnel. These relationships contribute to educational experiences that ultimately will benefit the health of the population at large.

Student benefits include:
- Augmenting academic study through experience in a real-world public health setting
- Achieving academic goals and assisting in career planning
- Applying theoretical concepts to real life situations
- Establishing a professional network
- Learning to become a reflective practitioner

Faculty benefits include:
- Keeping updated on current practices and policies
- Exchanging knowledge for the achievement of mutual goals
- Creating opportunities for practice research and service

Practice site benefits include:
- Expanding access to public health expertise
- Establishing academic relationships for future collaborative efforts

6. Credits and Requirements
The public health internship is a 1 to 3 credit-hour course offered year round. Students must earn 3 credit hours towards the internship and may not register for more than 3 credit hours in a single semester. Although most students choose to register for 3 credit hours in a single semester, the option of 1-2 hours in a semester is also available for students in special circumstances (e.g., a student with unusual schedule constraints). These students may work with the Internship Director and their site supervisor to arrange spreading the internship experience over more than one semester. Students should note that taking fewer than 3 credit hours in a semester limits the breadth and depth of the internship experience.

A student must work a minimum number of hours in a community-based organization or public health agency to earn credit. Following is a breakdown of the hours that must be worked to earn a specific number of credits.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Credits earned</th>
<th>Minimum hours required to work</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>180</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>120</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>60</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Based on a 14-week semester, student interns registered for 3 credit hours must average close to 15 hours in the internship per week during a full semester.

Students must complete a minimum of 18 academic credits, including BIOS 547 and EPID 571, before they may apply for an internship. Following this guideline, most (full-time) students should plan to take the internship in their third or fourth semester of the MPH Program. This typically equates to the first summer or second fall semester in the program. Students are expected to complete the internship by the end of the semester in which they registered for the internship. Exceptions require approval by the Site Supervisor and the Director of Educational Programs.

7. Planning for the Internship
Students should begin planning for the internship before the middle of the semester prior to the one in which the student intends to enroll in the internship. For example, a student planning to enroll in an internship in the fall
semester should be engaged in the planning process by the sixth week of the summer semester. This timeline should allow adequate time to match a student with a practice site and make any other necessary arrangements, such as completing paperwork and establishing a physical workspace for the intern.

Students who rotate through professional agencies such as the Virginia Department of Health as part of the MPH Practicum have an opportunity to identify potential areas or offices where they would like to complete an internship as they experience these agency environments. The student should work with the MPH Practicum Director to identify one or more potential sites for the internship. Students who do not have a firm idea of a potential internship site will work with the Director of Educational Programs to identify potential sites. Students uncertain about an internship site must complete an internship application, available in Blackboard, and submit this to the Director of Educational Programs along with a current resume/CV. These materials will be used in the process of contacting potential internship sites in which the student is interested.

When a probable site is selected, the Director of Educational Programs may contact the site initially to inquire about taking a student intern. Once the internship site has indicated that it is interested in taking an intern, the student contacts the site representative by email, expressing interest in interning at that site and enclosing a current resume and the internship application, if appropriate. Once the potential internship site responds, the student should schedule a meeting with the designated Site Supervisor to discuss the scope of the internship. A student may make inquiries to multiple sites, and through the interview process, determine the site that is best suited to meeting the student’s personal goals for the internship. If the student and site appear to be a good match, the next step is to agree upon a start date and complete the Internship Contract.

8. Considerations for the Internship Site
It is important to know if the Division of Epidemiology has an Affiliate Site Agreement with the organization selected for the internship. This document is a formal agreement between the Division of Epidemiology and the internship site outlining legal responsibilities of each party in the internship experience. Such an agreement usually must be in place for a student to obtain an internship placement. Such agreements typically are already in place for sites where students complete the MPH Practicum. If a student expresses interest in a site for which no Affiliate Site Agreement exists, delays will be introduced by the time required to establish this agreement, which can take from a few weeks to several months to process. Therefore, students must communicate with the Director of Educational Programs several months in advance to allow time to plan for this agreement.

9. Existing Jobs and the Internship
According to guidance from the Council on Education for Public Health (CEPH), which accredits the VCU MPH Program, students may not use existing jobs, especially full-time positions, to fulfill internship hours. Students may arrange to do alternate work at their workplace to meet internship requirements, as long as the work is different from their regular duties for their job. Students who begin a part-time position within three months of the start of their internship may request that this position be used to meet the internship requirement; however, the Director of Educational Programs must approve this arrangement.

10. Internship Contract
The Student Intern and Site Supervisor must read and sign the internship contract, available on Blackboard. The contract outlines the general responsibilities of the parties involved in the internship. This process may be completed before the student begins the internship, but no later than two weeks from the start date of the internship. The student must obtain signatures from her/his Faculty Advisor and the Director of Educational Programs, make copies for her/his own files and the Site Supervisor, and provide the Director of Educational Programs with the original copy of the contract.

11. Proposed Plan of Action/Timeline
The student will then begin planning for the internship. After consulting with the Site Supervisor, the student should draft a proposed Plan of Action (PA), which outlines the goals and objectives for the internship, specific tasks expected to be completed, and a timeline for completing these tasks. A template of the PA is available on Blackboard in the EPID
693 section. As with the internship contract, the PA may be completed before the start of the internship, but should be finalized no later than two weeks from the internship start date. Students must obtain verbal approval of the PA from the Site Supervisor and the Director of Educational Programs and provide copies to the Director of Educational Programs. If a major change in tasks occurs during the internship, the student must revise the PA accordingly and submit the new version to the Site Supervisor and Director of Educational Programs.

12. Communicating with Faculty Advisor
Students are encouraged to discuss plans for the internship with their faculty advisors as they begin planning for their experience. Faculty advisors may have connections with specific organizations or agencies that may be potential internship sites. Students are encouraged to discuss the progress of the internship with their advisors throughout the internship semester.

13. IRB Approval
If the topic of interest for the internship involves collecting data, working with confidential data, or working with human subjects, the student is advised to contact the Director of Educational Programs for guidance. Approval may be required by the VCU Institutional Review Board (IRB) prior to the start of the internship or the work involving confidential data.

14. Compensation for Internship
The Public Health Internship is designed to provide students with valuable field experience for academic credit. Students should not expect to receive compensation for their work on the internship. However, in a few cases, a site may provide student stipends or pay an hourly wage. Students who are offered stipends or other payment for their work on the internship must inform the Director of Educational Programs that they are being compensated.

15. Student Reporting Requirements
The reporting requirements are outlined in the EPID 693 syllabus and include the following.

a. **Daily Work Log**: The student documents the time spent in the actual work setting, type of work performed, any problems encountered, and comments (a template is available on Blackboard). The Student Intern should submit copies of the pages of the Work Log to the Site Supervisor to sign or initial no less frequently than every 2 weeks. The student must submit the original signed/initialed copy to the Director of Educational Programs at the end of the internship.

b. **Summary Assignment (e-Portfolio)**: Students are required to create an e-Portfolio in the Blackboard EPID 693 course section. This portfolio will include a summary of the student’s internship experience, documentation of how MPH Program competencies were met through the internship, and sample products that the student developed during the internship, among other items.

16. Reflection—Journaling and Group Meetings
Student reflection is facilitated through individual journals and group discussions. Students must maintain a journal of their internship experience and make entries as directed in the EPID 693 syllabus. The purpose of the journal is to help the student to reflect on the work completed in the internship, the student’s reaction to specific events during the internship, and conclusions a student may draw from the internship experience. *The journal is not simply a report of what was done—it is a venue for processing the experience and learning from contemplation of the experience.* Specific guidelines on journaling are provided in the EPID 693 syllabus.

In addition, students must participate in two or more discussion boards in Blackboard, responding to focused questions that may be based on an assigned reading and commenting on other students’ posts.

17. Evaluation
Two forms of evaluation are employed for the Public Health Internship—an informal meeting mid-semester and a more formal survey completed at the conclusion of the internship.
a. **Mid-semester evaluation.** Approximately halfway through the internship (mid-semester), the Student Intern and Site Supervisor should meet to assess progress to date and discuss problems and potential solutions. The Director of Educational Programs may be invited to this meeting, if desired, or may ask to participate in such a meeting.

b. **Final evaluation.** Both the Student Intern and the Site Supervisor will participate in an evaluation of the internship experience by accessing an on-line survey (link provided through the EPID 693 Blackboard site). Through these instruments, the Student Intern and Site Supervisor can reflect upon the internship and make suggestions for improvements in the process. In addition, the Site Supervisor is required to complete a brief assessment of the student’s performance during the internship.

18. **Assignment of Grade**
The Public Health Internship is graded as satisfactory, unsatisfactory, or fail (S/U/F). The Director of Educational Programs assigns grades based on the Site Supervisor Student Performance Evaluation and the various internship documentation tools (e.g., work log, contract, plan of action) and assignments (journal, group discussions, final report). Documentation and assignments must be submitted on time to receive full credit. Table 1 lists the elements required to obtain a grade for the internship.

If the student’s work for the internship is judged to be unsatisfactory, further work will be required to satisfy the internship requirements. The Internship Director will work with the Site Supervisor and the student’s Faculty Advisor to establish criteria for additional work to enable the student to complete the requirements.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Table 1. Elements Required to Obtain Grade for Public Health Internship</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Required Item</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Internship contract</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Plan of Action</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Journal</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Discussion board</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Work Log with signatures/initials from Site Supervisor</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Summary assignment: e-Portfolio</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Student Evaluation of Internship</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Performance at internship site</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

19. **Specific responsibilities of key members of the internship team**

a. **Student Responsibilities**
- Work with the Director of Educational Programs to select an internship site
- Contact potential Site Supervisor to request informal interview/meeting
- Meet with the Site Supervisor to develop the Plan of Action, including goals and expectations for the internship
- Obtain all required signatures for the Internship Contract, filing the original with the Director of Educational Programs
- Obtain approval of the Plan of Action from the Site Supervisor and the Director of Educational Programs no later than two weeks from the start date of the internship
- Report on time for work and maintain a work schedule as described in the Plan of Action, making daily entries in the Work Log
- Comply with any site policies and regulations, such as dress code, computer use policy, security policies, etc.
- Submit assignments on time and participate in discussion boards
- Provide Director of Educational Programs with the final copy of the signed Work Log
- Complete the on-line survey to evaluate the internship experience

b. **Faculty Advisor Responsibilities**
- Provide guidance to student as needed during the planning phase and ensure that the proposed work is appropriate, given the academic and professional goals of the internship and the MPH program
- Direct student to appropriate resources as needed throughout the semester
c. Site Supervisor Responsibilities

- Review and approve the student intern’s Plan of Action no later than two weeks from the start of the internship
- Assign appropriate tasks for the student intern, keeping menial tasks such as filing and clerical work, phone answering, etc., to a minimum
- Arrange regular (e.g., weekly, biweekly) meetings with Student Intern to monitor progress and evaluate student performance
- Monitor student intern’s attendance on at least a biweekly basis by signing the Work Log, to ensure that the intern completes the agreed-upon number of hours during the semester
- Instruct the student intern in new skills
- Contact the Director of Educational Programs with any comments, questions, or problems needing resolution
- Complete the on-line evaluation of the student intern’s performance
- Complete the on-line evaluation of the internship experience

d. Director of Educational Programs Responsibilities

- Contact potential practice sites and make arrangements for new internships
- Prepare and coordinate all affiliate site agreements with internship sites and negotiate any language changes with site representatives and VCU Counsel
- Work with students to select appropriate practice sites
- Review and file the signed internship contract
- Review and approve the student’s proposed Plan of Action
- Attend any evaluation meeting with Student Intern and Site Supervisor, if requested
- Ensure that student files contain all required documentation and assignments (Work Log, Plan of Action, Journal, e-Portfolio, student evaluation) for the internship
- Assign student grades at internship conclusion based on student assignments and feedback from internship supervisor

20. Planning timeline for student intern

Table 2 provides a list of tasks necessary for student interns and deadlines for completing them.

Table 2. Public Health Internship Student Tasks and Deadlines

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Task</th>
<th>Timeframe for completion</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Review Guide to Public Health Internship</td>
<td>First 2 weeks of semester prior to the one in which you intend to do an internship</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Confirm eligibility to register for the internship (minimum 18 credits, including BIOS 547, EPID 571 completed)</td>
<td>First 2 weeks of semester prior to the one in which you intend to do an internship</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Confirm feasibility of time commitment (minimum 180 hours in a semester)</td>
<td>First 2 weeks of semester prior to the one in which you intend to do an internship</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Meet with Internship Director and select potential internship site; complete application if necessary</td>
<td>No later than 8th week of semester prior to the one in which you intend to do an internship</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Send inquiry to potential internship site</td>
<td>No later than 9th week of semester prior to the one in which you intend to do an internship</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Meet with potential Site Supervisor and decide if internship is a good “fit” for student and site</td>
<td>No later than 11th week of semester prior to the one in which you intend to do an internship</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Complete documentation required by internship site (e.g., I-9 forms, security check forms, acknowledgment of policies)</td>
<td>Prior to beginning internship or as directed by Site Supervisor</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Schedule your work hours, working with your site supervisor</td>
<td>Prior to beginning internship</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Task</td>
<td>Deadline</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
<td>-----------------------------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Obtain required signatures on internship contract, providing original version to Director of Educational Programs</td>
<td>No later than 2 weeks from start of internship</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Draft PA, revise and finalize and submit to Director of Educational Programs</td>
<td>No later than 2 weeks from start of internship</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Enter record of day’s events and time period worked in Work Log</td>
<td>Daily for each day of internship worked</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Obtain Site Supervisor signature initials on work log</td>
<td>Weekly to biweekly</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Schedule brief meeting with Site Supervisor: Review initial progress and any areas that need resolution.</td>
<td>2 weeks after start of internship</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Arrange for subsequent meetings progress/status meetings as agreed with Site Supervisor.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Submit journal entries</td>
<td>As described on course syllabus</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Participate in discussion boards</td>
<td>As described on course syllabus</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Submit required documentation for grade: e-Portfolio, Final journal, Signed Work Log</td>
<td>By last day of classes in semester</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Student Evaluation of Internship (on line)</td>
<td></td>
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</tbody>
</table>

**Glossary of Terms**

**Affiliate Site Agreement:** A formal agreement between the Department of Epidemiology & Community Health and the internship site outlining legal responsibilities of each party in the internship experience. The Department must establish an affiliate site agreement with an internship site before students may begin engaging in internships at the site. The Director of Educational Programs is responsible for coordinating these agreements.

**Faculty Advisor:** A full-time Department of Epidemiology & Community Health faculty member who is assigned as the student’s academic advisor.

**Internship Application:** Form that the student must complete to apply for an internship, available on Department of Epidemiology & Community Health website.

**Internship Contract:** An informal agreement that the Student Intern, Site Supervisor, Site Representative, Faculty Advisor, and Internship Director sign. This agreement outlines the roles and responsibilities of the Student Intern and the Site Supervisor during the internship.

**Plan of Action (PA):** A list of goals for the student’s internship, accompanied by specific tasks to be completed and a timeline for their completion.

**Public Health Internship Director:** The faculty member who coordinates student placement at internship sites. The Internship Director is the primary liaison between the MPH Program and the internship sites for the Public Health Internship.

**Site Representative:** A qualified agency/organization official who represents the internship site and has signatory authority on behalf of the internship site. The Site Representative may be an administrative or management professional or a public health professional. The Site Supervisor may also play the role of Site Representative, depending on the nature of the organization serving as the internship site.

**Site Supervisor:** A qualified public health professional who works at the internship site and is experienced in one or more areas of public health and has the skills to supervise and evaluate graduate student work. The Site Supervisor evaluates the Student Intern’s performance during the internship and provides input to the Faculty Advisor, who assigns a grade to the student for the internship.

**Student Intern:** An MPH student who is working toward completing the requirements of EPID 692, the Public Health Internship.
**Work Log:** the document on which the Student Intern records her/his work hours, tasks completed, and notations about any problems encountered. The student should use this document as a reference in writing the report summarizing the internship.
Appendix D: Guide to the MPH Capstone Project
Guide to the MPH Capstone Project

EPID 694

Division of Epidemiology
Department of Family Medicine and Population Health

Master of Public Health Program

Background

To fulfill the requirements of the Master of Public Health (MPH) degree, all students must satisfactorily complete an independent Capstone Project. Depending on student interest, the project may be a scholarly research investigation focusing on data analysis or an applied project conducted in collaboration with a professional public health organization, such as the Virginia Department of Health, to further the mission and goals of that organization. The project serves as a culminating experience to demonstrate application of the knowledge and academic competencies acquired in the MPH Program. The MPH Capstone Project should be completed during the student's final two semesters in the MPH Program, after all core and the majority of all other required coursework has been completed.

The major product of this culminating experience depends on the type of project chosen.

Research-based capstone: The product is a scholarly written report, suitable for publication, on a topic of public health significance. The project is human-based, typically hypothesis-driven, and must involve data analysis that could be quantitative or qualitative. Faculty advisors will provide examples of appropriate topics. The data used typically comes from a faculty advisor's research program or from an existing, publicly available data set such as the National Health and Nutrition Examination (NHANES) survey or the Behavioral Risk Factor Surveillance System (BRFSS). The final report should provide a review of the literature relevant to the topic, clearly defined research methods, study design and interpretation of results, as well as a thoughtful discussion of the findings, its contributions and limitations. The completed project must also be presented as a poster or oral presentation at a public forum approved by the MPH Program.
A research-based Capstone Project should:

- Address at least two competencies from each of the five core domains of public health (i.e., Biostatistics, Environmental Health Sciences, Epidemiology, Health Policy & Management, Social and Behavioral Sciences) and the Program–specific competencies, along with a minimum of five competencies from the cross-cutting domains (e.g., Communication and Informatics, Diversity and Culture, Leadership, Professionalism)
  - More than two competencies are expected to be addressed in domains key to the Capstone Project (e.g., a research-based project would be expected to address more than 2 competencies in domains such as epidemiology and biostatistics)
- Involve a hypothesis or research question that fills a gap in the existing literature on the topic
- Employ a multivariate model that allows for adjustment of confounders
- Have appropriate IRB approval in place, if appropriate
- Use tables and graphics to present results
- Be summarized in a report that is of the level of quality expected for a manuscript submitted for publication
- Be presented in poster format at an MPH Program research forum or similar approved venue.

Practice-based capstone: The major products of this culminating experience are (1) one or more deliverables, as determined by the professional public health organization and (2) a written report that describes the practice project and documents the work for the MPH Program. A “deliverable” is a concrete product resulting from a work effort, such as a comprehensive surveillance report of one or more diseases in a state or region, development and production of a new informational web site, a needs assessment or program evaluation, or creation of a comprehensive suite of health education materials. The deliverable is always provided to the sponsoring public health organization and is also provided to the student’s faculty advisor as an appendix to the Capstone Project Report. This report describes the Capstone Project, including the background and need for the deliverables, the approach or methods taken to the project, results and any conclusions the student forms from the experience, and any future steps that should be taken as a result of the work. The completed project must be presented in a poster session approved by the MPH Program. In addition, the student also may be asked to give a formal or informal presentation of the project to organizational leaders/workers and/or stakeholders at the sponsoring organization.

A practice-based Capstone Project should:

- Address at least two competencies from each of the five core domains of public health (i.e., Biostatistics, Environmental Health Sciences, Epidemiology, Health Policy & Management, Social and Behavioral Sciences) and the Program–specific competencies, along with a minimum of five competencies from the cross-cutting domains (e.g., Communication and Informatics, Diversity and Culture, Leadership, Professionalism)
  - More than two competencies are expected to be addressed in domains key to the Capstone Project (e.g., a project focusing on health policy would be expected to address more than two health policy competencies)
- Be of considerable importance to the public health organization, among its major tasks or goals/objectives for the coming year
- Be comprehensive, requiring the integration of multiple major competencies used by a public health professional, such as data collection, management, and analysis; literature searches; needs assessments; program evaluation; evidence-based practice; health communication; and health promotion and education, to provide a few examples
- Result in one or more deliverables or concrete products to be used by the organization, such as
  - Comprehensive disease-related report
  - Policy analysis report
- Health promotion materials (e.g. brochures/posters/fliers, educational video games, web site content, etc.), on a specific disease area
- Needs assessment or program evaluation
- Development and implementation of target population surveys
- Organization and development of content of public health training or informational conferences

- Involve data analysis or an evaluation or assessment that will lead to a conclusion about project findings
- Expose the student to public health professionals and stakeholders and require collegial work with these individuals at the organization site or other professional sites
- Be realistic and practical in terms of time required to successfully complete the project. Consider factors such as availability of data or other resources required from the organization to complete the project, and if these elements can be “delivered” to the student with sufficient time to complete the work required. Occasionally, when working with professional organizations, unanticipated delays occur in the delivery of data, the scheduling of meetings that are critical to input for a project, and so forth. Students should consider these factors openly with their advisors and organization mentors when selecting a project.
- Be presented in poster format at an MPH Program research forum or similar approved venue.

**Academic credit and demand on your time**

While the MPH Capstone Project typically offers the equivalent of a total of three hours of academic credit over two semesters, the course is viewed as an applied, practical experience and is expected to consume an average of no less than 6-9 hours per week during the semester registered. Of course, the demands of high professional standards may require even more time. Students should keep this in mind when planning to register for the project.
Role of the student

The student is responsible for designing and implementing the Capstone Project, with the guidance of a faculty advisor and/or preceptor. Since this project is the culminating experience of the MPH degree Program, students are expected to work independently and to take the lead in executing the different phases of the Capstone Project, working with their faculty advisor or preceptor, as appropriate. Student responsibilities include:

- Observe all university and program deadlines for project and degree completion
- Develop a capstone topic and, as appropriate, related hypothesis or aims and objectives and determine, with the faculty advisor's/preceptor's guidance, appropriate sources of data and methods for analysis or project approach
- Working with faculty advisor, identify competencies from each of the five core domains of public health, the Program-specific competencies, and the cross-cutting domains that the Capstone Project will address and list these on the Capstone Project Proposal and Agreement Form
- Submit a faculty advisor-approved Capstone Project Proposal and Agreement Form to the Director of Educational Programs BEFORE registering for EPID 694
- Develop and adhere to a detailed time line for the project, consulting with the faculty advisor and/or preceptor if changes are necessary
- Communicate regularly by email and in-person meetings with the faculty advisor to ensure steady progress and receive regular feedback
- Carry out the work necessary to conduct the project
- Conduct all work in a responsible, ethical manner
- Demonstrate appropriate written and grammatical skills in reporting on the project’s results; use the VCU Writing Center resources as directed by advisor
- Be responsive to the faculty advisor’s and/or preceptor’s requests for information and be respectful of the appropriate time required for review of various phases of the project
- Present the Capstone Project Poster in an appropriate forum (MPH Program research forum or a peer-reviewed conference approved by your faculty advisor). If students present externally, a repeat presentation at the MPH Program research forum is strongly encouraged. Submit the required materials to the MPH Program Coordinator when the project is successfully concluded (.pdf file of the written report, including scanned signature pages and the original Capstone Project agreement form, .pdf or PowerPoint file of the Capstone Project Poster)
- Notify the faculty advisor of any major changes in the project and submit a revised Capstone Project agreement form to the advisor and the Director of Educational Programs if necessary

Students should refer to the MPH Capstone Project checklist to help them track the major submission requirements for the project.

Role of faculty advisor

The faculty advisor provides guidance on the conduct of the Capstone Project and should be available for regular communication with the student, whether by email or in-person meetings. The advisor has the ultimate right of approval or disapproval for the proposed project, its time line, methodology, and suitability as a Capstone Project in the MPH Program. The faculty member reviews all stages of work in the project and guides the student, as needed, in completion of the project, including providing input and final approval on methodology/approach and results and development of the Capstone Report and final poster. The faculty
advisor reviews and approves the final capstone report, entering a grade (S, U, or F) for the student at the end of each semester.

**Role of preceptor**

For practice-based projects, a public health professional will serve as the preceptor, providing guidance on the project as required by the organization for which the capstone work is being done. For research-based projects, on occasion, another collaborator (faculty member or other public health professional) may be asked to participate in the project as a preceptor, due to that individual's area of expertise and ability to contribute to the project. The preceptor may review and provide feedback on the project, including the research poster and final report, but the faculty advisor has the final authority on the conduct, approval, and grading of the Capstone Project.

**Capstone Project topic**

Students should carefully consider the topic selection for the Capstone Project. The nature of the Capstone Project should be sufficiently broad to address competencies from the five core domains of public health (i.e., Biostatistics, Environmental Health Sciences, Epidemiology, Health Policy & Management, Social and Behavioral Sciences), the Program-specific competencies, and the cross-cutting domains.

You must address:

- At least two competencies per core domain and for the Program-specific competencies
- More than two competencies in the domains key to the Capstone Project. For example, a project employing epidemiological and biostatistical methods would likely include multiple competencies from each of these two domains.
- At least five competencies from the cross-cutting domains (i.e., Communication and Informatics, Diversity and Culture, Leadership, Public Health Biology Professionalism, and Program Evaluation).

**Research-based project:** Students interested in research likely will have been working with a faculty advisor during the first year of study through the required MPH Practicum (EPID 593). Through this work, the student frequently will identify a research topic based on the faculty member's research program and to receive guidance from the faculty member on developing the research hypothesis. It is critical to begin discussing plans for the project with the faculty advisor in the spring semester of the first year in the program to allow sufficient time to develop the project. Students should begin the fall semester of the second year ready to initiate work on the project, with a topic and hypothesis clearly defined.

In selecting the Capstone Project topic, students should work with their faculty advisor to thoughtfully and systematically explore the following areas:

1. Current research projects in the faculty advisor’s program in which a student could be involved
2. The logistics, costs and time required for the proposed project
3. A review of the principal sources of literature on the topic
4. How the project serves professional and academic interests
5. Other topical experts who may be invited to be involved in the project and their availability.

Students are encouraged to focus on a project for which secondary data exists, either through the faculty member's research program or publicly available data sets. Preferably, the project will be covered by the faculty advisor's existing IRB protocols.
Practice-based project: It is anticipated that many students will transition from their required internship placement into the final project, potentially continuing work with the internship organization on the identified project that serves the organization’s needs. This approach is encouraged since students will already have established a working relationship and foundational knowledge about the organization and its major work areas and resources through the internship experience, making them better prepared to work on the project due to improved familiarity with the nature of the organization’s work. The student will work with her/his supervisor and mentors in the internship to identify a project that will fulfill the practice project requirements. Students may choose to do the Capstone Project with an organization other than the internship site, but additional effort may be required for familiarization about the organization and to make arrangements for conducting the Capstone Project with the appropriate preceptor.

MPH Capstone Project Agreement Form

The MPH Capstone Project Agreement Form is a brief, preliminary plan of the proposed project. It is developed in consultation with the faculty advisor and/or preceptor and submitted to the Director of Educational Programs in the semester prior to the one in which the student intends to first register for the MPH Capstone Project. For full-time MPH students, this would typically occur during the last month of the first summer semester. Students must obtain approval signatures from the faculty advisor and submit the agreement form to the Program Director for approval at least 1 week before the start of the semester in which they intend to initiate the Capstone Project. The agreement form should typically not exceed five pages (plus signatures). It should include the following:

1. A provisional title for the project
2. The purpose and specific objectives of the proposed project
3. A brief description of the methods or approach intended
4. A brief (approximately one paragraph) description of the anticipated findings
5. A brief description of how the project might contribute to the field of public health
6. An indication of need for Institutional Review Board review (see “Review of proposed project for protection of human subjects (IRB)”)
7. A time-line for project completion
8. A listing of the MPH Program competencies that will be addressed through conduct of the Capstone Project; the Project should address two competencies from each of the five core domains of public health (Biostatistics, Environmental Health Sciences, Epidemiology, Health Policy & Management, Social and Behavioral Sciences), the Program-specific competencies and, at a minimum five competencies from the cross-cutting domains.
9. Name, title, contact information for faculty advisor and preceptor, as appropriate
10. Dated approval signatures of all parties as indicated on the form

The Capstone Project Agreement Form should be regarded as a formal agreement between the student and faculty advisor. Approval of the agreement indicates that the topic is appropriate, that design or approach is sound, and that the proposed project is feasible within the projected time frame. Please note that all revisions to the project must be approved by the faculty advisor and Director of Educational Programs to avoid any last-minute difficulties. If the project undergoes a major revision, such as a change of topic or hypothesis, change of major deliverables, change of data set, or change in major approach/methodology, a new agreement form must be submitted within one week of the revision being agreed upon with the faculty advisor.
Review of proposed project for protection of human subjects (IRB)

All student Capstone Projects must comply with federal regulations for the protection of human subjects. This may mean a review of the proposed project by the Institutional Review Board (IRB), to ensure such protection and regulation compliance. Students are not expected to collect primary data or engage in a project that would require review by the IRB, although occasionally the nature of the project data requires such review. Students considering a project that requires IRB review should note that this sort of undertaking is very demanding and will require scrutiny by and additional responsibilities for program faculty. If a project is being conducted with the Virginia Department of Health (VDH), review by both the VCU and the VDH IRBs may be required. A project involving IRB review requires intensive work to prepare the IRB application, and students should note that IRB review of the application can add 2-4 months to the project timeline.

The student must work with her/his faculty advisor (and preceptor, as applicable) to ensure that IRB review is or is not required. The general criteria for a project not to require IRB review are that (1) the project does not involve collecting data through interaction with human subjects; and (2) the investigators have no access to identifiable private information. Identifiable information includes variables such as a research participant’s name, address, phone number, or Social Security Number; in addition, for students who plan to map data using GIS applications, the level at which data will be reported (small geographic units equating to small numbers) may lead to potential identification of research participants and may require review. Full guidelines to help determine the need for IRB review are available at the following link under the heading, “Activities Requiring IRB Review.” [http://www.research.vcu.edu/human_research/activities.htm](http://www.research.vcu.edu/human_research/activities.htm)

If VCU IRB submission is required, the VCU IRB requires that the faculty advisor, not the student, be listed as the principal investigator (PI). Therefore the faculty advisor must be willing to take on this responsibility. Often, if a student is using existing data from the faculty member’s research program, the faculty member already will have obtained IRB approval. Regardless, because of the work with sensitive data from human subjects, the student must have satisfactorily completed required human subjects training available through the Collaborative Investigator Training Initiative (CITI), which is part of the training received in the MPH Practicum.

Before a student begins to conduct any research involving information from human subjects, the faculty PI must have received a letter of approval from the IRB in the VCU ORSP. Beginning any work on the project with human subjects data before receiving IRB approval can lead to harsh sanctions. Once the IRB approves the project, the faculty PI is responsible for oversight of student research activities to ensure compliance with IRB guidelines.

Degree Candidacy Form

At the time that an MPH student registers for the MPH Capstone Project, the student must also complete the required degree candidacy form, which establishes the student as a candidate for a master’s degree. Students are required to complete this form as part of documentation for eventual graduation. The form is available through the VCU Graduate School website: [http://www.graduate.vcu.edu/student/candidacy.html](http://www.graduate.vcu.edu/student/candidacy.html).

Course enrollment and credits

Students should register for the MPH Capstone Project in their final year of study, after completing all core and most other major required coursework in the MPH curriculum. Full-time students would therefore register for EPID 694 in the second fall and spring semesters. Students may register for 1 credit in the fall semester and 2 in the spring, completing a required total of 3 credits minimum. Some students choose to register for 3 credits...
in their final semester in the Program. Exact distribution of credits should be discussed with your faculty advisor. You will register for the course under EPID 694 (MPH Program Research Project), selecting the section corresponding to your faculty advisor’s name. However, due to university regulations about variable credit courses, to register, you must send an email request to the Director of Educational Programs, including the number of credits for which you wish to register.

For a typical project, students should anticipate the following distribution of tasks. During the first semester or phase of the project, students should:

- complete the literature review
- refine the research question and/or specific aim(s) and objectives
- write up the project methods or approach
- prepare blank data tables and related instruments as needed
- begin implementing the methods and approach (this could involve obtaining a data set and beginning descriptive data analysis for a research-based project or, for a practice-based project, activities such as defining the structure of a disease surveillance document, health promotion materials, or a website, or beginning the initial steps of a needs assessment or program evaluation)

During the second semester, students should:

- complete more in-depth analysis
- complete data tables and/or prepare required graphics
- produce the narrative of the results, conclusion, and discussion
- prepare to the required Capstone Project poster for end-of-semester presentation.

**Project timeline**

Upon formal approval of the MPH Capstone Project Agreement Form (Appendix D-1), students are expected to be in frequent consultation with their advisor to ensure steady progress. Students should create a detailed timeline that includes regular meetings with their advisor to review progress and major milestones that would include:

- Completion of literature review and write-up, including development of reference list
- Acquisition of data set or other required information on which to build the project
- Completion of approach or methods development and write-up
- Completion of blank data tables or initial plan/structure for practice-based deliverable
- Initiation of and completion of data analysis
- Initiation of and completion of data tables, graphs, etc.
- Completion of write-up of project results
- Completion of write-up of conclusion and discussion
- Submission and approval of preliminary report draft
- Development and completion of Capstone Project poster
- Submission of final report (and deliverables for practice-based project)
- Approval of Capstone Project poster
- Presentation of Capstone Project poster
- Approval of final report

Students should also pay attention to posted “critical deadlines” for the project—concerning submission of the Capstone Project agreement form, preliminary draft report, and final report. These milestone deadlines are posted in Blackboard with the Capstone Project information.
Students must consider that faculty advisors and preceptors need adequate time to review student work at different stages and have a variety of obligations and responsibilities that occupy their time. Therefore, it is paramount for students to factor in sufficient time for the advisor to review submitted work and provide feedback. Typically, faculty should be given at least one week to provide feedback. Students who do not carefully plan their project timelines and fail to factor in time for faculty review may experience setbacks in schedule that delay their graduation date. Students should discuss with their advisor the typical amount of time to allot for advisor review of each stage of work in the project and plan accordingly.

Major public health projects typically are conducted according to a carefully designed plan that includes major milestones and stages that lead to successful completion of the project. A Capstone Project cannot be successfully completed in a compressed period of time (e.g., during the last three weeks of a semester), and this will not be allowed.

**Approval of preliminary and final drafts of MPH Capstone Project Report**

In general, a preliminary draft of the complete MPH Capstone Project report must be submitted to your faculty advisor at least 4 weeks prior to the end of classes. Advisor and preceptor feedback is essential to preparation of the final draft. The final draft of the report is due to your advisor approximately 2 weeks prior to the end of classes. The faculty advisor must indicate approval of the report by direct communication with the student, either by email or in-person meeting.

**Content of the MPH Capstone Project Report**

The MPH Capstone Project report is a scholarly accounting of the conduct, analysis, and results of the project. It should be similar in format and nature to an article in a peer-reviewed journal. The following table outlines required sections and minimum pages for each section.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Section</th>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Minimum content</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Research-based Capstone Project Report</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Abstract</td>
<td>Brief summary of the key components of the project. It should be, single-spaced and should include the background, purpose, methods, results, and conclusions (with implications or recommendations).</td>
<td>300 words</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Introduction</td>
<td>Description of the background of the project, focusing on the literature review. This section explains the rationale for the topic and the overall purpose of the project.</td>
<td>3-5 pages</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Objectives</td>
<td>Succinct statement of the project’s specific aims and/or objectives</td>
<td>1-2 pages</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Methods</td>
<td>Description of how the project was conducted. This section should generally include the number and composition of subjects in the target population, when and where the project was conducted, and how the data were collected and analyzed. A detailed description of resources, strategies, and experiences used to accomplish the objectives should be included</td>
<td>4-6 pages</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Results</td>
<td>Description of project results, including references to tables and figures (included at end of report, not included in minimum page count), to present findings.</td>
<td>5-6 pages</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Discussion</td>
<td>Summary of results and review of implications of the findings. The discussion should be supported by relevant literature. Limitations of the study should be explained.</td>
<td>4-6 pages</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Conclusion</td>
<td>Statements summarizing and concluding project findings, providing any relevant recommendations for further study. Include statements verifying that the research objectives were met. Consider the results in terms of translational (clinical or public health) implications and/or health policy, as applicable.</td>
<td>1-3 pages</td>
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**Practice-based Capstone Project**

| Abstract | Brief summary of the key components of the project. It should be, single-spaced and should include the background, purpose, approach/methods, results, and conclusions (with implications or recommendations). | 300 words |
Background | Description of the background of the project, focusing on the literature review of the project topic and the need/reason(s) for the project. Briefly describe the organization for which the project was done, including the organization mission. | 3-5 pages
---|---|---
Objectives | Succinct statement of the project’s specific aims and/or objectives | 1-2 pages
Approach/Methods | Depending on the nature of the project, describe how it was conducted. If the project is similar in nature to a research study, then this section will resemble a methods section in a traditional research article. If the project is less research-oriented (e.g., development of a web site on healthy nutrition), this section should be titled “approach,” and the narrative should describe the plans followed to develop, analyze/assess/evaluate, and implement the project. As appropriate, a detailed description of resources, strategies, and experiences used to accomplish the objectives should be included. | 4-6 pages
Results | Description of the project results, including references to tables and figures of qualitative or quantitative data (included at end of report), to present findings. | 5-6 pages
Discussion | Summary of project results with discussion of implications of the results/outcomes. This section should address lessons learned and next steps to take, including both the ideal options as well as those dictated by reality in a resource-limited world. Implications for practice as well as policy should be covered, as appropriate. The discussion should be supported by relevant literature as appropriate. | 4-6 pages
Conclusion | Statements summarizing and concluding project outcomes verifying that the project goals were (or were not) met. Discuss additional work that might be done in the future to further the project or the goals/objectives of the organization for which the Capstone Project was completed. | 1-3 pages

**Format of the MPH Capstone Project report**

The format of the final MPH Capstone Project report should adhere to general report-writing standards. The report should include the following elements:

1. Title page (see template, Appendix D-2)
2. Submission statement (see template, Appendix D-3)
3. Final, signed, dated MPH Capstone Project Agreement Form (see template, Appendix D-1)
4. MPH Capstone Project Final Approval Form (see template, Appendix D-4)
5. Dedication (optional)
6. Epigraph (optional)
7. Table of Contents listing all the key sections of the report
8. Acknowledgements (optional) may be used to thank individuals who have assisted in the completion of the MPH Capstone Project.
9. Abstract—a brief summary of the key components of the MPH Capstone Project. It should not exceed one page, single-spaced.
10. The text includes the major sections described above along with tables, and figures.
11. Appendices (as needed) should include other relevant material that is important to the project. For a research-based project, this could include additional data tables and figures or a questionnaire fielded as part of the project. For a practice-based project, deliverables/products resulting from the project should be included. Also include information that helps with the understanding of the desired implementation, results, or conclusions.
12. References section should include all of the literature cited in the report. Students should consult with their advisors on a reference format agreeable to both; APA style is recommended.
13. Formatting
   a. One-inch margins on top, bottom, right and left.
   b. Number each page. The preliminary pages (i.e., the Table of Contents and Abstract) should be numbered with lower case Roman numerals. The remainder of the report, generally beginning with the introduction, should be numbered with Arabic numerals.
   c. The font size of the text should be no less than 12 points.
   d. Use double spacing throughout the report except for the title page, submission statement, acknowledgements, abstract, any run-over lines in the table of contents or illustrations.
Completion requirements

All requirements for the MPH Capstone Project must be completed during the final semester in which a student is enrolled for project credit. Students must maintain communication with their advisors to ensure steady progress and advisor approval of work done. Students who do not communicate regularly with their advisors or allow sufficient time for advisor review and input on the project risk setbacks if the advisor disapproves work at any stage in the project. The faculty advisor must approve the project as completed—if not, the student will be required to continue the project into the following semester and will incur additional tuition expense to complete the project and meet the MPH Program degree requirements.

Presentation of MPH Capstone Project

All students are required to present their findings in an appropriate forum, which is typically the Division of Epidemiology poster forum at the end of a semester. A refereed conference setting is also appropriate, with advisor approval. Students who present externally are encouraged to participate in the Division Poster Forum as well, as this gives students another venue in which to share their work and helps to further build student CV's/resumes. Scientific posters are visual tools designed to present the body of a research or public health project in a graphic format. Information on poster preparation is available in Blackboard under the Family Medicine and Population Health Organization. The faculty advisor must approve for presentation any research posters developed and may inform the student that the project poster is not ready for presentation. Students doing practice-based projects also may be asked by the sponsoring organization to give a formal or informal presentation of project.

Final approval of the MPH Capstone Project

Each student’s faculty advisor, with input from the preceptor, if applicable, will evaluate the completeness of the MPH Capstone Project and the Capstone Poster based on an assessment rubric (Appendix D-5). This rubric provides guidelines for assessing the work performed. The MPH Capstone Project Approval Form (Appendix D-4) must be signed and dated, at a minimum, by the faculty advisor and Director of Educational Programs.

Submission of Capstone Project Documentation

The student must submit the appropriate documentation indicating satisfactory completion of the Capstone Project. This is satisfied by submitting an electronic version of the final report (pdf) to the MPH Program Coordinator. The report must contain all elements listed under “Format of MPH Capstone Project Report,” with all required signatures. A copy of the original, signed Capstone Project agreement form must be incorporated into the submitted electronic file of the final report.

Student Responsibility for reporting changes

Any changes in the Capstone Project proposal, preceptor, or student academic status must be reported promptly in writing to the Director of Educational Programs. A student who fails to file the Capstone Project forms in a timely manner or to report changes to the MPH Program Coordinator could face a delay in the expected graduation date.
MPH Capstone Project Checklist

PRIOR TO BEGINNING PROJECT

Capstone Project Proposal and Agreement form

_____ Preliminary draft submitted to faculty advisor, with applicable competencies included; Project addresses at least two competencies each from all five core public health domains and the Program-specific competencies and at least five competencies from the cross-cutting domains.

_____ Advisor and student agree on a timeline for the Capstone Project and include this in the Proposal and Agreement form.

_____ Final draft completed, faculty advisor signature obtained, and submitted to MPH Program Coordinator/Director of Educational Programs.

VCU Graduate School Admission to Master’s Candidacy Form

_____ Submitted to MPH Program Coordinator with final project agreement form.

DURING CONDUCT OF CAPSTONE PROJECT, NEARING CONCLUSION

Capstone Project Poster

_____ Draft submitted to faculty advisor for review four weeks before presentation date.

_____ Final, approved poster submitted to MPH Program Coordinator for printing (if needed) a minimum of 5 full business days before presentation date or conference travel date.

_____ Project findings presented at MPH Program Research Poster Forum and/or other advisor-approved conference/meeting/forum.

_____ Capstone Poster Presentation Form completed and submitted to MPH Program Coordinator no later than 10 business days before the end of the semester.

_____ Electronic file of poster (.pdf or .ppt) submitted to MPH Program Coordinator no later than 5 business days before the end of the semester.

Final Report

_____ Preliminary draft submitted to faculty advisor for review, 4 weeks prior to semester’s end.

_____ Final draft submitted to faculty advisor for review, 2 weeks prior to semester’s end.

_____ Electronic file (pdf) of full, approved final report, incorporating signature pages and original Capstone Project Agreement Form with signatures, submitted to MPH Program Coordinator.
Appendix D-1, MPH Capstone Project Agreement Form

Research-based or Practice-based

(to be submitted prior to beginning the project)

Note: A template of this form is available in Blackboard (Family Medicine and Population Health Organization)
Student name: E-mail address:

Street address:

Home/cell phone: _____ Work phone: _____

Number of semester hours (1-6): Semesters Year:

Please complete the following outline. **Do not exceed 4 pages (A-H).**

A. **PROJECT TITLE:**

B. **PURPOSE** (state hypothesis/research question):

C. **SPECIFIC OBJECTIVES** (list major aims of the study):

D. **DESCRIPTION OF METHODS**

   D.1. Identify source(s) of data (eg, existing data set, data collection plans, etc):

   D.2. State the type of study design (eg, cross-sectional, cohort, case-control, intervention, etc):

   D.3. Describe the study population and sample size:

   D.4. List variables to be included (If a qualitative study, describe types of information to be collected)

   D.5. Describe methods to be used for data analysis (If a qualitative study, describe general approach to compiling the information collected)
E. ANTICIPATED RESULTS:

F. SIGNIFICANCE OF PROJECT TO PUBLIC HEALTH:

G. IRB Status:
1. Do you plan to collect data through direct intervention or interaction with human subjects?
   ____yes____no

2. Will you have access to any existing identifiable private information?
   ____yes ____no

If you answered “no” to both of the questions above, IRB review is not required.

If you answered “yes” to either one of these questions, your proposed study must be reviewed by the VCU Institutional Review Board (IRB). Please consult with your faculty advisor and the information web page, “Determining What is Human Research.” http://www.research.vcu.edu/irb/guidance.htm. On this web page, you will find links to decision charts that help you determine if your project may be considered human subjects research. If you still have questions, Dr. Monika Markowitz, VCU Director of Education and Compliance Oversight, is a good resource.

Please indicate your IRB status:

___ IRB approval not required

___ IRB approval required
___ to be submitted (targeted date____________)
___ submitted (date of submission_____________; VCU IRB # ________) 
___ IRB exempt review approved (date____________)
___ IRB expedited review approved (date____________)

H. PROPOSED SCHEDULE: Start Date: _________ Anticipated End Date: _________

The Capstone Project report and poster should be developed and reviewed by your advisor throughout the course of the semester(s) and submitted in phases to your faculty advisor for review. Providing the report all at once to your advisor during the last weeks of a semester is unacceptable. Because the development of the Capstone Project report is an iterative process, plan for at least one advisor review of each section of the report in draft format and in a revised version after receiving advisor feedback on the draft. Work with your advisor and use the following table as a framework for developing your project timeline. Add milestone items as appropriate to your project (for example, you may wish to add more detailed milestones for specific types of analysis). Assign due dates for each task to help you in planning to maintain steady progress toward project completion. If you will complete the Capstone Project over more than one semester, feel free to insert rows separating work for each semester. Keep in mind the critical deadlines for the MPH Capstone Project, posted in Blackboard, as you develop your timeline.
As you develop a feasible timeline, be aware that review of a section by your faculty advisor can take several days to a week. Faculty members have multiple responsibilities and cannot be expected to drop all work to review your submission in 24 hours. Build in time to allow for the review process between student and advisor. Also acknowledge that Capstone Project report sections will take more than one cycle of review.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Milestone</th>
<th>Completion Date</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Conduct literature review</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Submit draft introduction (background) and objectives/specific aims sections to advisor</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Submit revised introduction (background) and objectives/specific aims sections to advisor</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Submit draft methods or approach section to advisor</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
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<tr>
<td>Conduct data analysis or other evaluative activity</td>
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<tr>
<td>Meet with advisor to discuss data analysis results</td>
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<tr>
<td>Revise data analysis</td>
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<tr>
<td>Meet with advisor to discuss revised data analysis results</td>
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<tr>
<td>Submit draft results section to advisor</td>
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<tr>
<td>Make final revisions and obtain approval signatures on Capstone Project Report</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Submit approved Capstone Project Report and Poster file to MPH Program Coordinator</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
INDICATE WHICH OF THE FOLLOWING PUBLIC HEALTH COMPETENCIES WILL BE DEMONSTRATED, selecting from the attached list. List ONLY the competencies you will address in your project—omit the ones that do not apply. You must address at least two competencies from each of the core domains of public health (items A-E), at least two competencies from the Program-specific competencies and a minimum of five competencies from the cross-cutting domains (items F-K). Please note: more than two competencies are expected to be addressed by domains key to the Capstone Project. (Consult with your mentor and faculty advisor to select these.)

A. Biostatistics

BIO1. Explain the role of biostatistics in evidence-based research and the decision-making process.

BIO2. Describe the theoretical concepts behind a number of commonly used statistical methodologies.

BIO3. Apply the appropriate statistical methodology for description and estimation to account for different measurement scales.

BIO4. Draw appropriate inferences from statistical analyses.

B. Environmental Health Sciences

ENV1. Describe the direct and indirect human, ecological and safety effects of major environmental features and the approaches to assess, prevent, and control risks to human health and safety.

ENV2. Describe genetic, physiologic, psychosocial, and environmental justice factors that affect susceptibility to adverse health outcomes following exposure to environmental conditions.

ENV3. Describe federal and state regulatory programs, guidelines and authorities that control environmental health issues.

C. Epidemiology

EPI1. Identify key sources of data for epidemiologic purposes.

EPI2. Apply basic terms and definitions of epidemiology in terms of magnitude, person, time, and place.

EPI3. Explain the importance of epidemiology for informing scientific, ethical, economic and political discussion of health issues.

EPI4. Calculate basic epidemiology measures.

EPI5. Evaluate the strengths and limitations of epidemiologic reports.

D. Health Policy and Management

HPM1. Identify the main components and issues of the organization, financing, access, and delivery of health services and public health systems in the US and globally.

HPM2. Describe the legal and ethical bases for public health and health services.

HPM3. Discuss the policy process for improving the health status of populations.

HPM4. Communicate health policy and management issues using appropriate channels and technologies.
E. Social and Behavioral Sciences

SBS1. Identify basic theories, concepts and models from a range of social and behavioral disciplines that are used in public health research and practice.

SBS2. Identify the causes of social and behavioral factors that affect health of individuals and populations.

SBS3. Describe steps and procedures for the planning, implementation and evaluation of public health programs, policies and interventions.

VCU MPH Program-Specific Competencies

VCU1. Discuss the effect of physical and social environment on health outcomes during the life course.

VCU2. Discriminate between research questions and hypotheses and derive one from the other.

VCU3. Accurately distinguish between epidemiological and biostatistical concepts and apply the appropriate method to analyze a public health research question using appropriate statistical software.

VCU4. Access public and private data sets and assess their relevance in addressing a specific public health research question or evaluation need.

VCU5. Work effectively in collaborative teams to develop public health projects.

VCU6. Distinguish between public health ethics and medical ethics, discussing the values and beliefs inherent to a public health ethics perspective.

F. Communication and Informatics

COM1. Describe how societal, organizational, and individual factors influence and are influenced by public health communications.

COM2. Demonstrate effective written and oral skills for communicating with different audiences in the context of professional public health activities.

G. Diversity and Culture

DIV1. Explain how professional ethics and practices relate to equity and accountability in diverse community settings.

DIV2. Differentiate among availability, acceptability, and accessibility of health care across diverse populations.

H. Leadership

LDR1. Engage in dialogue and learning from others to advance public health goals.

LDR2. Demonstrate transparency, integrity, and honesty in all actions.
I. Public Health Biology

PHB1. Apply biological principles to development and implementation of disease prevention, control, or management programs.

J. Professionalism

PRO1. Apply basic principles of ethical analysis (e.g. the Public Health Code of Ethics, human rights framework, other moral theories) to issues of public health practice and policy.

PRO2. Apply evidence-based principles and the scientific knowledge base to critical evaluation and decision-making in public health.

PRO3. Promote high standards of personal and organizational integrity, compassion, honesty and respect for all people.

PRO4. Distinguish between population and individual ethical considerations in relation to the benefits, costs, and burdens of public health programs.

PRO5. Appreciate the importance of working collaboratively with diverse communities and constituencies (e.g. researchers, practitioners, agencies and organizations).

K. Program Planning

PPL1. Differentiate among goals, measurable objectives, related activities, and expected outcomes for a public health program.

PPL2. Differentiate the purposes of formative, process, and outcome evaluation.
Master of Public Health Capstone Project Agreement Form

Approval Page

Student Name: ________________________________________________________________

Faculty Advisor Name: _______________________________________________________

E-mail: __________________________ Phone: __________________________

If a preceptor will participate in this project, include preceptor information; otherwise leave blank.

Preceptor Name: ______________ Title: _______________________________

E-mail: __________________________ Phone: __________________________

SIGNATURES:

Student: _________________________________________________________________

My signature indicates that I have fully read and understand the Guide to the MPH Capstone Project and will use the Guide as a reference while conducting my project. I will follow the project schedule outlined in this document and will work with my advisor to adhere to deadlines to ensure timely project completion.

Date: ________________________________

Faculty Advisor: ___________________________________________________________

Date: ________________________________

Preceptor: ________________________________________________________________

Date: ________________________________

Director of Educational Programs: ____________________________________________

Date: ________________________________
VCU Master of Public Health Capstone Project Agreement Form
Division of Epidemiology, Department of Family Medicine and Population Health

Practice-Oriented Capstone Project

Student name: ___________________________ E-mail address: ___________________________

Street address: __________________________

Home/cell phone: (___) ____________ Work phone: (___) ____________

Number of semester hours (1-6): Semesters Year:

Please complete the following outline. Do not exceed 4 pages (A-H).

A. PROJECT TITLE:

B. PURPOSE (state need for project):

C. SPECIFIC OBJECTIVES (list major goals/objectives for the project):

D. PROJECT APPROACH or METHODS

   Describe the plan, approach, or methods to be implemented for the project. Include, as appropriate:
   sources of data or data collection plans, any analytical methods to be used (quantitative or qualitative),
   background information to be collected or synthesized, collaborators from other organizations that will
   be included in the project, major milestones required to complete the project, etc.

E. ANTICIPATED OUTCOME:

   Describe the final product(s) of the project, the impact the project is anticipated to have on the
   organization or population being served by the project, usefulness of the project to the organization,
   and possible next steps that could be taken to further efforts of the organization once this project is
   completed. If the student will be required to make one or more presentations as a result of the project,
   such as an oral presentation to organization stakeholders or a poster presentation at a meeting, include
   this information.
F. SIGNIFICANCE OF PROJECT TO PUBLIC HEALTH:

Describe how this project will further the goals of the organization for which it will be completed, addressing target populations affected, potential impact on policy and programs, etc.

G. IRB Status:
1. Do you plan to collect data through direct intervention or interaction with human subjects?
   ___yes      ___no

2. Will you have access to any existing identifiable private information?
   ___yes      ___no

If you answered “no” to both of the questions above, IRB review is not required.

If you answered “yes” to either one of these questions, your proposed study must be reviewed by the VCU Institutional Review Board (IRB). Please consult with your faculty advisor and the information web page, “Determining What is Human Research.” http://www.research.vcu.edu/irb/guidance.htm. On this web page, you will find links to decision charts that help you determine if your project may be considered human subjects research. If you still have questions, Dr. Monika Markowitz, VCU Director of Education and Compliance Oversight, is a good resource.

Please indicate your IRB status:
___ IRB approval not required
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H. PROPOSED SCHEDULE: Start Date: _________ Anticipated End Date:_______

The Capstone Project report and poster should be developed and reviewed by your advisor throughout the course of the semester(s) and submitted in phases to your faculty advisor for review. Providing the report all at once to your advisor during the last weeks of a semester is unacceptable. Because the development of the Capstone Project report is an iterative process, plan for at least one advisor review of each section of the report in draft format and in a revised version after receiving advisor feedback on the draft. Work with your advisor and use the following table as a framework for developing your project time line. Add milestone items as appropriate to your project (for example, you may wish to add more detailed milestones for specific types of analysis.). Assign due dates for each task to help you in planning to maintain steady progress toward project completion. If you will complete the Capstone Project over more than one semester, feel free to insert rows separating work for each semester. Keep in mind the critical deadlines for the MPH Capstone Project, posted in Blackboard, as you develop your time line.

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PRO1. Apply basic principles of ethical analysis (e.g. the Public Health Code of Ethics, human rights framework, other moral theories) to issues of public health practice and policy.

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PRO5. Appreciate the importance of working collaboratively with diverse communities and constituencies (e.g. researchers, practitioners, agencies and organizations).

K. Program Planning

PPL1. Differentiate among goals, measurable objectives, related activities, and expected outcomes for a public health program.

PPL2. Differentiate the purposes of formative, process, and outcome evaluation.
Master of Public Health Capstone Project Agreement Form

Approval Page

Student Name:__________________________________________________________

Faculty Advisor Name:_____________________________________________________

E-mail: ______________________ Phone: ________________________________

If a preceptor will participate in this project, include preceptor information; otherwise leave blank.

Preceptor Name:____________________ Title:_______________________________

E-mail: ______________________ Phone: ________________________________

SIGNATURES:

Student: __________________________________________________________________

My signature indicates that I have fully read and understand the Guide to the MPH Capstone Project and will use the Guide as a reference while conducting my project. I will follow the project schedule outlined in this document and will work with my advisor to adhere to deadlines to ensure timely project completion.

Date: __________________________________________________________________

Faculty Advisor: __________________________________________________________________

Date: __________________________________________________________________

Preceptor: __________________________________________________________________

Date: __________________________________________________________________

Director of Educational Programs: ____________________________________________

Date: __________________________________________________________________
Appendix D-2, Capstone Report Title Page

(to be submitted with final report at end of project)

Note: A template of this form is available in Blackboard (Family Medicine and Population Health Organization)
Title Page
Master of Public Health Capstone Project

(Insert Title here)

by

Name of Student

(Insert Name here)

(Insert name and degree(s) of student’s Advisor)

(Insert name and degree(s) of student’s Preceptor)

Division of Epidemiology
Department of Family Medicine and Population Health
Master of Public Health Program
MPH Capstone Project: EPID 694

Virginia Commonwealth University
Richmond, Virginia

Month/Year
(Insert Date)
Appendix D-3, Capstone Report Submission Statement

(to be submitted with final report at end of project)

Note: A template of this form is available in Blackboard (Family Medicine and Population Health Organization)
Submission Statement

Master of Public Health Capstone Project

This MPH Capstone Project report is submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for a Master of Public Health degree from Virginia Commonwealth University’s School of Medicine. I agree that this Capstone Project report be made available for circulation in accordance with the program’s policies and regulations pertaining to documents of this type. I also understand that I must receive approval from my Faculty Advisor to copy from or publish this document, or submit to a funding agency. I understand that any copying from or publication of this document for potential financial gain is not allowed unless permission is granted by my Faculty Advisor or (in the absence of my Faculty Advisor) the Director of Educational Programs.

____________________________________________________
Student Signature

____________________________________________________
Date
Appendix D-4, MPH Capstone Project Final Approval Form

(to be submitted with final report at end of project)

Note: A template of this form is available in Blackboard (Family Medicine and Population Health Organization)
MPH Capstone Project Approval Form

(Type TITLE of Project here)

Submitted to the Graduate Faculty of the
Division of Epidemiology
Department of Family Medicine and Population Health
Virginia Commonwealth University

In partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of
Master of Public Health

by: (Insert STUDENT NAME)

Comments:

Approval signatures:

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<th>Date</th>
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<th>MPH Capstone Project Faculty Advisor</th>
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<th>MPH Capstone Project Preceptor</th>
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<tr>
<th>Director of Educational Programs</th>
<th>Date</th>
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Appendix D-5, MPH Capstone Project Rubrics

(For Written Report and Poster)
This review guide was developed to assist you as well as standardize the review process for Capstone Projects. Please use this guide to determine the scoring for each MPH Capstone Report individually. You will also evaluate how well the student performed on the MPH Program competencies applicable to the particular Capstone Project.

The review process consists of a quantitative and qualitative evaluation. The quantitative evaluation includes epidemiologic and public health importance, originality, appropriate study design, sound methods, appropriate presentation of results/data, and reasonable conclusions. The quantitative section also includes your evaluation of the competencies. Qualitative measures include your open-ended comments and concerns.

Note: If the Capstone does not fit all the criteria used below because of the nature of the project (e.g., reviews, discussions of policy or ethical or methodological issues), please use your best judgment, and review the Capstone on its own merits using the provided scale as best as possible.

**Quantitative Evaluation** – all items are measured on a scale of 1 (poor) to 10 (outstanding). Please use the following scale as your guide:

- **10-9:** OUTSTANDING
- **8-6:** SOLID
- **5-3:** MARGINAL
- **2-1:** POOR

### Quantitative Evaluation

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<th>Evaluating Factor</th>
<th>Assigned Score</th>
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<tr>
<td>1. What is the public health significance and rationale of the Capstone Project?</td>
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<tr>
<td>(10-9) High importance</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(8-6) Moderate importance</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(5-3) Low importance</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(2-1) Not a public health issue or of no epidemiological importance</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Is the Capstone Project original, an important extension of methods or knowledge, or does it provide a novel perspective?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(10-9) New topic/approach/findings</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(8-6) Relatively new topic/approach/findings</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(5-3) Somewhat new topic/approach/findings</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(2-1) Not new topic/approach/findings</td>
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</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
3. **Given the research question or Capstone Project purpose, which of the following statements best describes the design or approach used in this project?**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Score</th>
<th>Description</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>10-9</td>
<td>Appropriate design for the research question or project purpose, well described</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8-6</td>
<td>Appropriate design for the research question or project purpose, but not clearly described</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5-3</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>2-1</td>
<td>Incorrect design for study or project purpose, seriously flawed, or design not discussed at all</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

4. **Based on the research question or project objectives, which of the following statements best represents the description of study or project methods?**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Score</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>10-9</td>
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<td>8-6</td>
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<td>Methods appear somewhat flawed, but have some value to address objective(s)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2-1</td>
<td>Methods not described or importantly flawed, or unclear (cannot be judged)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

5. **In your opinion, which of the following best describes the Capstone Project results?**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Score</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>10-9</td>
<td>Results clearly described and illuminate key associations or provide valuable estimates</td>
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<td>Results described and of value to public health knowledge</td>
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<tr>
<td>2-1</td>
<td>Results not given, no added value, or are unclear (cannot be judged)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

6. **Which of the following best describes the conclusions?**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Score</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>10-9</td>
<td>Conclusions are clearly stated and strongly supported by results</td>
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<td>Conclusions are only partially supported by results</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2-1</td>
<td>No conclusions given, not supported by results, or are unclear (cannot be judged)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**TOTAL SCORE**

**Qualitative evaluation**

Please provide any additional comments or concerns you have about this Capstone Project.
Competency Evaluation

- Please note that the MPH Coordinator has filled out the following table to highlight the Competencies that were originally listed as relevant in the student's proposal form. These are indicated with a mark in the first column. Please identify any additional competencies addressed by this project using the table below.
- Please recall that the Capstone Project must address at least two competencies from all of the core public health domains (Biostatistics, Environmental Health, Epidemiology, Health Policy and Management, and Social and Behavioral Sciences), at least two from the Program-specific competencies, and at least five of the cross-cutting domains (Communication and Informatics, Diversity and Culture, Leadership, Public Health Biology, Professionalism, and Program Evaluation).
- For all competencies, please evaluate the student's level of performance for each item.

### MPH Competencies Covered in Capstone Experience—Assess on competencies covered by Student Capstone Project

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Check if covered</th>
<th>ID</th>
<th>Competency Area</th>
<th>Cannot do at all-inexperienced (0)</th>
<th>Poor ability-struggling to do (1)</th>
<th>Fair ability-skills need honing (2)</th>
<th>Satisfactory ability-competent (3)</th>
<th>Excellent ability-advanced (4)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Biostatistics (Two competencies from this domain must be included)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>BIO1.</td>
<td></td>
<td>Explain the role of biostatistics in evidence-based research and the decision-making process.</td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>BIO2.</td>
<td></td>
<td>Describe the theoretical concepts behind a number of commonly used statistical methodologies.</td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>BIO3.</td>
<td></td>
<td>Apply the appropriate statistical methodology for description and estimation to account for different measurement scales.</td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BIO4.</td>
<td></td>
<td>Draw appropriate inferences from statistical analyses.</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Environmental Health Sciences (Two competencies from this domain must be included)</td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>ENV1.</td>
<td></td>
<td>Describe the direct and indirect human, ecological and safety effects of major environmental features and the approaches to assess, prevent, and control risks to human health and safety.</td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>ENV2.</td>
<td></td>
<td>Describe genetic, physiologic, psychosocial, and environmental justice factors that affect susceptibility to adverse health outcomes following exposure to environmental conditions.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Check if covered</td>
<td>ID</td>
<td>Competency Area</td>
<td>Cannot do at all - inexperienced (0)</td>
<td>Poor ability-struggling to do (1)</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>ENV3.</td>
<td></td>
<td>Describe federal and state regulatory programs, guidelines and authorities that control environmental health issues.</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td><strong>Epidemiology (Two competencies from this domain must be included)</strong></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>EPI1.</td>
<td></td>
<td>Identify key sources of data for epidemiologic purposes.</td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>EPI2.</td>
<td></td>
<td>Apply basic terms and definitions of epidemiology in terms of magnitude, person, time, and place.</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>EPI3.</td>
<td></td>
<td>Explain the importance of epidemiology for informing scientific, ethical, economic and political discussion of health issues.</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>EPI4.</td>
<td></td>
<td>Calculate basic epidemiology measures.</td>
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<tr>
<td>EPI5.</td>
<td></td>
<td>Evaluate the strengths and limitations of epidemiologic reports.</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td><strong>Health Policy and Management (Two competencies from this domain must be included)</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>HPM1.</td>
<td></td>
<td>Identify the main components and issues of the organization, financing, access, and delivery of health services and public health systems in the US and globally.</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>HPM 2.</td>
<td></td>
<td>Describe the legal and ethical bases for public health and health services.</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>HPM3.</td>
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<td>Discuss the policy process for improving the health status of populations.</td>
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<tr>
<td>HPM4.</td>
<td></td>
<td>Communicate health policy and management issues using appropriate channels and technologies.</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td><strong>Social and Behavioral Sciences (Two competencies from this domain must be included)</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>SBS1.</td>
<td></td>
<td>Identify basic theories, concepts and models from a range of social and behavioral disciplines that are used in public health research and practice.</td>
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<tr>
<td>SBS2.</td>
<td></td>
<td>Identify the causes of social and behavioral factors that affect health of individuals and populations.</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>SBS3</td>
<td>Describe steps and procedures for the planning, implementation and evaluation of public health programs, policies and interventions.</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td><strong>VCU Program-Specific Competencies (Two competencies from this domain must be included)</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>VCU1</td>
<td>Discuss the effect of physical and social environment on health outcomes during the life course.</td>
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<td></td>
<td>VCU2</td>
<td>Discriminate between research questions and hypotheses and derive one from the other.</td>
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<td></td>
<td>VCU3</td>
<td>Accurately distinguish between epidemiological and biostatistical concepts and apply the appropriate method to analyze a public health research question using appropriate statistical software.</td>
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<td></td>
<td>VCU4</td>
<td>Access public and private data sets and assess their relevance in addressing a specific public health research question or evaluation need.</td>
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<td></td>
<td>VCU5</td>
<td>Work effectively in collaborative teams to develop public health projects.</td>
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<td></td>
<td>VCU6</td>
<td>Distinguish between public health ethics and medical ethics, discussing the values and beliefs inherent to a public health ethics perspective.</td>
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<td></td>
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<td><strong>Cross-cutting competencies (At least five competencies from the following domains must be included)</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>COM1</td>
<td>Describe how societal, organizational, and individual factors influence and are influenced by public health communications.</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>COM2</td>
<td>Demonstrate effective written and oral skills for communicating with different audiences in the context of professional public health activities.</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td><strong>Diversity and Culture</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>DIV1</td>
<td>Explain how professional ethics and practices relate to equity and accountability in diverse community settings.</td>
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<td></td>
<td>DIV2.</td>
<td>Differentiate among availability, acceptability, and accessibility of health care across diverse populations.</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td><strong>Leadership</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>LDR1.</td>
<td>Engage in dialogue and learning from others to advance public health goals.</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>LDR2.</td>
<td>Demonstrate transparency, integrity, and honesty in all actions.</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td><strong>Public Health Biology</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>PHB1.</td>
<td>Apply biological principles to development and implementation of disease prevention, control, or management programs.</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td><strong>Professionalism</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>PRO1.</td>
<td>Apply basic principles of ethical analysis (e.g. the Public Health Code of Ethics, human rights framework, other moral theories) to issues of public health practice and policy.</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>PRO2.</td>
<td>Apply evidence-based principles and the scientific knowledge base to critical evaluation and decision-making in public health.</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>PRO3.</td>
<td>Promote high standards of personal and organizational integrity, compassion, honesty and respect for all people.</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>PRO4.</td>
<td>Distinguish between population and individual ethical considerations in relation to the benefits, costs, and burdens of public health programs.</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>PRO5.</td>
<td>Appreciate the importance of working collaboratively with diverse communities and constituencies (e.g. researchers, practitioners, agencies and organizations).</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td><strong>Program Planning</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>PPL1.</td>
<td>Differentiate among goals, measurable objectives, related activities, and expected outcomes for a public health program.</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>PPL2.</td>
<td>Differentiate the purposes of formative, process, and outcome evaluation.</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
This review guide was developed to assist you as well as standardize the review process for Capstone Projects. Please use this guide to determine the scoring for each MPH Capstone Poster individually. The companion form for the Capstone Project Report will request your input on how the student addressed the competencies applicable to her/his Capstone Project.

The review process consists of a quantitative and qualitative evaluation. The quantitative evaluation includes epidemiologic and public health importance, originality, appropriate study design, sound methods, appropriate presentation of results/data, reasonable conclusions, and poster design. The quantitative section also includes your evaluation of the competencies. Qualitative measures include your open-ended comments and concerns.

Note: If the Capstone does not fit all the criteria used below because of the nature of the project (e.g., reviews, discussions of policy or ethical or methodological issues), please use your best judgment, and review the Capstone on its own merits using the provided scale as best as possible.

**Quantitative Evaluation** – all items are measured on a scale of 1 (poor) to 10 (outstanding).

Please use the following scale as your guide:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Score</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>10-9:</td>
<td>OUTSTANDING</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8-6:</td>
<td>SOLID</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5-3:</td>
<td>MARGINAL</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2-1:</td>
<td>POOR</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Evaluating Factor

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>1.</th>
<th>What is the public health significance and rationale of the Capstone Project?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(10-9) High importance</td>
</tr>
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<td></td>
<td>(8-6) Moderate importance</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(5-3) Low importance</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(2-1) Not a public health issue or of no epidemiological importance</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>2.</th>
<th>Is the Capstone Project original, an important extension of methods or knowledge, or does it provide a novel perspective?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(10-9) New topic/approach/findings</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(8-6) Relatively new topic/approach/findings</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(5-3) Somewhat new topic/approach/findings</td>
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<td></td>
<td>(2-1) Not new topic/approach/findings</td>
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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>3.</th>
<th>Given the research question or Capstone Project purpose, which of the following statements best describes the design or approach used in this project?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(10-9) Appropriate design for the research question or project purpose, well described</td>
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104
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4. **Based on the research question or project objectives, which of the following statements best represents the description of study or project methods?**

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5. **In your opinion, which of the following best describes the Capstone Project results?**

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6. **Which of the following best describes the conclusions?**

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<td>(5-3)</td>
<td>Conclusions are only partially supported by results</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(2-1)</td>
<td>No conclusions given, not supported by results, or are unclear (cannot be judged)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

7. **How would you describe the graphic design and use of poster space in presenting the project?**

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<tr>
<th>Score Range</th>
<th>Description</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>(10-9)</td>
<td>Outstanding design, graphics, and information flow</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(8-6)</td>
<td>Very good design, graphics, and information flow</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(5-3)</td>
<td>Marginal; several areas of improvement needed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(2-1)</td>
<td>Poor; not visually appealing, disjointed or disorganized</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**TOTAL SCORE**

**Qualitative evaluation**

Please provide any additional **comments or concerns** you have about this Capstone Project.
Appendix D-6, Capstone Poster Presentation Form
MPH Program Capstone Project Presentation Form

(All students submit this signed form with all required Capstone Project documentation.)

Student name (Last, First): ________________________________

Type of presentation (check one):

____ Poster presentation       ____ Oral presentation

Presentation venue (check appropriate choice and fill in details as needed):

____ MPH Program Research Poster Forum

____ Other forum/conference—provide details below

Title of other forum/conference:

_______________________________________________________________________

_______________________________________________________________________

_______________________________________________________________________

Date: ____________________________

Location: ______________________________

Poster or presentation citation:

_______________________________________________________________________

_______________________________________________________________________

_______________________________________________________________________

Advisor signature: ________________________________

Date: ________________
Appendix E: Student/Mentor Compact
Compact Between Graduate Students and Their Advisors

Adapted from:
Compact Between Biomedical Graduate Students and Their Research Advisors, Association of American Medical Colleges, Compact Between Biomedical Graduate Students and Their Research Advisors
http://www.medschool.vcu.edu/graduate/pgmdir_res/documents/AAMCMentorGradStudentCompact.pdf

Graduate Student Responsibilities

• I acknowledge that I have the primary responsibility for the successful completion of my degree. I will be committed to my graduate education and will demonstrate this by my efforts in the classroom and field. I will maintain a high level of professionalism, self-motivation, engagement, scientific curiosity, and ethical standards.
• I will meet regularly with my advisor and provide him/her with updates on the progress and results of my activities and experiments.
• I will work with my advisor to develop a capstone project. This will include establishing a timeline for each phase of my work. I will strive to meet the established deadlines.
• I will be knowledgeable of the policies and requirements of my graduate program, graduate school, and institution. I will commit to meeting the requirements.
• I will attend and participate in research meetings, seminars and journal clubs that are part of my educational program.
• I will comply with all institutional policies, including academic program milestones. I will comply with both the letter and spirit of all institutional human research policies at my institution.
• I will participate in my institution’s Responsible Conduct of Research Training Program and practice those guidelines in conducting my research and the capstone project.
• I will discuss policies on authorship and attendance at professional meetings with my research advisor. I will work with my advisor to submit all relevant research results that are ready for publication in a timely manner prior to my graduation.
• I acknowledge that it is primarily my responsibility to develop my career following the completion of my master’s degree. I will seek guidance from my advisor, career counseling services, other mentors, and any other resources available for advice on career plans.
Advisor Responsibilities

- I will be committed to the lifelong mentoring of the graduate student. I will be committed to the education and training of the graduate student as a future member of the scientific community.
- I will be committed to the capstone project of the graduate student. I will help to plan and direct the graduate student’s project, set reasonable and attainable goals, and establish a timeline for completion of the project. I recognize the possibility of conflicts between the interests of externally funded research programs and those of the graduate student, and will not let these interfere with the student’s pursuit of his/her project.
- I will be committed to meeting one-on-one with the student on a regular basis.
- I will be knowledgeable of, and guide the graduate student through, the requirements and deadlines of his/her graduate program as well as those of the institution.
- I will lead by example and facilitate the training of the graduate student in complementary skills needed to be a successful scientist, such as oral and written communication skills, grant writing, research policies, the ethical conduct of research, and scientific professionalism.
- I will not require the graduate student to perform tasks that are unrelated to his/her training program and professional development.
- I will discuss authorship policies regarding papers with the graduate student. I will acknowledge graduate student scientific contributions, as applicable, to my research program, and I will work with the graduate student who wishes to publish his/her work to ensure completion of the work in a timely manner prior to the student’s graduation.
- I will encourage the graduate student to attend scientific/professional meetings and make an effort to secure and facilitate funding, when available, for such activities.
- I will provide career advice and assist as appropriate in finding a position for the graduate student following his/her graduation. I will provide honest letters of recommendation for his/her next phase of professional development. I will also be accessible to give advice and feedback on career goals.
- I will provide for every graduate student under my supervision an environment that is intellectually stimulating, emotionally supportive, safe, and free of harassment.
- Throughout the graduate student’s time as my advisee, I will be supportive, equitable, accessible, encouraging, and respectful. I will foster the graduate student’s professional confidence and encourage critical thinking, skepticism and creativity.
Appendix F: Service-Learning Guide
VCU MPH Program Student Service-Learning

The MPH Program requires all students to complete at least 20 hours of service-learning during their time in the program. The Community Campus Partnership for Health has defined service-learning as “...a structured learning experience that combines community service with preparation and reflection. Students engaged in service-learning provide community service in response to community-identified concerns and learn about the context in which service is provided, the connection between their service and their academic coursework, and their roles as citizens.”

According to the VCU Division of Community Engagement, service-learning at Virginia Commonwealth University is a course-based, credit-bearing educational experience in which students participate in an organized service activity that meets community-identified needs. Service activities may be direct (e.g., mentoring youth, volunteering with patients, working in community gardens) or indirect (e.g., creating research reports, designing online or print materials); may be individual or group-based; may occur either on- or off-campus; may be scheduled at varying times of the week/day; may be focused in different parts of the city, and may involve a variety of community organizations. Individual service-learning classes do not offer all of these options. Students are expected to familiarize themselves with the service activity options that are available in this class and to select from the available options the option that best suits their needs and interests. Students in all VCU service-learning classes participate in reflection activities that are designed to increase students' understanding and application of course content and to enhance their sense of civic responsibility.

Service-learning often requires students to work outside of their comfort zones, involving them in learning experiences they would not normally encounter in the classroom. Service-learning is reciprocal in that students and faculty learn from community partners and community partners learn from students and faculty. Through reflection, students synthesize their experiential learning with their didactic learning.

Service-learning provides students the opportunity to

- apply knowledge and skills learned in coursework to practical situations
- interact with people of diverse cultures and backgrounds
- prepare to be competent professionals while contributing to the health and general improvement of a community in a meaningful way

Requirements

To fulfill the service-learning requirement, all MPH students must:

1. Volunteer for at least 20 hours of community service, 12 of which must be at a single organization; the remaining hours may be completed at other sites or events, including service events organized by the Public Health Student Association.
2. Document participation and hours logged using the service-learning form
3. Submit a reflection assignment upon completion of the service-learning hours

The following pages provide the steps for students to follow in meeting the service-learning requirement.

Steps to completing service-learning

1. Identify your community organization

Students are responsible for identifying an organization or event for service-learning. By completing the majority of service-learning hours at a single organization, students have a greater opportunity to learn about
the organization and the population served, gaining deeper insight into the organization and its community. The MPH Program may list eligible organizations or events for student participation on Blackboard, or students may look at websites such as Connect Richmond or Hands On Richmond. Examples of service-learning activities include, but are not limited to:

- Helping to plan and staff a community health fair or other health promotion event given by a single organization
- Assisting with health screenings, immunizations, or providing health education
- Assisting with selected community improvement projects sponsored by VCU or related organizations
- Assisting a VCU community outreach program through the Division of Community Engagement or working with one of the local resource centers at a subsidized housing community, through the Richmond City Health Department. Alternate spring break or study abroad experiences that involve direct community service (e.g., Habitat for Humanity or the VCU School of Medicine HOMBRE summer program)
- Helping a community organization plan for an event (e.g., community health screening program)
- Supporting a local clinic, such as the Daily Planet or the VDH-supported clinics in certain Richmond Redevelopment Housing Authority communities
- Supporting regular daily activities of an organization such as Tricycle Gardens or FeedMore

Students may complete all 20 hours at a single site, but the MPH Program encourages students to participate in service events organized by the Public Health Student Association. The type of service provided will vary with the organization or event, but could include activities such as preparing health promotion materials, doing administrative work to help plan a community day or health fair, manning a health education table or providing a demonstration at a health fair, assisting with a health screening program, collecting data or conducting surveys on community health during a study abroad trip, or assisting with construction of new housing for a Habitat for Humanity project. Students who want to participate in or promote a particular event to inform other students should enter contact the Director of Educational Programs.

2. Get approval for your organization choice

Contact the Director of Educational Programs with the name of your chosen organization and the type of work you might be doing. All sites should be approved before you begin your service hours.

3. Complete your hours at the organization(s)/events

Go, participate, demonstrate your knowledge, and learn what you can from the experience. You are representing the MPH Program and VCU, so we expect that you will conduct yourself in a professional manner.

All students must give a presentation about their service-learning experience. Therefore, please consider taking photographs or video of your experience to use in your presentation. However, be sure that you have permission to take photographs at the organization or event—from both the organization and individuals whose photo you may shoot. Alternatively, if you cannot use photos of individuals, you may be able to find images available for broad general use in the community commons section (i.e., non-copyrighted images or video) of web resources such as Flikr.

4. Document your experience

Use the service-learning log to document your service time. Log time you arrived at a site/event and time you left. Obtain a signature from the community organization contact person (or her/his designee). Time spent commuting to the event may NOT be counted toward the service-learning hours. However, if the service includes work “off site,” away from the community organization, such as developing an educational brochure,
the time for these types of activities should be counted toward the service-learning hours. However, the bulk of service-learning hours should be spent at the community organization or one of its events.

5. Prepare your service-learning presentation

When you have logged your 20 hours of service (or more, if you choose), you may prepare to participate in the annual service-learning forum. These are held once per year in the latter half of the spring semester on an announced day and time. The service-learning forum allows students to present summaries of their experiences. The summary may be a traditional PowerPoint presentation or a multimedia summary video of the experience.

Whichever type of presentation you choose, you must limit its length to 3-6 minutes. If you are giving a ‘live’ PowerPoint presentation, you must ensure that your presentation does not exceed six minutes. It’s recommended not to exceed 10 slides for such a presentation—realizing that you would spend on average, less than a minute speaking to each slide. Depending on the type of presentation (PowerPoint or multimedia digital story), you can use a software application such as PowerPoint, Prezi, Microsoft Photo Story, Microsoft Movie Maker, or another application with which you are familiar. Use images such as photographs you take yourself or images you obtain from the Internet to tell your story. (A major consideration in taking photos is permission from subjects photographed or possible violation of HIPAA policies through use of photographs.) You will incorporate the images to tell a story of your service-learning experience.

Your presentation should convey your experience in community service. It should be creative and may convey subjective thought and emotion: your personal reaction to the experience as well as your reflection on what you did and how the experience affected you.

**PowerPoint or Similar Presentation.** If you choose to give a traditional presentation using an application such as PowerPoint, you must of course give a live presentation at the forum. Feel free to be creative in your use of text, images, photo, or video in your presentation, as the objective of the service-learning summary is to share your experience and how your service affected you.

**Digital Story.** If you choose to do a digital story, you must record a voice narrative, and incorporate images/video. You may also choose to include music or other audio features, being as creative as you wish. The final digital story file must be converted to a .wmv file before submission to the Director of Educational Programs.

If you are new to multimedia presentations, you may find examples on how to complete the process, such as the one at the following link, useful. Other resources on digital stories are included in this guide.

http://drcavanaugh.org/digitalcamera/photostorytelling/storytelling_PhotoStory.htm

The final product should be a collage of images with a narrative (voice over) that you have recorded and with background music you incorporate, if you so choose. You may also choose to use video in combination with still images. Your story should be no longer than 3-6 minutes.

**Tips on developing a digital story.** Start your digital story by writing a brief script (not much more than 300 words). Select images to accompany portions of your script, then combine them with music and special effects, if you wish, using one of the software applications. Use microphones to do the ‘voice over’ of your story. Microphones are available in the computer laboratory or from MPH Program administration for you to record your voice over. Examples of multimedia stories may be accessed at the Center for Digital Story Telling, http://storycenter.org/, which offers several examples on its web page.
A sampling of other resources on digital storytelling appears below. You can search the web and find additional information as needed.

An overview of digital storytelling


Some guidelines for creating digital stories:

http://electronicportfolios.com/digistory/howto.html
http://courseweb.lis.illinois.edu/~jevogel2/lis506/howto.html

Using PowerPoint to create a digital story:


6. Issues to address in your service-learning summary

• Provide some background by telling a little about:
  • the organization where you served
  • its service population and if that population is underserved
  • characteristics of the service population(s)—e.g., applicable statistics that describe the public health problems of the population(s)
  • the public health impact of either the organization or the population it serves
  • health disparities/inequities that you observed

• Describe the event(s)/project(s) at/for which you provided service—you may have supported special scheduled events, or you may have supported normal daily activities.

• You may choose to provide an overview of your experience, or you may decide to focus in on a particular experience or encounter. For example, you may have encountered one or more persons who had a particular impact on you. Or you may have experienced a positive or negative reaction to a certain incident. You may have been reminded of a particular public health or societal issue and may want to reflect upon that in your story.

• Describe how this experience affected you. You can address:
  • lessons you learned
  • things you learned about yourself
  • ways you were challenged
  • ways your beliefs, opinions, or values have been changed
  • ways you feel you have contributed

Be sure to follow the checklist (available toward the end of this guide) as you develop your service-learning summary. You must submit this checklist to the Director of Educational Programs on the stated deadline before the service-learning presentation forum.

8. Submit your service-learning presentation file and checklist in advance of the forum

All students must submit their service-learning presentation files to the Director of Educational Programs in advance of the service-learning forum. You must include the checklist to document that you have addressed required elements for the presentation when you submit the file. Announcements about the date of the service-learning forum and due dates for presentation submission will be made during the spring semester after spring break.
9. **Participate in a service-learning forum**

Present your service-learning summary for others to enjoy and reflect upon in one of the service-learning forums. Students and faculty will attend the forum and evaluate each presentation anonymously, and selection of the best one(s) will be made based on this feedback.
VCU Master of Public Health Program  
Service-Learning Documentation Log

Please check off each item to indicate that you have addressed the required elements for the service-learning requirement. Submit this checklist with your service-learning summary file in advance of the service-learning forum.

**Service-Learning Site Approval**

____ I selected a service organization that serves public health needs

____ Before beginning my service hours, I contacted the Director of Educational Programs for approval of my site and the type of service work expected to be done

**Hours**

____ I completed at least 20 service hours, a minimum of 12 of which were at a single organization

____ I obtained signatures documenting my work hours at each organization from a representative of the organization

____ I will be able to submit the completed service-learning hours log by the end of the current semester.

**Service-Learning Summary Presentation**

I have described:

____ The service organization’s mission and service population

____ Relevant descriptive statistics to help characterize the organization’s service population and ways in which it is underserved, if applicable

____ The public health impact of the organization

____ Health disparities/inequities that you observed or that the organization addresses

____ The tasks you completed/activities in which you engaged to support the organization and how you feel you contributed to the organization’s work

I have reflected on my experience by describing:

____ Any lessons I learned

____ Things I discovered about myself through participating in this experience

____ Ways in which this experience challenged you

____ Ways in which your opinions, beliefs, or values may have changed through this experience

**Service-Learning Summary Presentation Technical Issues**

____ The summary presentation is in a format that can be read/played in commonly available software or player applications on a Windows platform (e.g., .ppt, .wmv; PowerPoint, Prezi, QuickTime, Windows Media Player)

____ Images used are of good quality and are clear

____ Images used depict only people who have given permission for their photos to be taken and used or are from non-copyrighted sources available for common use, such as Flickr’s Creative Commons

____ Any audio is clear and understandable and plays at a volume level that can be easily heard

_______________________________________________________  Student signature
VCU Master of Public Health Program

Service-Learning Documentation Log

Enter your name and the event for which you are providing service and the affiliated organization. Enter each date you served, and the start time and end time. If your service exceeds more than one day, total the hours for your service at the organization at the end of the service period and write the total under the last entry in the “Total hours” column. Obtain a signature from an organization representative to verify your documented time.

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Event/organization name</th>
<th>Date of service</th>
<th>Start time</th>
<th>End time</th>
<th>Total hours</th>
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I certify that I have provided the hours of service documented on this log.

__________________________________________________________________________
Student signature

Date

__________________________________________________________________________
Signature of organization representative

Date

__________________________________________________________________________
Printed name

__________________________________________________________________________
Title
Appendix G: Graduation Preparation Outline
Graduation Planning Outline

1. All students must complete a graduation application (available on Graduate School web page (click on Forms))—in first 2-3 weeks of semester in which you intend to graduate. Date announced each semester. This is the only form you need to submit for graduation.
   a. Fill out sections I and II
   b. Attach an unofficial transcript; no need to fill out section III
   c. Review your transcript to ensure that it properly reflects coursework and credits taken.
   d. Follow the guidelines given on the School of Medicine website, using the proper nomenclature for your degree
   e. http://www.medschool.vcu.edu/graduate/student_res/graduation_application/
   For the generalist degree, the degree is ‘Master of Public Health’ and the major is ‘Public Health.’
   f. All signatures must be original or the form will be rejected. Submit your form, with your signature and that of your advisor, to the MPH Program Coordinator or Director of Educational Programs at least one day before the application due date to allow time for program director signature. The Program will submit the form to the Dean’s office in the School of Medicine.
   g. Make sure that your student account is clear and has no outstanding balances; if accounts are not fully paid, your degree will not be awarded.
   h. Log in to eServices and complete the graduation checkout procedure. This will place your name on a list to receive information about graduation events and requirements.

2. Capstone project
   a. BEFORE BEGINNING:
      i. You must file a project proposal/agreement form
      ii. You must file an Admission to Candidacy Form with the research project agreement form (available on Graduate School web page (click on Forms) and through GradTrak)
   b. DURING CONDUCT OF PROJECT
      i. Work with your advisor/mentor to keep up with your timeline milestones
      ii. Pay attention to Critical Deadlines for the capstone project listed on Blackboard
   c. COMPLETION OF PROJECT
      i. Present your project (research-oriented projects require a poster in a formal forum or conference); (practice-oriented projects may be presented at the practice site, in a research forum, or other venue approved by Director of Educational Programs)
      ii. Obtain faculty advisor approval of final report
      iii. Submit an electronic copy (pdf) of your report to the MPH Program Coordinator for MPH Program records. You must INCLUDE THE SIGNATURE PAGES in this copy—which means you may have to scan the hard copy of the document. Follow the Capstone Project available on Blackboard.
      iv. Submit an electronic copy (ppt or pdf) of your Capstone Project Poster
      v. According to the nature of your capstone project, your report may include “deliverables” or final products from your project—as appendices. This is particularly true practice-oriented projects.
      vi. Complete the Student Exit Survey, accessible through Blackboard, before the end of exam week.

3. Public Health Seminar requirement
   a. Must attend 12 seminars
      i. Departmental, sponsored seminars or others approved by the Director of Educational Programs
         1. Approved seminars are posted on the department’s public health forum web page, available from main page under “Seminars and Events” http://familymedicine.vcu.edu/epidemiology/seminars/
         2. Look for a sign-in sheet at the seminar—if you sign the sheet, you will automatically receive credit.
         3. If no sign-in sheet is available you must submit a summary of the seminar using our on-line form available through Blackboard
      ii. Non-departmental seminars
         1. To obtain approval to receive credit for a non-departmental seminar, contact Director of Educational Programs ahead of time and provide a description of the seminar
         2. After the seminar, file a summary report using the on-line form available through Blackboard
4. Ensure that you have completed the service-learning requirement—guidelines are on Blackboard. A minimum of 20 hours is required and a presentation must be submitted. These are usually due in mid-April; notices will be distributed about actual due dates.

5. All students must complete a final self-assessment of their knowledge and skills in the MPH Program competencies. You will receive an email requesting you to complete this task in the second half of the semester in which you graduate.

6. Preparing for ceremonies: Look for announcements/emails about the “Grad Finale” which is held university-wide for graduating students and is the venue for obtaining your diploma ceremony regalia. This information is usually available in the middle of the semester.

7. VCU Career Center—a resource for job-seeking graduates
   b. Interview stream—allows on-line mock interviewing you can self-critique
   c. Under “Find a Job”
      i. information on how to develop good resumes, etc.
      ii. information on how to contact a career counselor to arrange for interview critique, resume review, etc.

8. Consider taking the Certified in Public Health exam, offered by the National Board of Public Health Examiners.
   http://www.nbphe.org/

9. Staying in touch:
   VCU Public Health Facebook page
   Division of Epidemiology Twitter feed: @VCU_Epi
Appendix H: Graduation Checklist
MPH Program Graduation Checklist—Fall Semester

Congratulations! If you are reading this, you are on your way to completing requirements for the MPH degree. Use this checklist to determine that you are completing all submission and documentation requirements needed to meet the expectations of the MPH Program, the School of Medicine, and the VCU Graduate School.

At the beginning of the semester:

- Ensure that you have completed all required courses and electives in the MPH Program.
- Submit Graduation Application by the advertised deadline (usually 2-3 weeks after the start of the semester)
- Ensure that you have submitted an Admission to Master’s Candidacy form
- Complete the Graduation Checkout in eServices
- Ensure that you have met/will meet the requirement to attend a minimum of 12 public health seminars. If your schedule creates conflicts with the regularly scheduled seminars, alternatives that include webinars are available—contact the Director of Educational Programs
- Ensure that you have met/will meet the service-learning requirement, completing required hours and planning to present a summary of the experience in April

At the end of the semester, or when directed:

- Submit your service-learning hours log by no later than the end of the last week of classes
- Give your poster presentation at an approved venue (with advisor approval)
- Submit the signed Capstone Project Presentation form (available in Appendix D-6 of the MPH Student Handbook on Blackboard) documenting presentation of your Project at an approved venue
- Obtain advisor and preceptor (as applicable) approval on the final written report, according to deadlines posted in Blackboard
- Submit an electronic version (pdf) of your final capstone project report and your poster (pdf or ppt) to the Graduate Programs Coordinator. For the Report, include the fully signed signature pages (this may require that you scan a hard copy). Follow deadlines posted in Blackboard
- Complete your final self-assessment of the MPH competencies. Go to Part I: [https://redcap.vcu.edu/rc/surveys/?s=sQZMPbzRgt](https://redcap.vcu.edu/rc/surveys/?s=sQZMPbzRgt) Part II: [https://redcap.vcu.edu/rc/surveys/?s=8zLBypNkIv](https://redcap.vcu.edu/rc/surveys/?s=8zLBypNkIv)
- Complete the Student Exit Survey (Parts 1 & 2), accessible through Blackboard or the links below) before the end of exam week. Part I [https://redcap.vcu.edu/rc/surveys/?s=c4e422](https://redcap.vcu.edu/rc/surveys/?s=c4e422) Part II [https://redcap.vcu.edu/rc/surveys/?s=fde2c5](https://redcap.vcu.edu/rc/surveys/?s=fde2c5)

Keep in touch with us after graduation through the VCU Public Health Facebook group and Epi Twitter feed: @VCU_Epi