

# Culminating Experience Guide

**2024-2025**



**CASE WESTERN RESERVE  
UNIVERSITY**  
School of Medicine

Master of Public Health Program

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## Important Notes

- The forms that follow are required by the MPH Program. Additional information and/or forms may be required by the partner organization. Confer with your preceptor and Capstone Advisory Committee for guidance on additional requirements. It is the student's responsibility to ensure all requirements are met.
- If your project requires approval of an Institutional Review Board (IRB) or other institutional committees, no work may begin on the project until submission has been approved. Submission to the IRB or other university-level review committees will likely take several weeks for approval. Due to regulations and requirements, international experiences will likely take several months to secure all necessary approvals. Confer with your preceptor, the MPH Program, and your Capstone Advisory Committee for guidance and plan ahead accordingly.
- The MPH Program requires the use of your CWRU email address for any and all correspondence related to the Culminating Experience. All electronic correspondence from the MPH Program will be sent to your CWRU email address. The MPH Program will not send correspondence to personal or other organizational email addresses. Students are encouraged to check their CWRU email address daily.
- All forms included in this guide, the Practicum Kit, and the Capstone Kit are available in electronic, fillable format on the MPH Program's website. The MPH Programs recommends accessing these forms from the website directly, rather than saving a copy to your desktop. This will ensure you always have the most up-to-date version should any updates be made to programmatic guides and/or forms.
- Students should familiarize themselves with the *Academic Integrity Standards* set forth by the university, a full description of which is available on the School of Graduate Studies website.
- Unless specifically stated otherwise, the faculty of the MPH Program expect and require original writing for all assignments given, including those related to the Culminating Experience. Submitting plagiarized work for an academic requirement is a violation of the academic integrity standards set forth by the University.

# Culminating Experience Overview

The **multi-semester** Culminating Experience is the centerpiece of the CWRU MPH Program, consisting of the Public Health Practicum and the Capstone Project. The Public Health Practicum is an integral component of the MPH curriculum, allowing students to apply, develop, and refine their public health skills and knowledge in a supervised, structured, and community-based experience. To complete the Practicum, students register for three (3) credits of Practicum credits, dedicating at least 120 hours to a substantial public health experience with a governmental agency or community organization which contributes to the public health system. During the **multi-semester** Capstone Project, students dedicate a minimum of 240 hours (six (6) credit hours of Capstone credits) developing a scholarly project of mutual benefit to the student and a partner organization. ***The manner in which credits are allocated between semesters is flexible***, and is determined by the student in consultation with their advisor. Both components of the Culminating Experience afford students the opportunity to apply the knowledge and skills that they have acquired through their academic course work to a problem involving the health of the community. Students learn to communicate with target groups in an effective manner, to order priorities for major projects according to definable criteria, to use computers for specific applications relevant to public health, to identify ethical, social, and cultural issues relating to public health policies, research and interventions, to identify the process by which decisions are made within the organization or agency, and to identify and coordinate the use of resources at the site. Students are strongly encouraged to complete their Practicum and Capstone with the same agency (“Integrated Option”), allowing the student to achieve greater depth on the chosen topic. Alternatively, students may choose to complete their Practicum and Capstone with different organizations and/or topics to gain exposure to different areas of public health. Both approaches are acceptable and are dependent on the student’s educational and professional goals.

Culminating Experiences are broadly oriented toward a problem involving the health of the community but may differ substantially in format. A successful Practicum experience requires the commitment of several individuals. The Practicum is a mutually beneficial partnership between the student, the MPH program, and a sponsoring agency/organization, represented by a preceptor. The preceptor is the professional on-site responsible for daily supervision of the student. Preferably, this individual will be a public health practitioner. Students must produce a learning agreement outlining an approach to the Practicum before being allowed to register for credit. Following the Practicum, students produce a professional poster detailing the experience and present it at the *Public Health Innovations Conference*.

The student will be supported by their Capstone Advisory Committee consisting of at least three members who will collaborate with each other in guiding and supporting the student. Ideally, the Capstone Committee will include an on-site director (preceptor), faculty member(s), and expert(s) in the subject area. The Committee will have the academic responsibility for grading the student on a pass/fail basis for the Capstone project. The grade will consist of an assessment of performance in the context of the field placement, as well as the preparation and presentation of the Capstone essay.

The MPH student is required to take an organized, scholarly approach to the topic, and to produce a master’s degree essay of high quality relating to the outcomes of the project. The

details of the Capstone Project will be determined jointly by the student and the Capstone Advisory Committee and will be outlined in a Capstone project proposal. **Capstone projects must be relevant to the student's chosen concentration(s)**. The proposal needs to be approved by all members of the Capstone Advisory Committee before being submitted to the MPH Office. Students must complete and submit the Capstone Proposal to the MPH Program (and receive approval) before they are permitted to register for Capstone credit.

Students are encouraged to have completed all core required coursework (refer to the MPH Student Handbook for a listing of core curriculum requirements) prior to their Capstone experience. At a minimum, students must have completed 9 credit hours in the program to begin their Practicum experience. The **multi-semester** Culminating Experience is most appropriately completed as a longitudinal project over **several semesters**. Students are **unequivocally discouraged** from completing their Culminating Experience in a single semester. The Culminating Experience requires a minimum of 120 hours dedicated to the Practicum and 240 hours dedicated to the Capstone project. Additional effort is expected outside of these required hours as necessary for fulfillment of the Culminating Experience. To facilitate tracking of these hours, a work schedule is required in the Practicum Learning Agreement and a project timeline should be included in every Capstone proposal.

The student is expected to complete a professional poster (Practicum Requirement) and master's essay (Capstone Requirement) describing and evaluating their experience/project and then present to his/her peers and advisors at the biennial *Public Health Innovations Conference*. Samples of Practicum posters and Capstone essays are available in the MPH Office.

# 10 Things to Know About Your Culminating Experience

1. There is no program component more important to your public health education and your professional career than an outstanding Capstone Experience.
  - It is never too soon to be thinking about what the right Culminating Experience is for you.
  - The idea of getting a Culminating Experience started may be exciting and scary. Both feelings are valid. What matters is at the end of the process that you are incredibly proud of your accomplishment.
2. A Culminating Experience is forever.
  - Done right, you will use what you accomplish for the rest of your career.
  - Done wrong, you will regret the missed opportunity for the rest of your career.
3. The tools for completion of an outstanding Culminating Experience are imbedded within your MPH course work.
  - Begin orienting assignments across different classes toward exploration of the topics most likely to end up as the topic of your Culminating Experience.
  - Diligently avoid replicating previous work (your own or someone else's work).
4. The public health competencies required to address your Culminating Experience should be the same competencies you believe are important to the career you envision.
  - Begin exploring which competencies you think are most important now.
  - Be open to competencies that hold less interest or natural appeal if they help you to get where you want to go.
5. Your Capstone Project **must** be related to your concentration(s).
  - If you can't find an attractive Capstone Project, have you really chosen the right concentration?
  - Look to people active in the field to find a Capstone Project that works for you.
  - You may explore competencies outside your chosen major during your Practicum experience.
6. The best Culminating Experiences usually involve building on something already being done.
  - Working closely, diligently, and respectfully with a community organization is likely to lead you to an excellent Culminating Experience.
  - Though you may be building on a project already started, you must create a part of it that belongs to you – **own it!**

7. Be ambitious...
  - Remember that you are not facing your Culminating Experience alone.
  - Ask for advice.
  - Don't be afraid to follow the advice.
  - Don't be afraid to respectfully reject advice *if you can justify doing so*.
  
8. ...but be realistic
  - It almost always works better to spread your Culminating Experience efforts and credits over ***two or more semesters***.
  - Realize that Capstone Projects are almost always more work than students expect.
  - Start big and scale back if necessary.
  
9. The goal of all Culminating Experiences should be the creation of new and meaningful knowledge.
  - There should be a plan for dissemination of that new and meaningful knowledge.
  
10. You should be an expert on the topic you chose by the time you are done with your Culminating Experience.
  - No one on your Capstone Committee, viewing your poster, or in the audience listening to your presentation should know more about your Culminating Experience than you.

# Possible Approaches to the Culminating Experience

These are only ideas for the Culminating Experience. Students are strongly encouraged to discuss other potential approaches with people such as their advisor, the leader of their chosen concentration, their Capstone Advisory Committee, the Director of Community Based Education, and their Practicum Preceptor or other representatives of the community organization. *(Note: in all cases, students should combine multiple approaches for their Culminating Experience. The best approaches to Culminating Experiences, like public health, require a multifaceted approach!)*

## Program Design

Design a health-related program that could be implemented at the partner site, including instructions, procedures, manuals, and materials. Alternatively, participate in the design of a new program initiated by the community organization.

## Program Implementation

Participate in a substantive way towards the implementation of a program already planned at the community organization.

## Data Analysis

Complete a substantial new analysis of existing data (e.g., dataset, survey, or claims database) on a health-related topic of interest to the community organization and report on the results. (Note: data analysis, in isolation, is not sufficient for a Practicum.)

## Community Intervention

Design and implement a community intervention supported by the community organization.

## Program Evaluation

Evaluate an existing program at the community organization to assess the effectiveness and outcomes of the program.

## Health Policy Statement/Advocacy

Develop a health policy position paper related to the mission of the community organization and advocate for its approval. Alternatively, for the Capstone Project, a position paper may be written on a health topic of local, state, regional, national, or international importance.



### **Population Health Research**

Research the determinants or distribution of a health problem identified by the community organization.

### **Community Assessment**

Undertake in-depth analysis of the health characteristics of a defined population or community of interest to the community organization.

### **Public Health Services & Systems Research**

Research the nature of access to health care, quality and cost of services, or evaluation of the provision and design of health services offered by the community organization.

### **Survey Research**

Survey an identified population on a topic of mutual interest with the community organization.

### **Quality Improvement**

Using a systematic and comprehensive approach, conduct a quality improvement project to impact things like infection rates, vaccine uptake, or some other clinical metric.

### **Policy Analysis**

Conduct an in-depth policy analysis on a topic of interest, systematically analyzing existing policies, best practices, or other appropriate data sources and make recommendations based on your findings.

# Resources to Get You Started... And Keep You Going Every Step of the Way

Some students enter the Master of Public Health Program knowing exactly what they want to do for their Culminating Experience. For others, choosing a Culminating Experience can seem overwhelming at first. The Master of Public Health Program has developed resources for both groups of students to get the most out of their Culminating Experience. The core curriculum is designed to equip you with the basic tools you need to complete a successful Culminating Experience. Beyond the curriculum, the MPH Program offers the following resources to aid every student to build and complete a successful Culminating Experience:

## ***Community Health Research & Practice***

Community Health Research and Practice (CHRP) is a seminar designed to bring together students, faculty, public health practitioners, and researchers as part of a collaborative seminar. CHRP meetings occur weekly throughout the Fall and Spring semesters focusing on things like development and completion of Practicum Experiences and Capstone Projects, learning about ongoing faculty and student research projects, networking with campus and community partners, and development of publications and presentations for national conferences and peer reviewed journals. Students are expected to share updates on their Culminating Experience progress (including ideas, challenges, and successes) as well as give and receive feedback from other students. **All students enrolled in Practicum and/or Capstone credits are required to participate in CHRP throughout the completion of their projects**, but all students are strongly encouraged to attend regularly. The CHRP schedule is made available before the start of each semester. The schedule subject to change; any updates are sent via email to the student body.

## ***Student Internships***

Through Cleveland's many local public health organizations and initiatives, internships may periodically become available for which MPH students are encouraged to apply. Internships are usually awarded on a competitive basis. While not exclusively dedicated to research projects, internships are often the basis for Culminating Experiences and future student research — and in some cases, post-graduation employment. Internship opportunities are sent via email to the student body throughout the year.

## ***APHA/OPHA Membership***

The MPH program encourages engagement with the American Public Health Association (APHA) and the Ohio Public Health Association (OPHA). Membership in APHA and OPHA includes access to newsletters and the American Journal of Public Health which offer insight into emerging public health issues — and potential Culminating Experiences. Student who submit abstracts for annual meetings may have their membership sponsored by the MPH Program. Speak with the MPH Director of Community Based Education for more information.

## ***MPH Program Financial Support***

The MPH program recognizes that the Culminating Experience may entail expenses for the student (e.g., survey instruments, materials, etc.). The MPH program provides financial support, on a case-by-case basis and when available, for Culminating Experiences up to \$250 per student. Recognizing that international projects entail greater expense, Capstones that include international travel are allotted up to \$500 on a case-by-case basis and when available. Full details about financial assistance for the Culminating Experience can be obtained from the MPH Office.

### ***Conference Support***

The MPH program and the School of Graduate Studies considers attendance at international, national, state, and local conferences an integral part of the professional development process. As such, the MPH program and School of Graduate Studies offer financial assistance to students attending these conferences. Students who are presenting at the conference are given priority for the following funding opportunities:

- **MPH Program Support** - Awarded on a case-by-case basis when available, up to \$250 per student. Students should contact the MPH program directly about these awards.
- **Graduate Student Travel Award** - Awarded on a case-by-case basis, the School of Graduate Studies will match the MPH Program contribution for conference-related expenses such as registration, lodging, meals, and transportation. The request must be submitted at least two weeks prior to travel. No funds will be awarded after the conference presentation has occurred. More information on this can be found at <https://case.edu/gradstudies/current-students/fellowships-and-awards>.

# A Competency-Based Technique

In accordance with the Council on Education for Public Health (CEPH) 2016 criteria, the Master of Public Health Program has adopted a competency-based approach to assess student culminating experiences. All students are expected to demonstrate synthesis of foundational and concentration-specific competencies appropriate to the student's education and professional goals.

## Foundational Competencies

There are 22 foundational competencies students are expected to have met upon graduation, broken down into eight subcategories.

### **Evidence-Based Approaches to Public Health**

1. Apply epidemiological methods to the breadth of settings and situations in public health practice
2. Select quantitative and qualitative data collection methods appropriate for a given public health context
3. Analyze quantitative and qualitative data using biostatistics, informatics, computer-based programming and software, as appropriate
4. Interpret results of data analysis for public health research, policy or practice

### **Public Health & Health Care Systems**

5. Compare the organization, structure and function of health care, public health and regulatory systems across national and international settings
6. Discuss the means by which structural bias, social inequities and racism undermine health and create challenges to achieving health equity at organizational, community and societal levels

### **Planning & Management to Promote Health**

7. Assess population needs, assets and capacities that affect communities' health
8. Apply awareness of cultural values and practices to the design or implementation of public health policies or programs
9. Design a population-based policy, program, project or intervention
10. Explain basic principles and tools of budget and resource management
11. Select methods to evaluate public health programs

### **Policy in Public Health**

12. Discuss multiple dimensions of the policy-making process, including the roles of ethics and evidence
13. Propose strategies to identify stakeholders and build coalitions and partnerships for influencing public health outcomes

14. Advocate for political, social or economic policies and programs that will improve health in diverse populations
15. Evaluate policies for their impact on public health and health equity

### **Leadership**

16. Apply principles of leadership, governance and management, which include creating a vision, empowering others, fostering collaboration and guiding decision making
17. Apply negotiation and mediation skills to address organizational or community challenges

### **Communication**

18. Select communication strategies for different audiences and sectors
19. Communicate audience-appropriate public health content, both in writing and through oral presentation
20. Describe the importance of cultural competence in communicating public health content

### **Interprofessional Practice**

21. Perform effectively on interprofessional teams

### **Systems Thinking**

22. Apply systems thinking tools to a public health issue

## Concentration-Specific Competencies

### **Global Health**

1. Describe the relationships among agencies focused on colonial health, tropical medicine, international health, and global health in a historical context
2. Prioritize diseases of global health importance and their epidemiological context
3. Apply methods for strengthening and focusing existing capacities and resources for health program sustainability and enhancement
4. Contrast application of technology to impact priority diseases with addressing the underlying social and economic determinants of global health linked to health care delivery systems
5. Apply the fundamental international principles and standards for the protection of human research subjects in diverse cultural settings

### **Health Policy & Management**

1. Apply the principles of program development, planning, budgeting, and resource management in organizational or community initiatives
2. Describe how policy impacts healthcare delivery and outcomes
3. Apply a continuous quality and performance improvement framework to address organizational coordination and performance
4. Identify methods for decision making using evidence-based, systems thinking, and data-driven approaches to health policy and management
5. Identify how access, quality, and cost are influenced by organizational and financial structures

### **Health Promotion & Disease Prevention**

1. Assess needs for health interventions for the general public as well as at-risk populations
2. Systematically evaluate health promotion strategies across typologies of evidence
3. Apply system complexity concepts in the context of nested individuals, social networks, organizations, and communities (i.e., systems nested within systems) in the analysis of public health problems and solutions
4. Develop health education/health promotion strategies that create an understanding of and respect for the importance of culture in practice and policy
5. Apply social and behavioral theory and planning models and evidence-based health promotion strategies for a variety of populations in the development of a health education/health promotion plan

## Population Health Research

1. Construct a conceptual model and choose an appropriate existing data set, such as electronic health records, Medicare/Medicaid, Medical Expenditure Panel Survey, Health Care Utilization Project, and Health and Retirement Study, to address a population health research question
2. Design and perform a study consisting of a retrospective analysis of an existing data set to address a population health research question of interest
3. Design efficient computer programs for data management and manipulation, statistical analysis, and presentation using R (or another statistical programming language, such as SAS)
4. Apply advanced statistical methods for analyzing count data, categorical data and time to event data: specifically, Poisson regression models, multinomial and ordinal logistic regression models and Cox proportional hazard models
5. Perform predictive modeling employing different strategies for model selection (best subsets and shrinkage approaches), imputation of missing values, and splitting data into training and test data sets

## Practicum Competency Requirements

Students must meet at least **5** competencies through the practicum portion of the Culminating Experience. At least **3** competencies must be foundational competencies. The remaining competencies may be concentration competencies or custom competencies appropriate to the student's education and professional goals. Students should work with their Practicum preceptor, the MPH Director of Community Based Education, and/or their advisor to identify competencies to be met by the Practicum. **Students are required compile a portfolio of deliverables produced during the Practicum experience, through which mastery of the chosen competencies will be demonstrated and assessed** (see page 24).

## Capstone Competency Requirements

There is no prescribed set or minimum number of competencies to be met by the MPH Capstone. It is expected that Capstone projects will be substantial enough to demonstrate mastery of multiple foundational and concentration competencies.

### Additional Expectations

The MPH curriculum has been designed to ensure every student has exposure to the above competencies. The Culminating Experience should be used to develop, refine, and enhance a student's knowledge and abilities related to the 22 foundational competencies and 5 concentration-specific competencies. As a result, the MPH Program has also identified standards students are expected to exhibit during their Culminating Experiences. Upon completion of the Culminating Experience, students should be able to:

- Demonstrate effective written and oral skills for communicating with different audiences in the context of professional public health activities
- Interact with diverse individuals and communities to produce an intended public health outcome
- Create and communicate a shared vision for a changing future, champion solutions to organizational and community challenges, and energize commitment to goals.
- Demonstrate ethical choices, values, and professional practices while considering the effect of choices on community stewardship, equity, social justice, and accountability
- In collaboration with others, prioritize and plan for the design, development, implementation, and evaluation of strategies to improve individual and community health
- Recognize system level properties that result from dynamic interactions among human and social systems and how they affect the relationships among individuals, groups, organizations, communities, and environments



# Culminating Experience Checklist

## Step 1: Build a project idea

### *A student-initiated and student-driven process*

Suggested Timeline: A semester or more before proposed start date

- Network:** Discover community needs/interest with guest speakers, MPH staff, faculty members, and other students. The inclusion of guest speakers in the classroom is designed to help connect you to members of the Public Health Practice community. These are the people on the front lines with the experience, knowledge, and resources you need to get the most out of your project and future career.
- Develop ideas:** Think about your experience, goals, area of concentration, population focus, preferred methodological approach, and target population(s). Keep in mind that anything you want to be able to do with skill after graduation should be integrated into your Culminating Experience. Explore your ideas with faculty, your concentration leader, MPH staff, etc. Be sure to keep the MPH Director of Community-Based Education in the loop.
- Find a site:** Where will you complete your Practicum? Would you like to do your Capstone Project at the same site or a different site? What population or community might they benefit? What organization and on-site preceptor will you work with?

For some students, the organization or site will be the first thing they are sure of. Other students will have an idea in mind and seek a site at which the idea can be actualized. Still others will know the population they wish to work with first and then identify a site and topic.

## Step 2: Prepare for your Practicum Experience

### *A foray into the field*

Suggested Timeline: By the start of the semester you intend to begin the Practicum

- Finalize organization and Practicum preceptor:** Which organization will you work with for your practicum hours? Who will be your primary contact at the organization?
- Complete & submit Practicum Learning Agreement:** A mutual agreement between the student, preceptor, and MPH program, this document will outline your role, responsibilities, and expected outcomes that result for the practicum experience. The learning agreement must be signed by the student, preceptor, and MPH Director of Community Based Education. Refer to the Practicum Kit on the MPH website, CHRP canvas page, or contact the office for a blank copy. (If a student is satisfying both Practicum and Capstone requirements through one large integrated project, a single proposal that describes both Practicum and Capstone may be submitted.)
- Register for Practicum credit:** You must register for a total of three (3) semester hours of Practicum credits to satisfy the practicum requirement. Students are encouraged to register for these credits in the semester in which they plan to complete and present the project.
- Site-specific responsibilities:** Your host organization may have trainings, paperwork, or other onboarding activities they will require of you before beginning your Practicum. It is your responsibility to ensure the completion of all site-specific responsibilities!

## **Step 3: Prepare for your Capstone Project**

### ***Laying the groundwork for a successful project***

Suggested Timeline: During the semester before proposed start date

*(If you are completing a project which requires IRB approval, we recommend starting even earlier. For domestic projects, we recommend allotting two months for IRB approval. For international projects, we recommend giving yourself at least one semester to complete the IRB process. **Consult your Capstone Advisory Committee for guidance with the IRB process.** Additional details on the IRB process are also available in this handbook.)*

- Identify and invite a minimum of three people who can guide, support and advise you.** One member should act as the Chair of the Committee Advisory Committee. The Chair should hold a faculty appointment and will have the academic authority to assign the final grade in collaboration with the other Capstone Advisory Committee Members.

In addition to the Chair, we recommend including a site Preceptor as a member of your Committee. The Preceptor is a member of the organization with which you will be completing your Capstone Experience and is responsible for day-to-day supervision and serves as a troubleshooter for issues related to the site and the population participating in the project. You'll also want Capstone Committee Members who can address specific learning pieces, methodology, and content, in addition to serving as troubleshooters for program related issues. Capstone Advisory Committee Members should have some relevant content expertise to provide guidance on content and project methodology. Committee members can be on the faculty or from the public health practice community, as long as they possess knowledge of and sincere interest in your topic – and can be resources for procedural, logistical, or scholarly issues with you.

**You will be responsible for how your committee works.** Students are expected to **maintain regular contact** with the committee through whatever means serve the committee best. Students are also required to provide written progress reports to all committee members (copy to the MPH Office) if the project spans more than one semester. Students also provide committee members with essay evaluation forms accompanying the final essay submission and presentation evaluation forms (also included in this kit and available for download online) just prior to the final presentation.

- Write Proposal.** All submitted proposals must be accompanied by the Capstone Proposal Cover Page signed by each member of your Committee. Additionally, all proposals must contain:

- Literature Review: what work has already been done related to this topic?
- Purpose of Project/Project Rationale: why is this project important?
- Project Goals: what do you hope to accomplish or contribute to as a result of the project?
- Project Timeline: how do you intend to spend your time (including how many semesters you intend to spend on your Capstone Project)?
- Project Logistics: how you will meet the goals of your project? You should include a description of your methodology and plan for analysis, as appropriate.
- Project Outcome: what are the intended tangible products of the project?

- Submit final approved proposal to MPH Director of Community Based Education**

- Register for Capstone Credits:** You must register for a total of six (6) semester hours of credits to satisfy the Capstone requirement. Your approved proposal must be submitted to the MPH office by the end of the Add/Drop period during the semester in which you plan to register.

## Step 4: Carry out the plan identified in Practicum Learning Agreement and/or Capstone Proposal

### *The fun part*

Suggested Timeline: As determined in your Practicum Learning Agreement and/or Capstone Proposal *Carry out the project as outlined in the learning agreement or capstone proposal. Consult with the MPH Director of Community Based Education and Preceptor if changes need to be made to the practicum as described in the approved Learning Agreement. Consult with your Capstone Advisory Committee members if changes need to be made to the project as described in the approved capstone proposal.*

- Check-in regularly** with the MPH Director of Community Based Education, Preceptor, and/or Advisory Committee members to keep everyone informed of progress.
- Attend CHRP regularly:** Attendance at CHRP is a must while engaged with the Culminating Experience. If your schedule prohibits attendance, alternative arrangements may be made in consult with the MPH Director of Community Based Education. The CHRP schedule will be announced at the beginning of each semester.
- Make adjustments as needed:** Include these changes in Capstone Progress Reports as appropriate.
- Submit your materials in preparation for the *Public Health Innovations Conference*:** Leave yourself plenty of time to avoid scrambling in crunch time!

For Practicum, prepare your poster at least 2 weeks prior to *Innovations* so that it can be printed. You will have opportunities to get feedback from your peers at *Innovations* practice sessions in CHRP. The MPH Director of Community Based Education and/or your preceptor are also good sources of feedback.

For Capstone, submit your final essay to all Capstone Advisory Committee Members with accompanying essay evaluation forms at least 2 weeks prior to presentation at *Innovations*. The reason the essay must be turned in before the end of the semester is to allow your Committee to make suggestions and comments in plenty of time to allow changes before your presentation and the final essay is turned in. Committee members should provide feedback to MPH Office on essay evaluation forms for grading purposes. Also, students who are planning to graduate must be certified to graduate 5 weeks before commencement. MPH students cannot be certified to graduate without a completed Practicum Poster and Capstone Essay on file.

Encourage preceptor and advisory committee members to evaluate poster and/or project promptly and provide feedback to MPH Office. It is your responsibility to ensure that the MPH Office receives their feedback on your essay.

- Submit your presentation to the MPH Director of Community Based Education:** For Capstone, plan on submitting an electronic copy of your presentation no later than 7:00am the morning of *Innovations*. For Practicum, plan on hanging your poster in the designated space before the start of the first presentation on the morning of *Innovations*.

## **Step 5: Present your Practicum poster and/or Capstone project at the *Public Health Innovations Conference***

*Your moment in the spotlight*

**Invite your audience:** Capstone Advisory Committee Members, your preceptor, site colleagues, friends & family – the more the merrier!

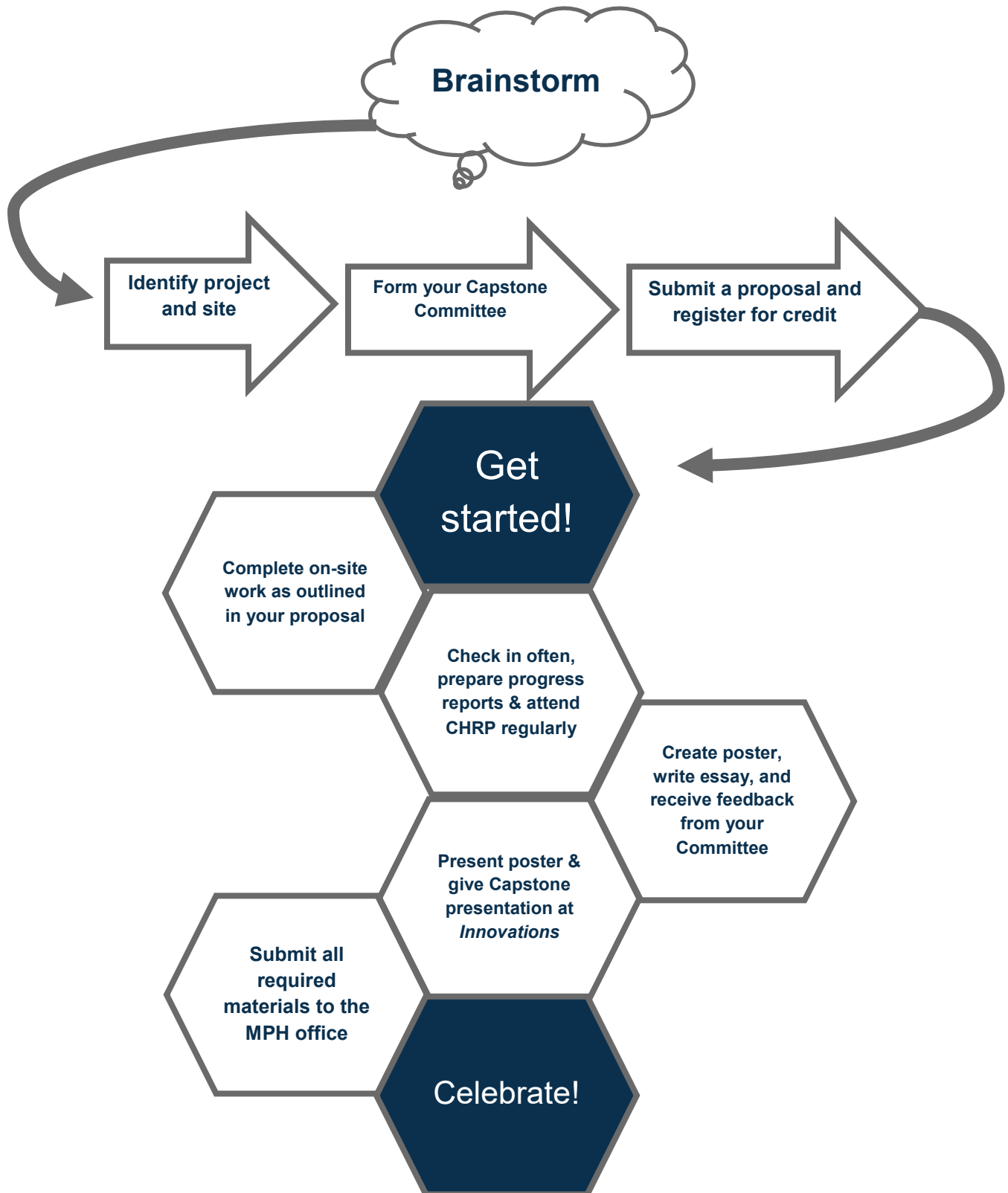
**Submit final materials:** An electronic copy of all Practicum and/or Capstone materials must be submitted to the MPH Director of Community Based Education by the stated deadline communicated to students each semester. Required items include:

- Portfolio of products created through the Practicum experience
- Electronic copy of Practicum poster presented at *Innovations*
- Student evaluation of Practicum site
- Practicum hours log
- Electronic copy of Capstone essay (and accompanying evaluations)
- Electronic copy of Capstone presentation (and accompanying evaluations)

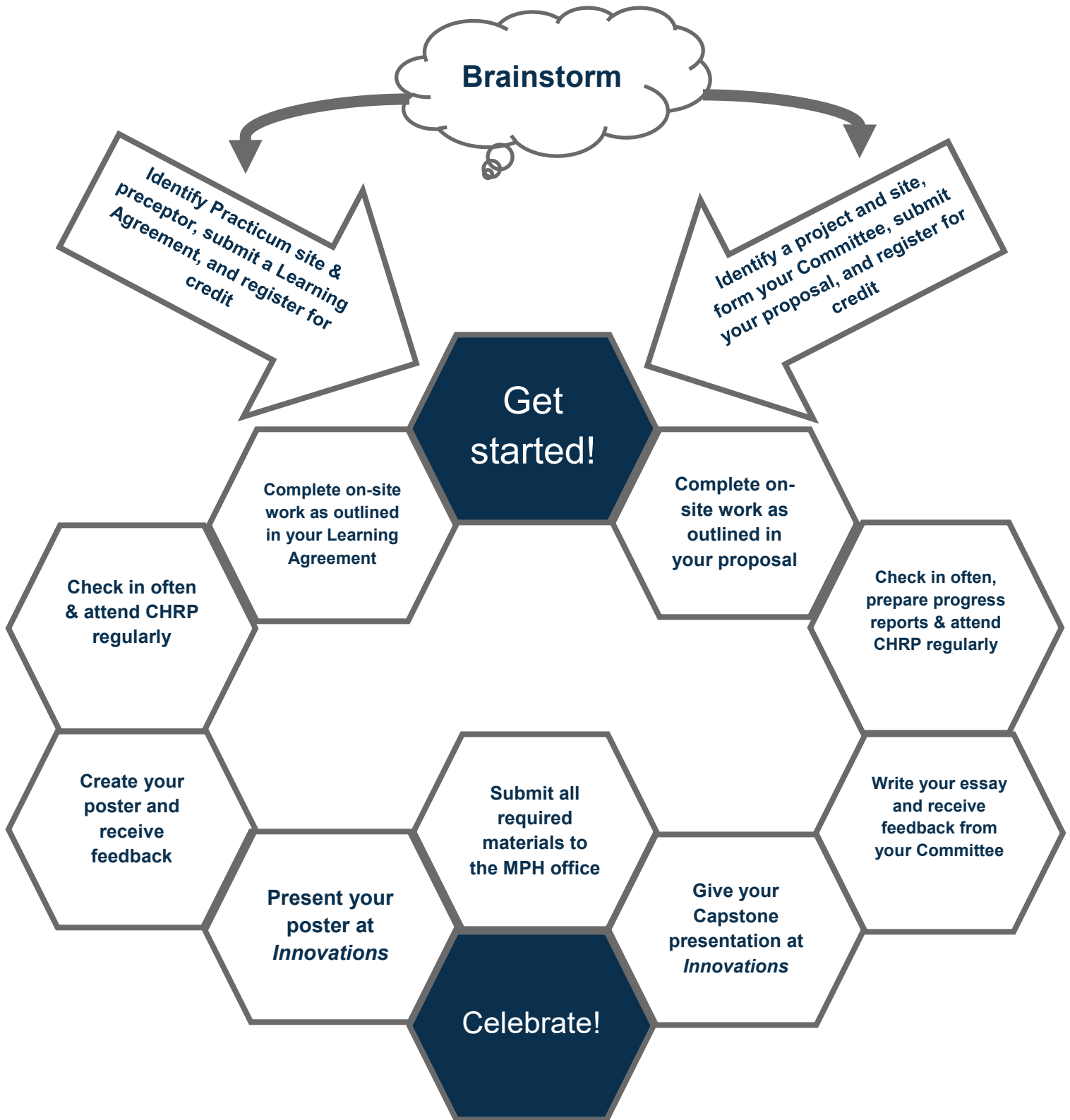
Encourage your Committee to evaluate your project and promptly provide feedback to the MPH Office. It is your responsibility to ensure that the MPH Director of Community Based Education receives their feedback on your presentation.

## **Step 6: Celebrate!**

# Flowchart: Integrated Practicum + Capstone



# Flowchart: Separate Practicum & Capstone



# Grading for the Culminating Experience

The MPH Culminating Experience is graded on a Pass/Fail basis. To fulfill the Culminating Experience, students must earn a “Pass” in both MPHP 650 ‘Public Health Practicum’ and MPHP 652 ‘Public Health Capstone’. To receive a grade of Pass, the student must complete all required components of MPHP 650 and/or MPHP 652 by the stated deadlines. The required components are detailed in MPH Program documents, including this one.

## Practicum Credits

Students should plan on enrolling in all 3 Practicum credits during the semester in which they intend to complete the project and present at the *Public Health Innovations Conference*. In order to enroll in Practicum credits, a Practicum Learning Agreement (or a project proposal that encompasses both Practicum and Capstone, if a student is completing an integrated project) must be completed by the student and their preceptor and submitted to the MPH Director of Community Based Education before the end of the Add/Drop period of the semester in which the student intends on registering.

## Capstone Credits

Students are encouraged to split the required 6 Capstone credits across two semesters. For example, a student may begin the Capstone process and submit an approved proposal in order to register for 3 credits in a Fall semester. The student may then enroll in the remaining 3 credits and finish the Capstone in the following Spring semester. In order to receive credit for the 3 credits taken in the preceding fall semester, the student must submit a Progress Report to their Capstone Committee and the Director of Community Based Education by the stated deadline. While it is possible to enroll in all 6 capstone credits in one semester, students are **highly** discouraged from attempting to complete a Capstone in one semester.

## “Incomplete” Grades & the Culminating Experience

There are instances in which a student has registered for Culminating Experience credits but does not complete the project prior to the end of the semester. In these instances, a student is given an “Incomplete” for the credits. The Incomplete will be resolved and a grade of “Pass” will be issued once the student completes all of the requirements associated with the credits in question. The School of Graduate Studies reserves the right to convert unresolved Incomplete grades to a permanent No Pass if the work is not completed by the stated deadline the following semester. For this reason, students are **strongly encouraged** to register for Culminating Experience credits in the semester they intend to complete the work and present at the *Public Health Innovations Conference*. Failure to heed this advice may result in permanent No Pass status for unresolved credits, requiring the student to re-register (and pay) for additional credits. Students are encouraged to split Capstone credits into two semesters, and are therefore encouraged to register for the final 3 Capstone credits in the semester they intend to complete and present their project.

## Waiver of Registration

Sometimes, graduating students are unable to finish the Culminating Experience requirements by the stated deadline during the semester in which they intend to graduate. However, if the student is able to complete the requirements, present the Capstone and/or practicum poster to committee members, and turn in the final copy of the Capstone essay and all required paperwork associated with the completion of the Capstone project and Practicum requirement by the end of the drop/add period of the following semester, the student can apply for a waiver of registration. This waiver exempts the student from the School of Graduate Studies’ policy that states that a student must be registered for credit during the semester in which he/she intends on graduating. For example, a student may register for their final MPHP 652 credits in fall semester but not finish as intended. They have the option of completing their project prior to the end of the drop/add period in spring semester, apply for the waiver of registration, not take any credits in spring semester, and graduate in May. Please also note that a student presenting his/her Capstone to committee members only (prior to the end of the drop/add period in order to qualify for a waiver of registration) is strongly encouraged to present their Practicum poster and/or Capstone during that semester’s *Public Health Innovations Conference* as well. If the student cannot complete the project as described above by the end of the drop/add period, the student will need to register for credit during that semester (in order to remain in good standing and to apply for graduation). These types of situations can be complicated – a student with questions about any of the above should contact the MPH Office.

## MPH Archive & Retention of Student Work

The Master of Public Health Program retains electronic copies of all Practicum Posters, Capstone Essays, and Capstone Presentations as part of the program’s archives. These electronic copies are retained for a number of reasons, including providing references, program quality assurance/improvement, and re-accreditation purposes. Students may petition to have their work excluded from the electronic archive by contacting the MPH Administrative Director. Petitions will only be accepted after completion of the Culminating Experience process (including all presentations and submission of all required forms and documents).



# Public Health Practicum Overview

The Public Health Practicum is meant to provide students with *community-based* practical field experience that cultivates mentored relationships with public health professionals through meaningful, hands-on work that builds upon foundational and concentration-specific competencies. The Practicum is also meant to serve as a bridge between the classroom and public health profession, linking academic training to the core functions of public health practice. The Practicum should be mutually beneficial to both the student and the host organization.

## A Portfolio Approach

As discussed on page 15, the Practicum must meet at least 5 competencies, at least 3 of which are foundational. Mastery of the student's chosen competencies is demonstrated and evaluated by a portfolio of concrete products. By the end of the student's practicum experience, the student's portfolio should consist of 2 or more products (deliverables) that demonstrate attainment of the student's 5 chosen competencies and should be productive and useful to the student's host organization.

### Portfolio product examples

The following lists various examples of appropriate portfolio products. **This list is not exhaustive** and is meant to provide ideas for portfolio products. Possible portfolio products should be identified and discussed with the student's practicum preceptor and the MPH Program's Director of Community Based Education.

- A written report or white paper on a public health issue relevant to the host organization
- Educational materials targeted toward a population of interest to be used by the host organization
- A training or manual for the host organization to provide to its employees, volunteers, or other populations of interest
- A spreadsheet or dataset compiled by the student to be used by the host organization for quality improvement and/or research initiatives
- A webpage the student has developed for the host organization
- An infographic or other informational material to be displayed or otherwise used by the host organization

## Requirements

The successful completion of the Public Health Practicum (MPHP 650) requires:

- Exhibiting professionalism in all work situations (e.g., behavior, dress, oral and written communication, and ethics) as evaluated by the student's practicum preceptor
- A structured, individually arranged **Practicum learning agreement** with a community partner that describes the nature of the Practicum experience, including public health competencies addressed (Note: a student may submit one single written proposal, if appropriate, if practicum and capstone requirements are being satisfied through one large project.)
- Attendance at Community Health Research & Practice (CHRP) meetings
- Completion and documentation of 120 hours dedicated to the Practicum
- Preparation and presentation of a professional poster describing the practicum experience, to be presented at the *Public Health Innovations Conference* hosted by the MPH program near the end of each fall and spring semester
- At least two **portfolio products (deliverables)** that are useful to the host organization and that demonstrate attainment of the identified competencies. Portfolio deliverables can be in electronic or physical form as appropriate. The poster completed for the *Innovations* conference is **not** included as a portfolio product unless the poster is also being presented in another setting, such as a professional conference being attended as a part of the student's practicum experience.
- Evaluation of the practicum site and preceptor (completed by the student) and an evaluation of the student and their portfolio products (completed by the preceptor)

## Registering for Practicum Credit

To fulfill the Public Health Practicum requirements, students register for three (3) credits of MPHP 650. These credits are taken on a Pass/Fail basis. **Students are encouraged to complete their Public Health Practicum and Capstone Project as a unified Culminating Experience, with a single proposal that describes both the Practicum and Capstone projects.** Students completing unrelated Practicum and Capstone projects are required to submit both a learning agreement and a proposal for the Practicum and Capstone, respectively.

Students must submit a completed learning agreement to the MPH Office before they are allowed to register for Practicum (MPHP 650) credits. Most students will complete their practicum experience during a single semester; however, students may elect to spread their practicum experience across two semesters if appropriate. In all cases, students should register for 3 credits of Public Health Practicum (MPHP 650) during the semester they intend to complete and present their work. If needed, a grade of Incomplete will be issued until the student completes all requirements of the Practicum, at which point, assuming satisfactory completion of all requirements, the grade will be changed to a Pass. The School of Graduate Studies reserves the right to change Incomplete grades to permanent No Pass if the credits are not resolved by the stated deadline.

## **Roles and Responsibilities for the Public Health Practicum**

A successful Practicum experience requires the commitment of several individuals. The Practicum is a mutually beneficial partnership between the student, the MPH program, and a sponsoring agency/organization, represented by a preceptor. The agency preceptor is the professional on-site responsible for daily supervision of the student. Preferably, this individual will be a public health practitioner. The responsibilities of the preceptor, the MPH program and the student are detailed below.

The agency, organization, program, project, or individual that ultimately agrees to accept a student for a practicum experience assumes an educational role. One person, the *Practicum Preceptor*, must agree to help arrange the student's experience and define activities that will help meet the objectives of both the student and of the organization/project. The practicum, however, is not meant to burden the preceptor with extensive supervisory demands. The roles and responsibilities for students, preceptors, and the MPH Director of Community Based Education are outlined below:

### **The MPH Student**

The role of the MPH student includes the following responsibilities:

- Seek out specific background reading or other information prior to initial meeting with preceptor
- Discuss the scope of the practicum with Preceptor and MPH Director of Community Based Education
- Complete a Practicum Learning Agreement describing the anticipated practicum experience
- Clarify with preceptor whether work will be independent or in collaboration with others
- Complete a minimum of 120 hours during the practicum
- Discuss with preceptor how time should be allocated
- Comply with time commitments whether or not preceptor is on site
- Discuss work schedule with preceptor on a regular basis
- Complete any special training or certifications as required
- Meet with preceptor regularly as appropriate
- Check in with the MPH Director of Community Based Education on a regular basis
- If applicable, discuss the relationship of the practicum to the student Capstone project on an ongoing basis with the Preceptor and MPH Director of Community Based Education
- Report any problems regarding the practicum experience to the MPH Director of Community Based Education as they occur (rather than waiting until formal debriefing or completion of the experience)
- Act in a professional manner, respecting agency and individual confidentiality
- Complete and submit an evaluation of the practicum site at the end of the experience
- Prepare and present a professional poster relating to the practicum experience
- Compile and track progress of the Practicum Portfolio products
- Maintain regular attendance at the Community Health Research & Practice (CHRP) seminar

### **The Practicum Preceptor**

The role of the Public Health Practicum Preceptor includes the following responsibilities:

- Define the scope of the practicum with student
- Determine the need for special training or certifications (e.g., HIPAA, IRB, etc.)
- Discuss and develop a schedule with the student

- Schedule regular meetings (recommended weekly or at least 1 meeting for each 40 hours of practicum completion) with the student to discuss performance, development, and progress
- Discuss maintenance of data/records, if applicable
- Review and approve the student's Practicum Learning Agreement which contains the above information, in concert with MPH Director of Community Based Education
- Include student in meetings or seminars related to the practicum area
- Clarify to whom student should report if preceptor is not available
- Communicate regularly with the MPH Director of Community Based Education
- Review the final practicum poster and Practicum Portfolio products (along with MPH Director of Community Based Education)
- Complete an evaluation of the student at the end of the practicum experience

**At a minimum, Public Health Practicum Preceptors should possess the following traits and/or abilities:**

- Possess a MPH degree or sufficient public health knowledge and experience to appropriately guide and advise the student
- Ability to work collaboratively with the student in developing a suitable educational experience
- Willingness to provide project/field instruction and supervision
- Ability to assist student in identifying relevant issues and possible approaches to a problem
- Ability to assist student in applying newly learned knowledge in the community
- Ability to assess student's performance, including ongoing feedback and final critique of project

**The MPH Director of Community Based Education**

The Role of the MPH Director of Community Based Education includes the following responsibilities related to the Practicum Experience:

- Support the student and preceptor in all aspects of the Practicum
- Discuss the scope, scale, and structure of the Practicum
- Maintain office hours that allow students to meet regularly (by appointment or drop-in)
- Help the student and preceptor determine the relationship of the Practicum to a Capstone (if any)
- Communicate regularly with the student and preceptor
- Review the final practicum poster and portfolio products and provide feedback
- In conjunction with overall MPH Program efforts, offer professional development to the public health workforce, including current practicum preceptors
- Utilize continuous quality improvement principles to enhance the course and practicum sites

# Capstone Project Overview

## Objectives

The objectives of the *multi-semester* Capstone Project are to:

- Develop a broad understanding of content related to the chosen MPH concentration
- Develop the ability to communicate effectively with target groups and professionals
- Develop skills necessary for scholarship and scientific investigation
- Order priorities for major projects according to definable criteria
- Use information technology for applications relevant to public health
- Identify ethical, social and cultural issues relating to policies, risks, research and interventions in a public health context
- Identify decision-making processes within the field site organization
- Identify and coordinate the use of resources at the site

## Requirements

The successful completion of the Capstone Project requires the completion of the following:

- Complete Capstone project proposal and accompanying forms (these **must** be completed, submitted, and approved by Capstone Committee and MPH Office prior to student receiving permission to register for Capstone credits)
  - A completed Capstone project proposal includes:
    - Cover sheet signed by all Capstone Committee members
    - Proposal essay, detailing background literature, methodology, and public health significance of Capstone project
    - General competencies form
    - Major-specific competencies form
- Capstone progress report(s)
- Capstone competency evaluation forms (to be completed by the student and all members of the Capstone Committee)
- Capstone essay of publishable quality
- Capstone essay evaluation forms (to be completed by all Capstone Committee members)
- Oral presentation detailing the project and its findings given at the *Public Health Innovations Conference*
- Presentation evaluation forms (to be completed by all Capstone Committee members)

## Registering for Capstone Credit

To fulfill the Capstone requirements, students must register for six (6) credits of MPHP 652 'Public Health Capstone' or the appropriate equivalent course (e.g., MPHP 656/657 for MSSA/MPH dual degree students). **Students are encouraged to complete their Public Health Practicum and Capstone Project as a unified Culminating Experience, with a single proposal that describes both the Practicum and Capstone projects.** Students completing unrelated Practicum and Capstone projects

are required to submit both a learning agreement and a proposal for the Practicum and Capstone, respectively.

Students must submit a completed Capstone proposal (with accompanying forms) to the MPH Office before they are allowed to register for Capstone (MPHP 652) credits. Most students will complete their Capstone Project experience during their last academic year in the program (two semesters, three credits per semester). However, students may elect to condense their Capstone credits into a single semester (one semester; six credit hours). It is always preferred to dedicate two semesters to the project. In any case, the student must detail their timeframe in their Capstone project proposal and will be expected to submit regular progress reports. **Students who enroll in the six credits over two semesters (three credits per semester) may receive a grade of Pass for the first set of three credits by completing and submitting regular progress reports to the student's Capstone Committee and the MPH Director of Community Based Education.**

## Roles and Responsibilities for the Capstone Project

### The MPH Student

The role of the MPH student includes the following responsibilities:

- **The MPH student is responsible for all aspects of their Capstone project**, including ensuring the timely submission of all required forms
- Identify a Capstone Advisory Committee who will support the student's development throughout the process of their scholarly project. The student's Capstone Advisory Committee should consist of a faculty advisor, the field site preceptor, and a content expert relevant to the project topic or methodology. These roles may overlap or be shared by the same person; however, **there must be three (3) members of the Capstone Advisory Committee who will serve to evaluate student performance in the Capstone presentation and essay.** Students may choose to include more than three Capstone Committee members. **Due to the unique nature of the MPH Capstone Project, the MPH Program recommends that a member of the MPH Management/Administrative Team or a Concentration Coordinator serve on your Capstone Advisory Committee.**
- Students are expected to meet with their Capstone Advisory Committee as determined in their proposal and to submit written progress reports as required. **Students should plan to create and submit at least one progress report per semester of Capstone work** (though the student's Committee may require additional progress reports as appropriate).

### The Capstone Advisory Committee

While the student should be thoughtful in constructing their Capstone Advisory Committee, each committee member should carefully consider their role as well. **There are specific responsibilities associated with being a member of the committee.** If a potential member believes they cannot fulfill the role (e.g., due to other time commitments), the MPH program can assist the student in identifying other potential committee members.

General responsibilities associated with being a Capstone Advisory Committee Member include:

- Provide guidance and feedback to the student as they prepare their Capstone Proposal
- Review and approve the student's final Capstone Proposal by signing the Cover Sheet and Approval Form
- Meet with the student to assess progress and provide feedback throughout the project
- Attend the student's Capstone presentation
- Review and evaluate the student's Capstone essay and presentation using evaluation forms

**At a minimum, Capstone Advisory Committee should possess the following traits and/or abilities:**

- Possess a MPH degree or substantial public health knowledge and experience.
- Ability to work collaboratively with the student in developing a suitable educational experience.
- Willingness to provide project/field instruction and supervision.
- Ability to assist student in identifying relevant issues and possible approaches to a problem.
- Ability to assist student in applying newly learned knowledge in the community.
- Ability to assess student's performance, including ongoing feedback and final critique of project.

### **Chair of the Capstone Advisory Committee**

In addition to the general responsibilities for Capstone Advisory Committee Members, the Chair of the Capstone Advisory Committee has the following additional responsibilities:

- Serve as a mentor throughout the Capstone process, generally meeting with the student more often than other committee members
- Taking a leadership role on the Capstone committee, serving as the point person for the student if challenges arise
- Serves as the Responsible Investigator for submission of the project to Institutional Review Board oversight (if applicable). Only Case Western Reserve University faculty members who meet the human subjects research education requirement may act as Responsible Investigators.

### **The Capstone Preceptor**

In addition to the general responsibilities for Capstone Advisory Committee Members, the Capstone Preceptor has the following additional responsibilities:

- Define the scope of the organizational involvement for the project with student;
- Determine the need for special training or certifications (e.g., HIPAA, IRB, etc.) specific to the host organization;
- Discuss and develop a schedule with the student;
- Include student in meetings or seminars related to the Capstone project;
- Clarify to whom student should report if preceptor is not available;

### **The MPH Director of Community Based Education**

The Role of the MPH Director of Community Based Education includes the following responsibilities related to the Capstone Project:

- Support the student, preceptor, and Committee in all aspects of the Capstone
- Maintain office hours that allow students to meet regularly (by appointment or drop-in)
- Communicate regularly with the student and preceptor
- Utilize continuous quality improvement principles to enhance the course and Capstone sites
- Serve as the primary organizer of the *Public Health Innovations Conference*



# Human Research Protection and IRB Information

There are federal regulations governing research involving human subjects. These regulations require Institutional Review Board (IRB) approval of a protocol. In determining whether your Capstone Project will require IRB clearance, we recommend a simple approach: ***When in doubt, submit a protocol to the IRB.*** Your Capstone Advisory Committee and the MPH Program can offer guidance on the IRB process. Students at Case Western Reserve University must have a “Responsible Investigator” (faculty with a contractual relationship to the University) be the primary sponsor for the IRB application. The Capstone Advisory Committee Chair should function as the Responsible Investigator. In addition, all IRB applications must obtain the signature of the Chair of your home department (usually Population & Quantitative Health Sciences). When preparing the IRB application, work closely with your Responsible Investigator and be diligent in following the directions given by the IRB, as this will save a lot of time and headaches. Remember, you are **not** alone in this process. Your Capstone Advisory Committee and the Responsible Investigator can guide you through the process. All study applications are submitted through the SpartaIRB system. More information can be found here: <https://case.edu/research/faculty-staff/education-and-training/spartaairb-info>. Students must also complete the Continuing Research Education Credit (CREC) program. Additional information can be found here: <https://case.edu/research/faculty-staff/education-and-training/continuing-research-education-credit-crec>

Additional information and submission guidelines can be accessed on the website for the Office of Research Compliance: <https://research.case.edu/>. Electronic forms and templates are provided, along with a helpful list of FAQs.

In general, when preparing an IRB application, the following questions will be answered. These questions can also be helpful in preparing your Capstone Proposal:

## Purpose

- What is the purpose of your research?

## Population

- Describe the population you are working with.
- Why have you chosen this population?

## Participants

- How will you identify, recruit, and engage participants for your research?
- What criteria will you use to identify appropriate participants?
- How will you exclude participants that do not meet your criteria?
- Will you provide any incentives or payments to participants?

## Consent

- How will you obtain consent from your participants?
- Who will obtain the consent?

## Identifiable Information

- Will you collect identifiable information from your participants?
- If yes, why do you need identifiable information?

## Confidentiality and Data Protections

- How will you protect the privacy of your participants?
- What steps will you take to protect the identities of your participants?
- Will the data be coded to protect the identities of your participants?
- If the data is coded, who will have the code to identify participants?
- What will you do to keep your data safe?

### Risks and Benefits

- Are there any direct benefits to the individual's participating in your research?
- How will your research benefit the population you are working with?
- How will your research benefit the general population?
- What are the risks to this population?
- What will you do to mitigate and address these risks?

### Previous Research

- What research has already been done on your topic?
- What question(s) does your research seek to answer that previous research has not answered?

### Methodology

- Describe the methodology you intend to use.
- Why have you chosen this methodology?

### Dissemination Plan

- How will you report the results of your findings to your participants?
- How do you plan to disseminate your results to the general public?

In addition to the general considerations above, please familiarize yourself with the relevant university policies (on the Office of Research Compliance's website), particularly if you are completing a Capstone Projects which includes a research-component. **It is important that you also familiarize yourself with the policies of your Capstone site (and host country for international projects).**

# Capstone Progress Report Guidelines

Common sense prevails for this aspect of reporting on a Capstone Experience. The Progress Report is the method by which the student communicates the activities of the project and keeps his/her Capstone Advisory Committee up to speed with the project. It also provides an opportunity for the MPH Program to give something other than a grade of 'Incomplete' for projects that span more than one grading period.

During any semester that students are registered for Capstone credits but not completing their Capstone project, students should provide a minimum of one report at midterm and at the end of the semester. If it is the final (or only) semester of Capstone registration, the student should plan at least three progress reports to the advisory committee. As a general guideline, we suggest that students communicate often and consistently with their committee during the course of their project.

Consult with your Capstone Committee for their preference on the frequency and timing of progress updates. The student's essay and presentation will serve as the final semester progress report.

Progress report(s) should be submitted to each member of the student's Capstone Advisory Committee, with a copy to the MPH Director of Community Based Education. The Committee, or the Chair representing the committee, can assess the quality of the work for the semester and determine a grade of "Pass" or "No Pass" for the term. That grade should be communicated to the MPH Director of Community Based Education before the final grading deadline so that a grade may be applied to the student's record. If the information does not get communicated to the MPH Office, the student will be issued an Incomplete for the semester. Students receiving a Pass for one semester will also be issued a permit to register for continued MPHP 652 credits in the subsequent term.

Components of the progress report (approximately one page) are listed below:

- Report of actions taken in fulfillment of Capstone proposal
- Review of accomplishments and achievements toward goals and timeline detailed in proposal and progress toward completion
- Summary of barriers encountered
- Revised timeline (if necessary)
- All written products of your efforts, even if in draft form
- Attendance at Community Health Research and Practice (CHRP) research group (or agreed upon alternative).
- Progress made in fulfilling the competencies included in your proposal (and any changes). Attach completed Competency Reporting Form with progress report.

**For any student receiving Capstone credit, if barriers are encountered that will prevent completion of the project as proposed, the Capstone Committee should be informed as it happens rather than waiting until progress report time.**

# Capstone Essay Guidelines

Each student is required to develop an essay of **professional quality** based on his or her Capstone experience. The student writes the essay based on the Capstone project as outlined in the student's Capstone proposal. The Capstone Committee, analogous to a Thesis Committee, is responsible for evaluating the essay. The structure of the Capstone essay should generally follow the format listed below. (An alternate option is to submit a manuscript prepared for submission for publication.)

Following completion of the Capstone experience and the essay, each student is required to formally present his or her his or her research findings. (Refer to Capstone Presentation Guidelines on page 39.) The essay is due to all members of the Capstone Committee and the MPH Program Office prior to the presentation. **(Read all emails from the MPH Office while working on your Capstone experience as these emails will contain specific deadlines.)** Should the student's Capstone Advisory Committee request any changes to the essay, the modifications need to be incorporated into a final document to be submitted (to all previously named parties) at the time of the final presentation. The student will receive support and encouragement to publish peer-reviewed, scholarly work based on the Capstone essay.

Samples of past Capstone essays are on file with the MPH Office and available to reference upon request.

## Suggested Capstone Essay Format

- Cover Page: Name, project title, sponsoring organization, committee members, date of submission
- Abstract
- Summary Statement: A brief statement of the purpose of the project and what the project addresses.
- Rationale: A discussion of why the project was undertaken and/or its importance to public health
- Objectives: A numbered list of the objectives and/or research questions addressed by the project
- Background: A detailed literature review describing previous work done on the topic that led to the project being undertaken. Effort should be made to place the project in theoretical model. The student should address related controversies.
- Methods:
  - Design
  - Setting
  - Participants
  - Intervention (if appropriate)
  - Main outcome measures
- Results: The product of the effort put forth in the project should be articulated in detail in this section. The student should place the results in the context of the existing base of knowledge on the topic. Strengths and limitations of the project should be discussed.
- Conclusion: Discrete conclusions supported by evidence should be communicated. Further study or effort implied by the conclusions should be expressed. Equal attention should be given to positive and negative conclusions.

Students are responsible for arranging for their Capstone Committee members to review and evaluate the essay (see the evaluation forms in the Capstone Kit). Students are also responsible for distributing essay evaluation forms to members of the capstone advisory committee, along with the essay, for performance assessment. Students should instruct committee members to complete and sign these forms no later than approximately one week after presenting at the *Public Health Innovations Conference*,

and submit them to the MPH Office so that a grade may be given. **(Please read all emails from the MPH Office during the semester you will completing your Capstone essay, as these emails will contain important deadlines.)** Until a satisfactory evaluation is received from the Capstone Committee, the student will not receive a passing grade.

### **Definition of Publishable Quality**

All Capstone Essays must be of publishable quality. **Publishable quality does not mean that your essay must be published in a peer-reviewed journal.** Instead, publishable quality means that your essay is of sufficient quality that it *could* be published (e.g., for the lay public, in a public health newsletter, an academic journal, etc.) or is worthy of retaining for reference. In order to ensure that your paper is of publishable quality, please adhere to the following guidelines:

#### **Mechanics**

- Choose a citation format — and be consistent in its use. We recommend American Psychological Association (APA) format, though another format may be appropriate.
- The student's ideas should be supported with authority and any material taken from an outside source must be cited in accordance with the chosen citation format.
- The student should provide relevant, useful, and meaningful material in the body of the essay or in footnotes.

#### **Organization**

- The student's ideas should be presented in a logical sequence and flow from paragraph to paragraph.
- The essay should contain the components described under the above Capstone essay guidelines.

#### **Style**

- The student should use proper grammar, punctuation, and correct spelling.
- The student should use proper public health vocabulary where appropriate.
- The student should write with clarity and avoid redundancy.

#### **Analysis**

- The Capstone Essay should contain an introduction that presents the reader with an accurate idea of the nature of the subject matter covered (e.g., literature review). The introduction/literature review should not be the primary focus of the Capstone essay.
- The student should discuss and resolve the relevant issues.
- The student should place their Capstone Project in the context of past public health efforts and future public health implications.
- The Capstone essay should primarily focus on the student's own analysis and interpretation.
- The Capstone essay should have an effective conclusion.
- The reader should be left with a relatively clear understanding of the Capstone essay's topic.

## **Abstracts**

All students who have completed sufficient work toward their Capstone are strongly encouraged to prepare an abstract for potential submission to APHA or another professional conference. Abstracts will be reviewed at CHRP, where students will receive feedback from faculty and other students prior to actual submission. Students will be directed on the preferred method of submission in advance of the due date. It is not unusual for several MPH students to have their abstracts accepted to APHA and other professional conferences in a typical year. Notify the MPH Office if your abstract is accepted for presentation.

# Capstone Presentation Guidelines

The Capstone Presentation is an oral presentation of the content of the Capstone Essay. Students should use PowerPoint slides to support their presentation. Students should avoid reading the slides out loud to the audience; the visuals provided by the software should support the oral presentation, not duplicate it. Students should work with MPH Program staff if special equipment is needed. The MPH Office asks that an electronic copy of the Capstone presentation be submitted to the MPH Director of Community Based Education for the archives, along with the final Capstone essay.

Some general guidelines for presentations include:

- Briefly introduce yourself at the beginning of the presentation
- Make sure you include the names/credentials of the people on your Capstone Committee on the first or second slide
- Include a clear and concise statement of purpose related to your project
- Be sure to appropriately label and provide a title for all charts and graphs
- Include some comments about the Public Health Implications of your work. In other words, how does your project impact public health practice, policy, and/or research? Also, if applicable, consider separating clinical and public health implications.
- Provide balance between the limitations and strengths of your work. Present a balanced perspective. Do not solely focus on limitations.
- Include a future work slide. What are the next steps for this project and your future work?
- The more you help the audience understand what you are presenting, the more interested they will be

The Capstone Presentation is analogous to a defense of a master's thesis for a student in an MS program or a defense of a doctoral dissertation for a student in a PhD program. It will be given to an audience of the student's peers, faculty, and Committee members. It should be scheduled through the MPH Office for a time slot during the biennial *Public Health Innovations Conference*, after determining the availability of the Capstone Committee as they must be present for the presentation. Presentations are expected to last 20 minutes, with 5-10 additional minutes for questions and answers. (Note: The Capstone essay is due to all members of the Advisory Committee and the MPH Office prior to the final presentation. Should the MPH Program Management Team and/or the student's Capstone Committee request any changes to the essay, the modifications need to be incorporated into a final document to be submitted to all previously named parties prior to or at the time of the final presentation.) In rare cases, it may be necessary for students to schedule their presentations for times other than the *Public Health Innovations Conference*. In this case, students should work with MPH Program staff to arrange a location and promote the presentation to faculty and peers.

**Students are responsible for arranging for their Capstone Committee members to attend the presentation.** Students are also responsible for distributing presentation evaluation forms (see Capstone Kit) to members of the Committee for assessment. Students should instruct Capstone Committee members to complete and sign these forms during the presentation. The student should then collect these forms at the end of their presentation to submit them to the MPH Office. Until the forms are signed off by each advisor, the student will not receive a passing grade.

All students who graduate during the summer term or during a Waiver of Registration period are responsible for arranging a time in which all Committee members can be present to view the Capstone

presentation. Once a student has arranged this time, they should contact the MPH Office for assistance in reserving a room in the School of Medicine for the presentation. The MPH Program will advertise the presentation to MPH faculty, staff, students, alumni, and the broader community and can also video-record the presentation, if requested. Please note that students presenting and graduating in a summer term or a Waiver of Registration Period are encouraged to present their Capstone during the next *Innovations Conference* as well.



# Culminating Experience Funding Request Form

Student name: \_\_\_\_\_ 7-Digit ID: \_\_\_\_\_

Project title: \_\_\_\_\_

Amount requested: \_\_\_\_\_

Please briefly describe the expenses you plan to incur:

*Please note: expenses are paid on a reimbursement basis. (Exception: CWRU will **not** reimburse you for gift card purchases. Please see the Research Incentives Policy below for details on procurement of gift cards for research purposes.) You must save itemized receipts for all expenses and submit them to the MPH office for reimbursement. CWRU will not reimburse you without a receipt.*

## **Financial Support for Capstone Projects**

The MPH program recognizes that the Capstone Experience may entail expenses for the student (e.g., survey instruments, materials, etc.). The MPH program provides financial support, on a competitive basis, for student capstone projects up to \$250 per student. Recognizing that international projects entail greater expense, Global Health capstones that include international travel are allotted up to \$500. Full details about financial assistance for the Capstone Experience can be obtained from the MPH Office.

## **Research Incentives Policy**

Any research incentives must be approved by the Case Western Reserve University's Institutional Review Board (IRB). The MPH program does not keep gift cards on hand. If students are using gift cards as incentives for educational or research projects, i.e. capstone projects, students must submit a request to the MPH program for the gift cards. This request is submitted through a form to be approved by the MPH Director of Community- Based Education and then submitted to the Administrative Director for budgetary purposes. The MPH program strongly encourages the use of electronic gift cards such as Amazon.

## **Process for Gift Card Procurement**

- Students submit a Gift Card request form indicating the purpose for the cards.
- The Director of Community-Based Education will request the gift cards by notifying the Department Assistant.
- The amount requested will be documented by the Administrative Director.
- Gift cards will be purchased by the Department Assistant.
- Gift cards are secured in the MPH office by the Director of Community- Based Education.
- Once the Gift cards are available, the Director of Community- Based Education will notify the student.

All incentives and monetary devices must be accounted for by the student to prevent theft or misuse.

Student signature: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

*I have read and understand the policies and procedures described above.*

# Special Considerations for International Experiences

Please note: The CWRU Center for Global Health & Disease or the partner organization may have additional forms that must be completed for international experiences. It is the student's responsibility to complete all forms, including those included in this document and those of the partner organization.

- Speak with Capstone Advisory Committee about safety and logistical considerations for the host country
- Approved IRB Protocol (from Case Western Reserve University)
- Approved IRB Protocol (from Host Country)
- Human Subjects Regulations Certification (through CWRU/CITI program)
- Signed Statement of Responsibility (through CWRU)
- Register your travel with the CWRU Office of Education Abroad. (Please refer to the MPH Program's study abroad policy in the MPH Handbook for more detailed information.)

## Travel Documentation

- Valid Passport

Make sure your passport does not expire less than 6 months before your return flight.

- Visa

Check with Foreign Embassy to determine the specific type of visa that will be required for you to perform research. Many countries require special research visas which require more planning on your part due to lengthier application timeframes, additional expenses, and documentation (e.g., letters of support from the foreign research institution, chest x-rays, proof of vaccinations, police reports, etc. Note that performing research after entering the country as a tourist (i.e., without an approved research visa) may be illegal in some countries.

- Required Health Inoculations/Medications (Traveler's Clinic)

Visit a travel clinic at least 3 months prior to departure since some vaccinations require booster doses

- Emergency Evacuation Insurance

A variety of companies can insure travelers to provide emergency medical transportation from remote or underdeveloped areas to regions with improved health facilities and care. In some cases, this type of insurance may be available through CWRU during approved CWRU

international activities, but supplemental insurance may still be advisable. In all cases, verify your eligibility and restrictions (e.g., for specific *activities* that you could foresee during your travels) and carry copies of the coverage.

Registration with US Embassy

In the unexpected event of political upheaval, natural disaster, or other emergency, the US embassy may be able to provide assistance to US citizens. Registration is easy and free through their website.

Import Permit

If bringing back biological samples, be sure you have a valid import permit issued by CDC. Note: You may not bring back biological samples in your baggage. Be aware that these items may be confiscated and not returned. Also, host country may require their approval to remove biological samples from the country.

# MPH Program Study Abroad Policy

Per the guidelines of the CWRU Center for International Affairs, Integrated Graduate Studies (IGS) students are classified as undergraduate students for the purposes of study abroad experiences. All undergraduate *and* graduate students must register with the Center for International Affairs Office of Education Abroad (see instructions below). Undergraduate students may have travel abroad denied or restricted based on current U.S. Department of State Travel Advisories. If an undergraduate student travels to a country or region which the Office of Education Abroad has identified as restricted, the student may not receive the credits associated with the study abroad experience. *(Restricted regions typically include those for which Level 4 Travel Advisories have been issued by the U.S. Department of State. Level 3 Travel Advisories may also be subject to restriction. Check with the Office of Education Abroad before traveling if you are unsure of your destination status.)*

Graduate students, while not subject to these restrictions, are responsible for following all university policies and are encouraged to contact the Center for International Affairs to discuss possible travel advisories before traveling abroad for research.

The MPH program requires all undergraduate *and* graduate students register with the Office of Education Abroad. Please review the Center for International Affairs Pre-departure orientation (<https://case.edu/studentlife/educationabroad/studying-abroad/preparing-go-abroad/pre-departure-orientations>)

Students that are going to study abroad must complete these steps:

- Email [studyabroad@case.edu](mailto:studyabroad@case.edu) and ask for the registration forms for study abroad
- The registration forms will be sent by email from the Center of International Affairs to be completed by the student
- Confirm that the student status is “committed” (typically takes 24 hours)
- Students must notify the MPH program Administrative Director or Director of Community-Based Education of their study abroad confirmation