

D7. MPH Integrative Learning Experience

MPH students complete an integrative learning experience (ILE) that demonstrates synthesis of foundational and concentration competencies. Students in consultation with faculty select foundational and concentration-specific competencies appropriate to the student's educational and professional goals.

Professional certification exams (e.g., CPH, CHES/MCHES, REHS, RHIA) may serve as an element of the ILE, but are not in and of themselves sufficient to satisfy this criterion.

The school identifies assessment methods that ensure that at least one faculty member reviews each student's performance in the ILE and ensures that the experience addresses the selected foundational and concentration-specific competencies. Faculty assessment may be supplemented with assessments from other qualified individuals (e.g., preceptors).

- 1) List, in the format of Template D7-1, the integrative learning experience for each MPH concentration, generalist degree or combined degree option that includes the MPH. The template also requires the school to explain, for each experience, how it ensures that the experience demonstrates synthesis of competencies.

Table D7-1: MPH Integrative Learning Experience for all Concentrations	
Integrative learning experience	How competencies are synthesized
Capstone Project and Capstone Report	Students, with input from their course instructor, write a project proposal for the PHC 6940 MPH Capstone course. The proposal requires identification of the competencies that will be demonstrated through the project and outlines measurable objectives for the project. Students select three foundational and two concentration competencies, which are then reviewed and approved by the course instructor. A required element of the final Capstone report is a written assessment of how the project met the terms of the original proposal, with special attention to the student-identified competencies. Competency attainment is assessed using the Rubric for Justifying Demonstration of Competencies, which can be found in ERF D7-4.

- 2) Briefly summarize the process, expectations and assessment for each integrative learning experience.

Overview of the Capstone Course

Students enroll in PHC 6940 Master of Public Health Capstone in the final semester of the program. This course is offered online or on-campus, depending on projected enrollment, and meets weekly. The instructor is involved in advising students on their capstone project and reviewing deliverables related to that project. In addition, the capstone course serves as a final preparation before graduation for students to achieve leadership competencies and strengthen their professionalism skills.

The Capstone Project

The MPH Capstone course, introduced in summer 2020, has allowed for a more streamlined and consistent experience for students completing their capstone requirements by providing structure around the capstone project and presentation. Students create a project proposal with input from the course instructor, including identification of competencies that the project will address. During the course, the capstone course instructor guides the student through the project.

The capstone project may be linked to a student's internship site and responsibilities or may be independent of that experience. In cases in which a student works with an outside organization,

students complete an MOU. The MOU is a document that, based on a template provided, is created by the individual student with the organization's input. This document outlines the behavioral expectations of both the organization and each individual. The document also outlines expectations for communication with the organization and the instructor. Next, students create a work plan to detail their approach to completing the capstone project. The work plan includes the deliverables and due dates for those deliverables. It also identifies the individuals responsible for those deliverables. Any modifications to the work plan are expected to be approved by the organization and instructor throughout the semester. Students provide brief progress reports on the capstone project throughout the semester, with progress evaluated based on the proposed work plan before presenting the outcomes of the capstone project toward the end of the semester. The presentations are open to all faculty and students and are assessed by two faculty members using a rubric. At the end of the semester, students submit a high-quality written report detailing the capstone project that includes an updated copy of the work plan, a background section, methods, results, discussion and a reflection on the process of completing the project.

Leadership, communication and professionalism

Modules on leadership, professionalism and communication are covered throughout the semester. Within the leadership domain, students learn about conflict management, negotiation and mediation, organizational levels of leadership, guiding decision-making, translating data to action and fostering collaboration. The professionalism domain focuses on job searches, career expectations and how to network. The communication domain focuses on communicating effectively with diverse groups and creating and delivering the capstone project presentation.

Advantages of the capstone course model

The capstone course model has several benefits over the prior model, which relied almost solely on the faculty advisor to guide the student. Many students had excellent final results, but the quality of the results and experience varied based on the student's and faculty advisor's involvement. In addition, some students had trouble identifying an appropriate project and were delayed in starting their work because of this. In the capstone course, students receive input and feedback from the course instructor. Students may propose their own project that meets the competencies they wish to strengthen or they may choose to work on a project that was developed by a community partner that meets those identified competency goals.

3) Provide documentation, including syllabi and/or handbooks, that communicates integrative learning experience policies and procedures to students.

The following can be found in ERF D7-3:

- APE ILE Planning for 2020
- PHC 6940 Syllabus

4) Provide documentation, including rubrics or guidelines, that explains the methods through which faculty and/or other qualified individuals assess the integrative learning experience with regard to students' demonstration of the selected competencies.

Students must justify in writing how their ILE demonstrates attainment of their selected competencies. The course instructor uses a rubric to assess demonstration of competencies in the ILE product and in the written justification. Rubrics and guidelines can be found in ERF D7-4.

5) Include completed, graded samples of deliverables associated with each integrative learning experience option from different concentrations, if applicable. The school must provide at least 10% of the number produced in the last three years or five examples, whichever is greater.

Examples of graded ILE reports and Public Health Day presentations can be found in ERF D7-5.

6) If applicable, assess strengths and weaknesses related to this criterion and plans for improvement in this area.

Strengths:

- The capstone course model provides more assistance and oversight for students in the process of completing their ILE. Didactic training and experiential learning on leadership and professionalism allow attainment of foundational competencies that are critical for students to possess before entering the public health work force.

Weaknesses:

- The course was first offered in summer 2020 with a small group of students who were under the new MPH curriculum and will be offered again in spring 2021. Thus, there has been little opportunity for feedback from students and faculty on this new model.
- Because the capstone model added the instructor role (who provides oversight to all students), the faculty advisor's role in the ILE needs to be more fully refined.

Plans:

- The MPH program is outlining clear expectations of faculty advisor involvement in the capstone course, including the expectation that all faculty advisors will meet with their capstone-enrolled student during project conceptualization (preferably the semester prior to PHC 6940 Capstone). This will allow students to develop appropriate projects specific to their educational goals and concentrations. Faculty advisors will be expected to support the student in their conceptualization of the capstone projects and in the grading of their capstone presentations.
- Students will be informed about the project expectations the semester prior to the capstone course, so they can begin conceptualizing their project ideas and meet with their faculty advisor in developing their proposal and identifying competencies on which to focus.