

Professional Paper Instructions (Read Me)

1) Understand what the Professional Paper is

- a) The Professional Paper is a required integrative learning experience (ILE), or capstone experience, in which the student uses what they have learned in their coursework and produces a high-quality written product, poster, and oral presentation.
- b) Each student will conduct a professional paper project, which is a research project involving the gathering of data or information for the development of new knowledge or understanding. Students will then write a paper based on this project and present the paper orally with a poster.
- c) The professional paper project can be a descriptive or experimental study, an evaluation project, systematic literature review, or white paper.
- d) The professional paper process takes place within a 2-course-series, MPH 6991 and 6992. In MPH 6991, each student writes a proposal for their professional paper project and in MPH 6992 they conduct the project, write the paper, and present their project as a poster.
- e) Pre-requisites for MPH 6991 include: MPH 6000, MPH 6002, MPH 6011, and the concentration-specific research methods course (MPH 6020, MPH 6702, or MPH 6027).

2) Think about the skills you would like to learn from your Professional Paper experience

This might include:

- a) Data collection (quantitative and/or qualitative),
- b) Statistical analysis, data management, and computing,
- c) Program evaluation, and
- d) Skills for a particular type of job.

3) Become familiar with the ECU MPH Professional Paper webpage during your first semester of the MPH program

<https://public-health.ecu.edu/professional-paper/>

4) Think about a Public Health topic that you find interesting and would like to research

- a) Discuss your proposed topic with your academic advisor.
- b) Review the document entitled, "Potential Topics for Professional Paper." For each faculty member, this document lists their areas of interest and expertise and potential topics for professional papers. This document is posted on the professional paper webpage under the heading Resources for Students and Faculty.
- c) Talk with faculty, colleagues, and practitioners about the topics you are considering for your professional paper.
- d) Read current public health journals.

5) Find a Primary Advisor for your professional paper during the semester before MPH 6991

- a) Talk with several faculty members (from any concentration) about possible topics that are of interest to you.
- b) Discuss possible research questions and data sources with faculty.

- c) Talk about expectations, both theirs and yours.
- d) Choose one faculty member and ask them if they would be willing to serve as your Primary Advisor.

6) Complete the ILE Agreement and Concept Form Part I in conjunction with your Primary Advisor

- a) Each student should download this form from the professional paper webpage and review it with their Primary Advisor; the student and advisor should complete and electronically sign the form.
- b) Submit the completed form to the Student Services Coordinator and to the Professional Paper Coordinator.

7) Registration for MPH 6991

After receiving the ILE form Part I, the Student Services Coordinator will register the student for the advisor's section of MPH 6991. (Note: students do not register themselves for MPH 6991.)

8) The MPH 6991 semester

- a) Students will conduct a literature search on their selected topic.
- b) Students will develop a proposal for their professional paper project. (See pages 7-10 of the Professional Paper Guidelines for a description of the proposal.)
- c) By mid-semester, students will complete the ILE Part II form, in which they select at least 4 foundational competencies and one concentration competency for their professional paper.
- d) If the student's proposed project involves human subjects, the student will complete an IRB application during MPH 6991. (See pages 10-11 in the Professional Paper Guidelines.)
- e) Students will submit their final proposal to their Primary Advisor for approval.
- f) Grade options for MPH 6991 are S (satisfactory) and U (unsatisfactory).

9) Registration for MPH 6992

- a) Pre-requisites for MPH 6992 include MPH 6991 and all core courses.
- b) Students will register themselves for MPH 6992 in their Primary Advisor's section.

10) The MPH 6992 semester

- a) Students should review the Professional Paper Guidelines for MPH 6992 and the competencies selected as part of the ILE Part II form.
- b) At the beginning of 6992, each student will develop a schedule in conjunction with their advisor to complete their professional paper project and write their paper by the end of the semester.
- c) Depending on the project, students will collect data, analyze data, and write the paper.
- d) See pages 12-14 of the Professional Paper Guidelines for the structure of the professional paper.
- e) At the end of the MPH 6992 semester, each student will develop a poster and present their professional paper project and results.

11) Submitting final paper and products, and grading for MPH 6992

- a) To submit their professional paper each student needs to complete Part A of the Professional Paper Submission form and send it to their advisor along with their final paper, poster, recorded poster presentation (if necessary), and Competency Achievement Table.
- b) After approving the student's final professional paper and products, the advisor will complete Part B of the Professional Paper Submission form, sign the form, and email the form and accompanying documents to the Student Services Coordinator and the Professional Paper Coordinator.
- c) The advisor will submit a grade of S or U for the student.
- d) The Student Services Coordinator will submit a petition to the Registrar with information on the student's completion of their professional paper. The Registrar will then include a final grade for Professional Paper in the student's record.

Frequently Asked Questions

What is the Professional Paper?

The professional paper is the integrative learning experience for the MPH program, a culminating experience in which students demonstrate synthesis of foundational and concentration competencies by developing a well-written product. Usually, the professional paper involves proposing and conducting a research project and then writing a paper based on this project.

How do I choose an advisor for Professional Paper?

Students are encouraged to talk with various faculty members about possible topics and then to choose one faculty member with whom they would like to work. Students should then ask this faculty member if they would be willing to serve as their primary advisor for their professional paper.

How do I register for MPH 6991 and MPH 6992?

Students do not register themselves for MPH 6991. After completing the ILE Agreement and Concept form Part I with their primary advisor, the Student Services Coordinator will register the student for the advisor's section of MPH 6991. After completing MPH 6991, students register themselves for their advisor's section of MPH 6992.

How do I find a topic or a project?

Students can start thinking about possible topics for their professional paper by reviewing a document called "Potential Topics for Professional Paper" which lists each faculty member with their areas of expertise and suggested professional paper topics. This document can be found on the professional paper webpage at <https://public-health.ecu.edu/professional-paper/>

Do I need a Content Advisor for Professional Paper?

A Content Advisor is an expert who would serve to provide the student with expertise on their topic area or methods to be use in their professional paper. A Content Advisor is optional, not required.

Can I link my professional paper with my internship?

If students do their internship (MPH 6904/6905) before or at the same time as their professional paper, it is possible to link the two experiences. For example, a student could potentially obtain permission to use data from the internship agency for their professional paper project or could network with internship colleagues to develop an idea for a project. The professional paper project, however, needs to be a separate project from projects conducted as part of a student's internship.

What do I do if I "get stuck"?

Communication is very important while doing your professional paper. If you feel stuck, do not hesitate to reach out to your primary advisor for your professional paper, your academic advisor, and the Professional Paper Coordinator, Dr. Rashmita Basu (basur19@ecu.edu) for assistance.

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