In the thesis manuscript option, one publishable manuscript will be developed and submitted. The manuscript must present community-based health data driven findings and contributions. The data may be quantitative or qualitative in nature. Secondary data analysis may be conducted on a variety of existing data sources. The manuscript should be submitted to a respective journal prior to submission to the graduate school. Student must complete 6 thesis credits for the thesis manuscript option.

Minimum Student Capacity Requirement

As a prerequisite the student must provide examples of demonstrated analytical and writing skills for consideration of a thesis manuscript option by the committee chair and members. These may include successful completion of MPH program coursework including MPH 530 (Epidemiology), MPH 520 (Biostatistics), and MPH 579 (Research Methods), and quality of writing in the proposal for the manuscript option.

Committee for the MPH Thesis Manuscript Option

The thesis manuscript option committee is composed of at least two members in the Department of Public Health Sciences and one faculty member outside our department as the dean’s representative (rep).

Selection of the Dean’s Representative

The faculty committee members select a dean’s representative outside the department (2011-2012 Graduate School catalog, p. 18). Faculty members may use the online graduate faculty list at the Graduate School Web site.

The Dean’s Representative may be an expert in content matter relevant to the manuscript study. The committee chair sends the dean’s representative instructions.

The dean’s representative oversees the process to determine if the process was conducted fairly according to the guidelines.

Prospectus and Proposal:

Student will develop an informal prospectus (see guidelines for the prospectus) and have a committee meeting about the prospectus to refine ideas before writing the full proposal. The committee for this project must approve a proposal for the planned manuscript before the student may proceed with the thesis manuscript.
Data-driven Manuscript:

The thesis manuscript must present data driven findings/contributions. Secondary data analysis may be conducted on a variety of existing data sources.

a. Departmental faculty researchers may have research data available for analysis.
   i. The data may be quantitative in nature (e.g., biological measurements, survey data, experiment data collected by the student, or data from an outcome evaluation)
   ii. The data may be qualitative in nature such as data from a Process Evaluation or Health Needs Assessment (e.g., focus groups, interviews, observations)

b. Hundreds of federal and state data sources are readily available for secondary data analysis. Examples of these include:
   i. Behavioral Risk Factor Surveillance System (BRFSS) at the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (http://www.cdc.gov/BRFSS/)
   ii. Census data (http://factfinder2.census.gov/faces/nav/jsf/pages/index.xhtml)
   iii. American Community Survey (http://factfinder2.census.gov/faces/nav/jsf/pages/wc_acs.xhtml)
   v. Inter-University Consortium for Political and Social Research (ICPSR)

c. Students may use data from their health-related worksite (proper permissions must be obtained; health related data may require additional HIPAA training) or collected from their field placement (sponsor IRB Protocol must be approved prior to data collection, e.g., offsite agency collecting the data; NMSU IRB review for student project must also be submitted and approved)

d. Students may utilize the Survey Research Center in the SW Health Disparities Research center to access data for their manuscript.

e. Students may conduct meta-analysis of research articles on a specific health topic. The manuscript cannot consist of a simple review of the literature. The manuscript must incorporate valid meta-analytical techniques in the analysis/results section.

Human Subjects Approval:

Prior to any data collection for the manuscript, the student, along with the committee chair for the thesis manuscript option, must submit an IRB protocol for review (expedited or full review) by the NMSU Institutional Review Board. If the student is conducting a secondary data analysis for their manuscript, the student, along with the thesis chair, must submit an Exempt Form for Human Subjects Approval, before initiating any data analyses. The committee will establish clear expectations for IRB review and human subjects protection throughout the process of completing the thesis manuscript.
study. For the necessary instructions and forms please visit:
http://research.nmsu.edu/compliance/IRB/forms.html

Human Subjects Approval (continued):

Please note that IRB approval takes approximately 12 weeks, so it is important to have this reviewed early in the thesis manuscript development process.

*Note: Any data collected by any student/faculty prior to obtaining IRB approval cannot be used for the thesis manuscript.*

Authorship Guidelines:

The order of authorship is determined based on degree of individual contribution to the research project. Either the student or one of the two Public Health Sciences faculty members must be the first author of the manuscript. The manuscript must be written entirely by the student irrespective of the order of authorship. Regardless of the membership on the thesis committee, anyone who has significantly contributed to the project must be listed as a co-author of the manuscript. Significant contributions include but are not limited to the initial development of research idea, guidance in the development of a questionnaire, guidance in data-analysis methods, data-analysis and report generation, and any contribution other than proof reading which leads to the improvement in the quality of the manuscript.

The order of authorship must be negotiated before the approval of the proposal. If amount of effort by any co-authors changes significantly during the manuscript development, order of authorship must be renegotiated and approved by the committee before the manuscript submission to the journal.

A preface statement in the manuscript should outline the roles of the respective authors. Co-authors must agree and sign the evaluation of the roles and contribution of various authors. The same statement may be used for a journal requiring such statement.

Writing Style

The most frequently asked question is, “How long does the paper have to be?” Many students seem to believe that length and quality are perfect substitutes in grading (if you can’t be good, at least be long-winded). That is not the case; the faculty would greatly prefer a carefully argued concise paper that makes good use of relevant evidence instead of a rambling paper that has no apparent point, but lots of uncritically assembled sources.

The paper should be a significant effort, but specific expectations concerning the paper may differ because of topic, analytic approach, and specific journal selected for submission. Writing style will be determined by journal selected for submission but must be consistent with minimal university/graduate school guidelines. Student will list potential journals to be considered for submission as part of their proposal (i.e., before initiating the manuscript). The manuscript can be expected to be 15 to 30 pages, double spaced, in length (not including references).
It is expected that the manuscript will conform to the standard norms for crediting and citing sources. Sloppiness in keeping track of one’s sources and how they are used does not excuse any resulting appearance of plagiarism.

**Manuscript Outline:**

Below is a proposed general manuscript section outline. Please note the outline will vary depending on the specific peer reviewed journal identified for submission, and the required specific manuscript submission sections:

**Manuscript Sections:**

1. Title Page
2. Abstract
3. Introduction/Review of Literature
4. Research Questions/Hypotheses
5. Methods
   a. Participants/Subject
   b. Instrumentation/Measurement
   c. Procedure
   d. Statistical design
6. Results
   a. Data reduction
   b. Analysis
7. Discussion/Conclusions
8. Limitations
9. References

**Appendices**

http://gradschool.nmsu.edu/mb/ManuscriptRequirements.pdf

**Defense Meeting for the Thesis Manuscript Option:**
Student will complete the vast majority of the work for the manuscript. The manuscript must be written during the course of the student’s graduate study at NMSU. Finally, the student will participate in a defense meeting of their final manuscript. This will serve as the Master’s Comprehensive Examination. *The student will be expected to make all changes in the thesis manuscript requested by his/her committee prior to receiving final signatures. The student is expected to submit the manuscript for publication in a professional journal before the thesis manuscript is submitted to the graduate school.*

*It is not acceptable to submit manuscripts completed prior to the commencement of the MPH program.*
STUDENT RESPONSIBILITIES

• Prior to the committee meeting on their prospectus, students select at least two Department of Public Health Sciences faculty members to be on their thesis manuscript committee. From these two, the student will select a chair for their thesis committee.
• Students may or may not select their academic advisor to be their committee chair or a committee member.
• Students select the committee chair from the selected Department of Public Health Sciences faculty members.
• Student **must complete 6 thesis credits over two semesters**
• Student must identify a minimum of three journals to be considered for submission of manuscript as part of their proposal.
• Student will develop an informal prospectus for the thesis manuscript (see guidelines below).
• Student will present and obtain approval for the planned manuscript from their committee before the student may proceed with the thesis manuscript
• Student will obtain IRB approval before data collection or data analysis (if conducting secondary data analysis) begins.
• Student will complete the vast majority of the work for the manuscript. The manuscript must be written during the course of the student’s graduate study at NMSU.
• Student will participate in an oral exam/defense of their final thesis manuscript. This exam serves as the MPH comprehensive examination.
• The student is required to complete all changes in the manuscript, as requested by their committee, prior to receiving final signatures on the final manuscript by the committee members.
• The student is required to submit the final manuscript for review and consideration of publication to the designated professional journal before the manuscript is submitted to the graduate school.

FACULTY RESPONSIBILITIES

• Committee chair, works with the student and other committee members according to scope of work (to be determined).
• The committee chair guides the process for the thesis manuscript option and communicates with the student on all phases of the manuscript.
• The committee chair convenes the committee meetings for the review, discussion and approval of the manuscript proposal and final thesis manuscript.
• The committee chair convenes the committee meeting for the oral exam/defense, discussion and approval (pass, adjourn or fail) of the manuscript for submission to the predetermined peer reviewed journal.
• Completion and submission of required paperwork.
• Obtain signatures on the required master’s final exam form.
• The faculty committee must approve the informal prospectus and planned manuscript before the student may proceed with the manuscript option for master’s thesis.
• The chair will work with the student and the committee to obtain IRB approval before the thesis manuscript is approved.
• The chair and the committee will establish clear expectations during the proposal stage and throughout the thesis manuscript option process.
Completion of Required Paperwork

Online students. The committee chair may sign the required form for the online students, gather required signatures, and deliver the form to the Graduate School office (original signatures are required) at least 10 working days prior to the submission cutoff date.

Campus students. Students are responsible to sign the required form, gather required signatures, and deliver the form to the Graduate School office at least 10 working days prior to the submission cutoff date.

Forms are available at:
http://gradschool.nmsu.edu/mb/ManuscriptRequirements.pdf

Guidelines Website: http://gradschool.nmsu.edu/Guidelines/

The students are ultimately responsible to submit the completed submission form to the Graduate Student Services office. Forms may be faxed to the office. However, the office also needs the forms with the original signatures before graduation (575-646-2736 phone for questions, 575-646-7721 fax).

The Graduate Student Services will cancel the exam if the form is not submitted by the deadline. Student or committee chair gives a copy of the completed forms to the graduate coordinator. Copies will be maintained in the department until the exam process is completed.

SPECIAL CONSIDERATIONS FOR ONLINE, JOINT MSW/MPH, MASTER INTERNATIONAL STUDENTS

Online students:
1. Alternative options for a thesis are permissible for these students.
2. The thesis manuscript option may apply to a facet of their work.
3. The student will comply with all aspects of the IRB process for their employer and NMSU.
4. The student may defend his/her project online (Skype, poly-com, conference call, etc.) versus needing to come to main campus to defend the work.

Dual degree MSW/MPH students:
1. The thesis manuscript option is permissible for these students.
2. The process may count for one or both of the degrees, depending up the approval of the home department.
3. Faculty from Social Work may serve as the Dean’s representative for the thesis manuscript option.
4. It is the student’s responsibility to obtain permission/approval for the thesis manuscript option from the SW advisor.
Masters International students:

1. The thesis manuscript option is permissible for these students.
2. The data collection or project to be undertaken will probably occur in country. The student will follow all protocol for the project as identified by Peace Corps, NMSU, and the agency where the student is working/collecting data/conducting the project.
3. The project/work may be done in a language other than English, according to the norms of the community.
   a. If the project is completed in a language other than English, the student is to identify a faculty member (may be the Dean’s Representative) who speaks that language to ensure adequate comprehension of the project and outcomes by all members of the student’s committee.
   b. If there is no NMSU faculty member to serve in this role, the student needs to identify a person, in country, who speaks English and the native language. This individual will serve as an advisor to the committee and their role will need to be clearly delineated. This individual will not have a voting role on the Thesis Manuscript Option. This advisor will participate in the proposal and thesis defense meetings via skype or conference call.
4. The project may take up to 5 years to complete due to the time commitments to complete a Peace Corps tour (24-27 months) and the time required by NMSU for class completion.
5. Students are not required to take any classes, including thesis hours (MPH 599), while in country due to a low income received as a Peace Corps volunteer and potentially irregular access to the Internet, depending on the student’s site in country.