



# Master of Public Health Program

MPH Thesis  
Thesis Outline

The following is an outline of what material is expected to be addressed within in each chapter of the student's thesis. Your proposal and thesis should be completed in the [template](#) available from the Graduate College. **Please use appropriate headings and sub-headings within each chapter.**

1. Introduction
  - a. Statement of the Problem
    - i. Should include synthesis and analysis of the most relevant literature from chapter 2.
    - ii. Allows the reader to quickly step through the logic process for conducting the study.
  - b. Significance of the Problem
    - i. Explicitly state the purpose of the study relative to the significance of the problem.
  - c. Theoretical Basis
    - i. Logical or theoretical basis for the study should be presented succinctly in the Introduction and expanded upon in the literature review.
  - d. Hypothesis/Research Questions
    - i. Typically, a thesis may address up to 3 research questions or hypotheses.
    - ii. Qualitative work *may* be framed with research questions, while a quantitative study may include a single research question with multiple hypotheses.
    - iii. Hypotheses typically include a comparison statement using the word *than* to link the groups or variables being compared.
  - e. Operational Definitions
  - f. Delimitations of Research
    - i. These are the restrictions of the research study as determined by the researcher. Within this section, you should explain what your study will do and what it will not do, and you should justify these decisions.
  - g. Limitations
    - i. What are the limitations of this method? For example, with cross-sectional research one cannot establish causality.
2. Literature Review
  - a. Major issues that affect your study and/or historical/cultural context of the variables of interest.
  - b. Theoretical models
  - c. Current literature
    - i. Please consult with your Thesis Chair on what material needs to be included within this section; each literature review will be unique to the particular author drafting the thesis.
      1. Severity of the Problem

- 2. Gaps in the Literature
    - 3. Substantial Literature Findings/References
  - ii. Use headings and subheadings liberally to organize this section.
  - iii. Include a conceptual model that visualizes the literature and the relationships between constructs being examined by your study.
- 3. Methods
  - a. Study Design
  - b. Participants
    - i. Important characteristics
    - ii. Exclusionary characteristics
  - c. Recruitment
    - i. Methods for sample selection and recruitment are particularly important when considering how generalizable your sample is/will be.
  - d. Research design
    - i. Include a general description of the research design – describe threats to internal and external validity.
    - ii. Describe the independent and dependent variables here – then you can explain how you will measure them in the measurements section.
  - e. Procedures
    - i. Subject screening
      - 1. Once data is collected, numbers of subjects recruited, screened, etc. should be reported herein.
    - ii. Subject consent
    - iii. Measures
      - 1. Organize in terms of the constructs you are measuring
      - 2. If a survey instrument is being used, describe the psychometric properties of the instrument or scale.
      - 3. Justify the use of your measurements – are they the gold standard? Have they been validated for use with your population?
  - f. Data Analysis
    - i. Restate each research question or hypothesis and the statistical analysis being used to address the question (if quantitative) – describe assumptions regarding the data necessary for this form of analysis. State apriori alpha levels for the analysis.
- 4. Results
  - a. Answer each research question or hypothesis.
  - b. For qualitative studies:
    - i. Organize your answers to the research questions by theme or within the theory being examined, dependent upon your proposed methodology.
    - ii. Support themes/constructs with quotes from participants, or direct observations. These quotes or observations may be organized into tables.
    - iii. Please consult with your Thesis Chair on what material needs to be included within this section. This chapter will be dependent on overall study design and research findings.
  - c. For quantitative studies:
    - i. Descriptive statistics for all variables of interest in the study
    - ii. Preliminary statistical analyses
    - iii. Proposed analyses to answer the research question.

- iv. Report statistical power and effect sizes throughout.
    - d. Organize data into tables and figures.
  - 5. Discussion
    - a. Summary
      - i. Discussion of main results without statistical terms.
      - ii. Answer each research question within this summary statement
    - b. Conclusions
      - i. What do these results mean for the field?
    - c. Limitations
    - d. Recommendations for future research
  - 6. Appendices
  - 7. References