MASTER OF PUBLIC HEALTH PROGRAM

THESIS AND PROJECT PROPOSAL PACKET
The Thesis and Projects Option

Pursuant to San Jose State University policy, graduate students must fulfill a culminating graduation requirement through successful completion of a Master’s Thesis, a Graduate Project, or a Comprehensive Exam. The university’s Graduate Division mandates that, whichever option is selected, the required activities must demonstrate the student’s mastery of the breadth and depth of coursework completed for the degree. We offer all three options: a thesis, an independent project, and an exam. Please note, students who plan to complete the program in 2 years may meet the culminating graduation requirement only through the exam.

What are the differences between the Thesis and Project options?

Master’s Thesis: Overview

A thesis inevitably becomes a central focus of your life during the year or so you dedicate to it. The process requires absolute attention to the rigor of research and writing, and the final document must be approved by your Thesis Committee, Committee Chair, and the Graduate Studies Dean. A thesis may also require significant personal resources, depending on your study design and outside support. However, a thesis is an unparalleled opportunity for original research and offers the unusual, often intense, experience of being mentored in research by your Committee Chair and the other members of your Committee. What an opportunity! The thesis also:

♦ Provides an opportunity to develop and implement original research, and
♦ Is ideal if you are interested in pursuing a doctoral degree.

Independent Project: Overview

This option provides an opportunity for students to hone their evaluation and research skills. It

♦ Allows students to collect, analyze, and report data,
♦ Results in a publishable manuscript,
♦ Requires a faculty advisor and a community practitioner mentor,
♦ Takes a minimum of two semesters to complete, and
♦ Requires IRB approval, which must be obtained the semester before the project start date.

Eligibility for this option includes:

- Satisfactory completion of fieldwork (HS291D) and Research Methods (HS 295).
- Successful completion of the MPH graduate writing requirement and achievement of minimum grades for specific courses and assignments – see prerequisites below.
General Requirements for Thesis and Independent Projects
All students wishing to do a Thesis or Independent Project must

1. Have a project proposal approved by the MPH Core faculty.
2. Have an approved Request for Candidacy (i.e., the Contract) on file with Graduate Studies and Research at the time a project proposal is submitted.
3. Have completed fieldwork (HS 291D) and Research Methods (HS 295) before beginning a Thesis or Project.
4. For a thesis: You must earn \( \geq \) A- on your Applied Theory Paper (HS271), your Program Proposal (HS272) and in both of the courses. In addition, you must earn \( \geq \) B+ on your Research Proposal (HS295) and in the course overall. Your grades in all other MPH courses must be \( \geq \) B-.
   For a project: You must earn \( \geq \) A- on your Applied Theory Paper (HS271), your Program Proposal (HS272) and in both of the courses. Your grades in all other MPH courses must be \( \geq \) B-.
5. If proposing research with human participants, obtain approval from the Human Subjects-Institutional Review Board (IRB), during the proposal process and prior to the start of any data collection. The Human Subjects Statement cannot be forwarded to the IRB without project and faculty advisor approval. Once the thesis or independent project proposal has been approved by the IRB, it cannot be edited or changed without review and approval by the faculty advisor.
6. HS 295 should be the starting point for a thesis or independent project. Students are encouraged to develop their thesis or project proposal while enrolled in the Fall HS 295 course, and then, immediately revise the proposal, as appropriate, after completing the course and submit it to the HSGRC. Please note: Your HS295 proposal will require revisions before submission to the committee.
7. Students must continually be enrolled in HS 298/299 until the project is completed.

In addition to the above prerequisites, the following guidelines are specific to your choice of a culminating experience:

Specific Guidelines for:

Thesis

- The research methodology selected must be realistic in terms of the student’s research and writing abilities, time, and resources.
- Students should expect the thesis to take 12-24 months to complete after the thesis proposal is approved.

Independent Project

- Involves data collection and analysis, is based on public health evidence, and is grounded in a conceptual framework that results in a publishable manuscript.
- Publishable manuscripts should include a narrative, figures, and sections that are appropriate for journal submissions.
Other Things to Consider before making your decision:

- Talk to colleagues, current and former students, and your Peer Mentor about their decisions and experiences and reflect on how they match with your own professional preparation and academic experience to date.
- Think about your future plans and what you want to take with you as you leave the MPH program.
- Think long and hard about your writing skills, strengths, resources, and passion.
- A thesis or independent project should be something you really want to do and are excited about.
- You must have time available to complete the thesis or independent project. Theses, in particular, may take longer than expected.
- Consider your available resources: access to data, agency contacts, etc. before you decide on doing a Thesis or Independent Project.
- You must adhere to tight timeline and schedule, as the writing often requires multiple drafts.
- Good ideas are not good enough. Proposals will go through a rigorous review by faculty. They must be well written, methodologically sound, realistic, and conceptually based.
- You must be continuously enrolled in SJSU until the thesis or project is completed.
- Incompletes will not be given for thesis or project work.

Gathering as much information as early as possible will help you choose the option that best suits you.

Most students think long and hard about the appropriate way to fulfill the University’s Graduation requirement. It is very important that you stay in touch with the MPH Program Director and Project or Theses advisors to stay current with dates, deadlines, and procedures. Policies, procedures, and staffing may change year to year. It is also very important to be clear about what you want to do and what it will take to do it.

- Dr. Kathleen Roe is the Thesis Advisor.
- Drs. Edward Mamary, Anne Demers, and other department faculty, as appropriate, are the Project Advisors.
- Department policy states that theses and projects should be completed within a two-year period (four semesters) after the thesis or project is approved. Under extenuating circumstances, a student may request an extension. The extension request must include analysis of the factors leading to the delay and a detailed and achievable timeline for the requested extension.

### Submitting a Thesis or Independent Project Proposal

Proposals must be well written. Any proposal with excessive or sloppy grammar or spelling errors, poor organization, or missing sections will not be approved. Proposals with more than five grammar errors will be returned without being evaluated by the committee. The Graduate Research Committee will review proposals during specific times. Thesis proposals are submitted to Dr. Mamary and Project Proposals are submitted to Dr. Demers. Three copies of the entire proposal, including all attachments, and a self-addressed stamped envelope (business size), must be submitted to the Department Office by 4:00 p.m. on the proposal due date. No late proposals will be considered.
Proposal Submission Dates

Commitment to a thesis or independent project represents a significant decision. Developing the proposal is the first official step, and it is not uncommon that a proposal will require several revisions before it is accepted. This process often sets the tone for the important relationship that will evolve between the student, the advisor, and the Department. We encourage you to work carefully on this task.

See the MPH Program Calendar for Due Dates

Can I see samples of recent theses or projects?

Yes. The University makes all approved Master’s Theses available in the library. Faculty may also keep office copies of the Master’s Theses or Graduate Projects they have been involved in. These documents are available for review in the library and faculty offices, but not for checkout. Please note, the existing available theses and projects were developed under different guidelines than those noted above.

What theses and projects have MPH students done recently?

A list of theses and projects can be found in the MPH Student Handbook.
THESIS PROPOSAL OUTLINE

Below is the broad outline of a thesis proposal. The finished proposal includes a title page, proposal narrative (usually 8-10 pages), and several attachments. Each section must be clearly labeled as indicated below (suggested text lengths are indicated in parentheses). With title page and attachments, the entire proposal is usually around 15 pages.

Thesis Proposal Narrative

Abstract: Limit of 150 words that provides a summary of the proposal.

Purpose
State the reason(s) for conducting the study. What is the purpose of your research? (1 - 2 paragraphs)

Statement of the Problem
Clearly explain the problem to be addressed. Describe and document the parameters of the problem, its context or setting, and its implications. Identify any controversy or urgency that surrounds the problem. Use references (APA format) to support your arguments. (1 - 2 pages)

Objectives and Questions/Hypotheses
State your research questions or hypotheses and the objectives of your study. (1/2 page)

Definitions
Define any terms from your objectives, questions, or hypotheses that could be considered ambiguous. State both conceptual and operational definitions as appropriate. (1/2 - 1 page)

Methods/Procedures
Describe the methodology of the proposed research (3 - 6 pages). Include brief but clear descriptions of:

- The conceptual framework
- The research design
- The population and sampling
- Key variables (quantitative inquiry) and/or sensitizing concepts (qualitative inquiry)
- Data collection methods
- Data collection instruments*
- Analysis plans

*Include draft data collection instruments in an Appendix section, and refer to them in this part of the proposal.

Limitations
Briefly state the limitations of the proposed study as you have identified them at this point. (1-2 paragraphs)

Significance
State the potential significance of the research. What will it contribute to the knowledge base, future research, policy, or practice in your field? (2 - 4 paragraphs)
Attachments

Each of the required attachments to your proposal is described below. Make sure that each attachment is included, clearly labeled, and begins on a separate page.

**Title Page**
Use the standard thesis title page format, used in the HPROF Research Proposal, but be sure to change the text to reflect this proposal.

**References**
Document all references cited in the narrative using APA format.

**Time Schedule**
Project a timeline for the entire thesis, beginning with submitting the proposal and ending with graduation. Be aware that faculty assistance is generally not available over Winter or Summer Break. Be sure to include plenty of time for preparation and submission of a Human Subjects protocol, if appropriate. Please note that theses are due in the Graduate Studies Office in mid-November for December graduation; or early April for May graduation, and every July for August graduation.

**Resources and Budget**
Itemize the costs and resource needs of your research and writing. Be sure to include personnel, equipment, supplies, printing, and any other expenses. For each line item, indicate the source of the support.

**Thesis Eligibility Page**
Complete and attach the eligibility page. If you have any questions about the status of your contract, please clear them up before submitting the proposal.

**Human Subjects Statement**
Complete and attach the Human Subjects Statement, even if you do not feel that your thesis would require approval by the SJSU Institutional Review Board.

**Submitting the proposal**
- Be sure to proof your proposal carefully for grammar, punctuation, spelling, and expression. Proposals with more than 5 grammar errors will be returned without being evaluated by the committee.
- Be sure to keep a copy of the proposal for your own records.
San Jose State University  
Department of Health Science  
MPH Program

THESIS ELIGIBILITY

(Submit this form with your proposal)

Name: ________________________________________________________

Address: ______________________________________________________

Phone: (H) ______________________________ (W): ______________________

Email Address ___________________________________ Student ID #

Please complete the information below:

☐ I have completed HS 295 Research Methodology
   Section leader: ___________________________________________
   Proposal Grade: __________
   Semester Grade: __________

☐ I have completed HS 272 Health Promotion Planning and Evaluation
   Program Plan Grade: __________
   Semester Grade: __________

☐ I have completed HS 271 Theory
   Theory Application assignment Grade: __________
   Semester Grade: __________

☐ I have completed fieldwork
INDEPENDENT PROJECT PROPOSAL OUTLINE

Below is the broad outline of a project proposal. The finished proposal includes a title page, proposal narrative, and several attachments. Each section must be clearly labeled as indicated below (suggested text lengths are indicated in parentheses).

Project Proposal Narrative

Community Agency and Mentor
Describe the community agency you will be working with and identify your community mentor (name, telephone, address).

Purpose
State the reason(s) for conducting the study. (1 - 2 paragraphs)

Statement of the Problem or Issue
Clearly explain the problem or issue to be addressed. Describe and document the parameters of the problem, its context or setting, and its implications. Identify any controversy or urgency that surrounds the problem or issue. Be sure to describe the problem or issue in terms of the priority population or community being addressed. Use references (APA format) to support your arguments. (1 page)

Objectives
State the objectives of your project. (1/2 page)

Methods/Activities
Describe the activities of the proposed project (2-3 pages). Include brief but clear descriptions of:

- Overview of the project
- Participants
- Collaborators
- Specific activities to be performed

Relevance
State the relevance of the project. How will the project contribute to building your health education practice skills and serving your community agency? (2 - 4 paragraphs)

Attachments
Each of the required attachments to your proposal is described below. Make sure that each attachment is included, clearly labeled, and begins on a separate page.

Title Page

References
List references cited in the narrative in APA style.
Time Schedule
Project a timeline for the entire project, beginning with submitting the proposal and ending with graduation. Be aware that no faculty assistance is provided over Winter or Summer Break. Be sure to include plenty of time for preparation and submission of a Human Subjects protocol if appropriate.

Resources and Budget
Itemize the costs and resource needs of your project. Be sure to include personnel, equipment, supplies, printing, and any other expenses. For each line item, indicate the source of the support.

Complete the Project Eligibility Page
Complete and attach the eligibility page. If you have any questions about the status of your contract, please clear them up before submitting the proposal.

Human Subjects Statement
Complete and attach the Human Subjects Statement, even if you do not feel that your project would require approval by the SJSU Institutional Review Board.

Submitting the proposal
- Be sure to proof your proposal carefully for grammar, punctuation, spelling, and expression.
- Proposals with more than five grammar errors will be returned without being evaluated by the committee.
- Be sure to keep a copy of the proposal for your own records.
INDEPENDENT PROJECT ELIGIBILITY

(Submit this form with your proposal)

Name: ____________________________________________________________

Address: __________________________________________________________

Phone: (H) ______________________ (W): _____________________________

Email Address: ____________________________________  Student ID #

Please complete the information below:

☐ I have completed HS 295 Research Methodology

   Section leader: ________________________________

   Proposal Grade: ______

   Semester Grade: ______

☐ I have completed HS 272 Health Promotion Planning and Evaluation

   Program Plan Grade: ______

   Semester Grade: ______

☐ I have completed HS 271 Theory

   Theory Application assignment Grade: ______

   Semester Grade: ______

☐ I have completed fieldwork

   Suggested faculty advisor: ________________________________

   Suggested faculty advisor: ________________________________
HUMAN SUBJECTS STATEMENT
For Independent Project or Thesis

(Submit this form with your proposal)

I understand that all projects and theses which will use human subjects for participants in any capacity must be reviewed by, or registered with, the SJSU Committee for the Protection of Human Subjects.

I have determined that my proposed project or thesis is covered by the following federally determined risk category.

- [ ] No human subjects involvement
- [ ] Human subjects involvement exempt from regulation, but still requires an official exemption from the SJSU Institutional Review Board
- [ ] Minimal risk to human subjects
- [ ] Reasonable risk to human subjects
- [ ] Serious risk to human subjects

Based on this assessment, I ____ do/ ____ do not plan to submit a Human Subjects Protocol to the SJSU Institutional Review Board.

Planned submission date (if applicable): ________________________________

_________________________________________________________________

Student Signature

_________________________________________________________________

Date
This worksheet is designed to help students prepare their thesis or project proposals. It should not be included in the submission to the Department's Graduate Research Committee.

- Title page in correct format
  (Be sure to change the title, department name, type of proposal from your HS 295 proposal title page! This is not a “research proposal to the faculty of the Division of Health Professions!”)

- Narrative with the necessary headings

- Attachments
  - References (APA format)
  - Time Schedule
  - Resources and Budget
  - Human Subjects Statement
  - Project or Thesis Eligibility Page

Additional Items:

- A copy of your current transcript
- Three copies of entire packet
- A self-addressed, stamped business envelope
- Three self-addressed mailing labels