3.5 Integrative Learning Experience (ILE)

The second component of the capstone experience is the “integrative learning experience” during which students demonstrate and synthesize their knowledge and skills acquired in core and concentration courses by conducting a research project and writing a professional paper. Dr. Ann Rafferty is the coordinator for the two courses, Professional Paper I and II. (MPH 6991 and MPH 6992, respectively).

To successfully accomplish their ILE, students conduct a research project, which includes the following steps: review the literature regarding a practice-based or action oriented public health or clinical question in their area of interest, design and plan a research project, complete an Institutional Review Board (IRB) application (if necessary), implement the project, write up the findings similar to manuscript, and present the findings in poster format to the faculty and fellow students.

The professional paper consists of two linked courses (MPH 6991 Professional Paper I and MPH 6992 Professional Paper II).

- Professional Paper I (MPH 6991) is a two semester hour course in which students develop a well constructed proposal for a research project that can be completed in MPH 6992. If the student proposes a project that includes human subjects, an IRB application must be completed during the Professional Paper I semester.
- Professional Paper II (MPH 6992) is a one semester hour course in which students carry out the proposal developed in Professional Paper I by conducting the research project, writing up the results in a professional paper, and presenting a poster describing their completed project.

Students typically take Professional Paper I and II during the last two semesters of the MPH program. All students are encouraged to have completed the following core courses before starting Professional Paper I: MPH 6000, Public Health Practice; MPH 6002, Ethics and Law in Public Health; MPH 6011, Introduction to Epidemiology; and the research methods course specific to their concentration (MPH 6020 for Health Policy, Administration, and Leadership; MPH 6702 for Epidemiology; MPH 6027 for Community Health and Health Behavior). In addition, Epidemiology students are encouraged to take BIOS 7021, Biostatistics for Health Professionals I prior to MPH 6691, and Community Health and Health Behavior students are encouraged to take MPH 6013, Behavioral Sciences and Health Education.

Professional Paper Process

1. Students should talk with several faculty members about possible topics that are of interest to them, and then choose one faculty member and ask them if they would be willing to serve as their Primary Professor (advisor and mentor for Professional Paper I and II). A list of potential professional paper topics and faculty interests is on the DPH professional paper webpage.

2. Before registering for MPH 6991, students should set up an initial meeting with their Primary Professor to finalize their topic. At that meeting the student and their Primary Professor should together complete the Integrated Learning Experience (ILE) Agreement and Concept Form. The Primary Professor will then submit the completed form to the Student Services Coordinator.

3. Students should find out what section of MPH 6991 their Primary Professor is teaching and register for that section.

4. Students will work with their Primary Professor over two semesters to complete their professional paper project.
5. MPH 6991 and 6992 cannot be taken concurrently in the same semester without approval.

6. A paper and a poster presentation are required for completion of MPH 6992.

7. For more details, please refer to the Professional Paper Guidelines

Students receive a S for “Satisfactory” or a U for “Unsatisfactory” for both classes. Unsatisfactory represents a failure to pass. To progress to Professional Paper II, a student must receive a S for Professional Paper I. Upon successful completion of Professional Paper II, a student will be awarded a S. Credits from MPH 6991 are not assigned until completion of MPH 6992. If a U is conferred to either course, the course must be retaken.