

## **Competency Framework for the Culminating Experience**

### **Tulane University School of Public Health and Tropical Medicine (approved by executive faculty 6/3/08)**

Tulane University School of Public Health and Tropical Medicine allows students to satisfy the requirements for a culminating experience by completing one of the following options. The choice of available options is made at the department level:

1. Research Thesis
2. Public Health Analysis Manuscript
3. Master's Comprehensive Examination

Figure 1 depicts a set of overarching competencies that reflect the knowledge, skills and abilities that a graduate of any of the professional degree programs in the SPHTM should be able to demonstrate as a result of their completion of one of these three culminating experiences. To achieve these overarching competencies the student will be expected to demonstrate the knowledge and skills gained from the core courses as well as their ability to apply them to the investigation, analysis, synthesis and evaluation of real world problems in public health.

A Practicum is also required in addition to the culminating experience. It is used to demonstrate the ability to apply this knowledge. The Practicum is a separate requirement **in addition** to the culminating experience.

#### **Overarching Competencies**

1. Demonstrate general knowledge and understanding of the core discipline areas of public health.
2. Apply general knowledge of the core discipline areas of public health to identify and solve public health problems.
3. Investigate public health issues using evidence-based practice.
4. Analyze public health issues using contemporary, theories, and research techniques.
5. Evaluate the outcomes of public health related interventions.
6. Clearly communicate public health concepts orally and in written form.

Although the three culminating experiences differ somewhat, they are all intended to demonstrate the student's achievement of these overarching competencies.

The Research Thesis and Public Health Analysis manuscripts (see Guidelines) should show an understanding of general knowledge and how the general knowledge of the core disciplines in public health is employed in the thesis or analysis (Overarching competencies 1 and 2). The manuscript should show the employment of the tools of investigation, analysis, and evaluation for the problem addressed in these manuscripts (Overarching competencies 3, 4, and 5) These papers will also reflect the specific knowledge, skills and abilities relevant to the

student's area of concentration. Faculty evaluation of this culminating experience will be based on the student's demonstration of the achievement of these overarching competencies. As a major writing activity, these two culminating experiences will show written communication competency (Overarching competency 6). The presentation of their papers at a poster session, department seminar, or other venue will provide the opportunity to demonstrate oral communication competency (Overarching competency 6).

The master's comprehensive examination must also show that the student has achieved a desired level in these six overarching competencies. The exam consists of two parts:

Part A: Focuses on the school-wide core courses and is geared to assess competency in the core knowledge and application of knowledge and tools in public health (Overarching competencies 1 and 2).

Part B: Assesses the student's achievement from a discipline specific perspective and is administered separately by each department in the School. Individual departments will develop questions (in written form) to examine the other four overarching competencies. Thus, department examinations will place emphasis on the student's ability to investigate, analyze, evaluate and communicate a public health problem, activity or issue. Faculty will evaluate the student's level of successful achievement in each of these six overarching competencies.

For each culminating experience option and practicum, specific competencies that support the overarching competencies are listed below.

### **Thesis Option Competencies**

1. Formulate relevant research hypotheses and develop a study design to conduct appropriate research to address the hypotheses.
2. Prepare an appropriate literature review of the research topic.
3. Analyze relevant outcomes and draw appropriate conclusions.
4. Produce a formal professional document that describes the original applied research and contributes to the scope of knowledge in the field of public health.

### **Public Health Analysis Option Competencies**

1. Formulate relevant goals and objectives to be explored in a public health analysis.
2. Prepare an appropriate literature review of the analysis topic.
3. Analyze and evaluate the body of knowledge in a selected field of public health.
4. Produce a formal professional document that completely describes the analytical methodologies and results.

### **Master's Comprehensive Examination Option Competencies**

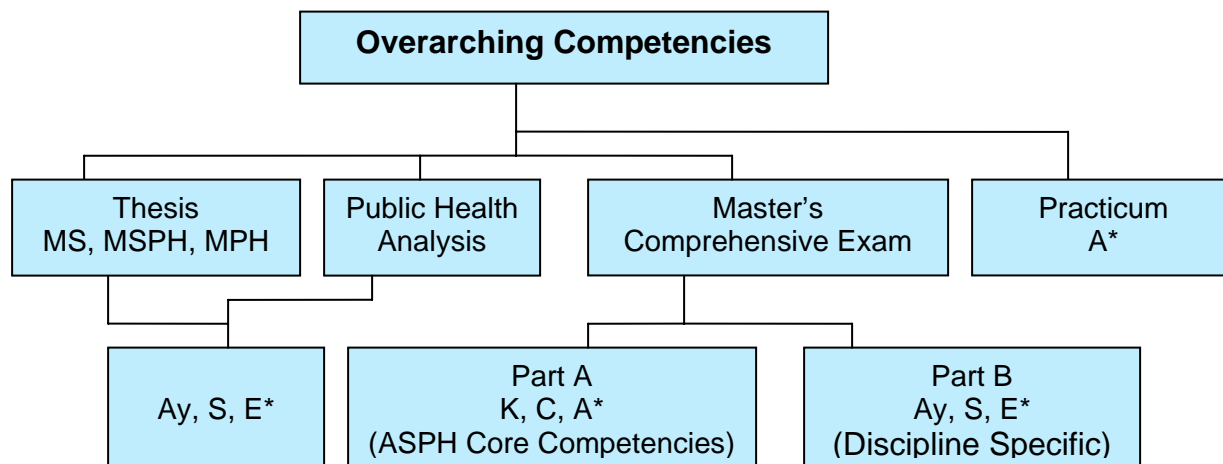
Acquisition of discipline specific competencies established by ASPH and listed at [www.asph.org/competency](http://www.asph.org/competency) (Version 2.3 Biostatistics, Environmental Health Sciences, Epidemiology, Health Policy and Management, and Social and Behavioral Sciences) are tested in Part A of the Master's Comprehensive Examination. Part B of the examination tests acquisition of competencies in the specialized field of study.

## **Practicum**

The Practicum is a separate requirement in addition to the culminating experience that is designed to demonstrate application of core public health knowledge in practice. Specific competencies for the Practicum that support the overarching competencies are listed below.

1. Demonstrate understanding of practical public health applications.
2. Evaluate options in selecting an appropriate practice based public health application or intervention.
3. Apply an appropriate action to the solution of a public health issue in practice.
4. Summarize and report on professional public health experiences
5. For those who conduct the Practicum in a government setting, demonstrate knowledge of the structure and working process of public health agencies.

Figure 1.



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K: Knowledge  
C: Comprehension  
A: application  
Ay: Analysis  
S: Synthesis  
E: Evaluation