

**EHESP School
of Public
Health**



**Ecole des
Hautes Etudes
en Santé
Publique**

**The Master
of Public Health
HPM track
2021- 2022**

Practicum Guidebook
*for M2 students; academic &
professional advisors & jury members*

Every year, the *Ecole des Hautes Etudes en Santé Publique* (EHESP School of Public Health) offers a one-year Master 2 program allowing students to acquire deeper knowledge and skills in the various disciplinary fields of public health, and choose to specialize in one of them. The M2 course draws on the content and skills acquired during the first year of the MPH (or equivalent course) with the overall aim of equipping graduates for leadership positions in institutions of public health at national and international levels.

As part of the program, students must complete a “Practicum” (internship) lasting a minimum of 4 months, which results in the submission of a thesis and an oral defence before a jury. This practicum is supervised by an advisor within the host institution (the « professional advisor ») and an « academic advisor » (appointed by the track coordinator) who monitors the progress of the thesis and provides methodological advice.

This guidebook aims to provide necessary information for:

1. **Students** by covering instructions related to the practicum/internship & thesis,
2. **Professional and Academic advisors** on their supervisory roles,
3. **Members of the jury** regarding the thesis and oral defence evaluations.

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THE PRACTICUM

1 – PRACTICUM OBJECTIVES

The practicum is an internship during which the student will have the opportunity to learn more about the roles and responsibilities of public health professionals within a host institution. Often, the host institution will assign a number of different activities and missions to the student who will be expected to complete specific tasks and problem-solve. Depending on the type of work being carried out at the institution that is hosting the student and its focus, the practicum may be more oriented towards either the professional sphere (economics, policy analysis, program evaluation, management or communication) or the scientific sphere, which may require the student to engage in field study, laboratory work and statistical analysis. While the practicum is an opportunity for the student to put into practice the knowledge and skills acquired during the program, they should also draw on their own personal resources: initiative, creativity, networking, teamwork, communication skills, etc.

Moreover, while the host institution will have a number of expectations and objectives related to the internship (which will be formalized in a contract), the student will need to identify one specific project/topic/problem that he or she will try to resolve by applying the knowledge acquired over the course of the MPH program. This project/topic/problem will be the focus of the thesis. The thesis topic should be a scientific and/or professional issue in the area of public health and be derived from the activities the student completes during the practicum.

Moving from the internship missions and projects to a thesis topic requires that the student engage in the following cognitive steps:

1. Consider which of your missions/projects might be translated into a “research question”. You can do this by analysing the problem in its context: collect data/information on the topic in question, examining its scientific, technical, socio-political, socio-economic and regulatory dimensions, etc.
2. Consider the objectives that the thesis might aim to contribute to,
3. Consider the methodology and tools that would be pertinent to meet the objectives and the feasibility of obtaining this data,
4. Discuss and confirm your ideas of a thesis topic with your professional and HPM track coordinator and/or academic advisors.

2 – CHOOSING A PRACTICUM HOST & THESIS TOPIC

The relevance of the host & topic:

The practicum/internship host institution and internship should be related to health policy and management and the activities, tasks, missions and projects that the student intern will be involved must allow the student to apply and develop relevant public health competences. The practicum host and projects/missions should also enable the student to complete their thesis work.

Feasibility:

When choosing a topic for the thesis, there are several factors that can make a topic difficult to study. Some topics may be beyond the scope of a Master's thesis and require that the student narrow down to a more realistic question. Alternatively a topic may be perceived as too sensitive or controversial thereby making it difficult for the student to gain access to necessary data. Finally, the timing of the project, missions or activities must take into consideration the need for the student to have the necessary data in time to complete the thesis before the due date.

Other criteria:

Consideration should also be given to ethical requirements or the need for confidentiality; student interns will be seeking employment at the end of their program and will need to be able to present their work in the recruitment process.

DURING THE PRACTICUM

1 - THE FRAMEWORK REPORT

At the end of first month, students will submit a framework report with the help of his or her professional advisor. *This framework report counts as your final evaluation for the Research Methods module.* This report will be forwarded to the HPM track coordinator (and academic advisor if already attributed) who will provide feedback and a grade. Once the framework has been update given the feedback, you must send the finalized copy to the MPH coordinator.

This document should be **5 pages maximum** and include:

- project/thesis topic
- context of the project (i.e. research or other type of project)
- objectives of the project/thesis (the questions it aims to answer)
- methods
- calendar

Since the framework is ultimately the outline of your thesis, it is recommended that you use the information below regarding the thesis format and layout as a guide.

The final framework report (which is an outline of the future thesis), should be co-signed by the professional advisor, the student and the academic advisor/HPM track coordinator.

2 – EVOLUTION OF THE PROJECT

The practicum may occasionally end up being carried out under conditions that differ from those envisaged at the outset. This may be due to:

- the absence or unavailability of human resources,
- difficulties/impossibility in accessing data,
- the quality of this data,

- the obsolete nature of the subject of the practicum itself,
- the emergence of a dimension of the problem not initially considered at the outset,

If this occurs, the project/thesis topic may need to be re-orientated and modified and this must be discussed as soon as possible with the professional and academic advisors. In this case, the explanations and justifications for these changes should be clearly explained in the thesis so they may be taken into account in the evaluation and in the assignation of a grade, since the student will not have been responsible for said changes.

THE ROLE OF THE PROFESSIONAL AND ACADEMIC ADVISORS

1 – THE PROFESSIONAL ADVISOR

The **professional advisor** defines the missions, tasks and activities that the student intern will be involved in throughout the internship. They also ensure that the thesis topic is feasible and relevant to the objectives of the internship. The professional advisor provides support on two levels:

- on a primary level: by creating a conducive environment in which the practicum can take place (providing relevant contacts, allowing authorised access to internal documentation, encouraging initiatives, evaluating phases of completion, ensuring the student intern is exposed to relevant experiences),
- on a secondary level: by providing insider knowledge and clarification regarding the professional culture and know-how, the regulations and working procedures of the host institution.

The professional advisor is the representative of the host institution and in this regard, he or she is:

- deemed to represent the opinions of the institution,
- responsible for the progress of the student intern during the practicum, in particular related to their compliance with the specifications of the internship which the student has been charged with completing,
- in a position to notify the academic advisor or HPM track coordinator of any significant evolutions during the practicum (as discussed above), both in respect to the chosen topic or as a result of any relational or behavioural problems of the student.

At the end of the internship, the professional advisor completes a report evaluating the student on aspects such as:

- the quality of the students' work
- the integration of the student within the host institution
- the degree of compliance with the terms of the internship's activities and missions
- the student's capacity for analysis and synthesis
- the student's autonomy, organisational and planning skills

- the student's personal commitment, motivation and responsibility over the course of the practicum
- the student's interpersonal communication skills and capacity to adapt and fit into their team.

The professional advisor must send this evaluation to the MPH coordinator, in writing (email with a letter in PDF format) at the latest: **June 20th, 2022**

2 – THE ACADEMIC ADVISOR

The **academic advisor** is responsible for:

- constituting an expert resource insofar as the thesis topic and/or chosen methodology
- maintaining contact, as much as necessary, with the professional advisor and liaising with the student, as required, over the calendar and progress of the project, in line with the provisional schedule.

The student is the sole author of the thesis and the redaction of this thesis remains their entire responsibility. There is no obligation for any prior rereading by the academic advisor.

THE THESIS

1. CONTENT

Since students in the HPM track often obtain internships in organizations in which they are expected to work on multiple projects that are not research-focused, students will need to select one main project among their many missions for their thesis. It is possible that these projects do not have a research angle, but rather entail the design and/or implementation of a public health intervention or a literature review to support policy design, evaluation or recommendation. If this is the case, the HPM thesis format will closely resemble the 'traditional' research thesis, but can have some minor modifications. In this case, your thesis can be adapted and modified in consultation with the HPM track coordinator and the academic advisor. It will still require that you take some distance from the internship project to consider a broader, more far-reaching implication for public health.

Some adaptations for HPM students' thesis topics can be, for example, the testing of a conceptual framework or model in the implementation of a program; program evaluation; a change management project; a policy analysis. This will still require a systematic and evidence-based approach (use of a theoretical or conceptual framework and systematic approach) and an analysis of the extent to which these tools contributed to a deepening of your understanding of the topic. These adaptations must be validated by the HPM track coordinator and the academic advisor.

The thesis should include the following sections:

I. An introduction

This section specifies the public health problem, its pertinence and justification, what is already known, any gaps in knowledge and the question(s) that you are seeking to answer. The introduction can be guided by the following questions:

- *What will you be talking about in this thesis and from what perspective (who are you and what is your role in the examination of this topic?)*
- *How will you be addressing the topic? What does the existing literature say? Are there any gaps, discordant views or new approaches that need further exploration? What is the justification to explore it further in terms of prioritizing resources in public health?*
- *Public health topics are often multifactorial, complex and far reaching, so you will need to state what it is you will and will not be focusing on in the thesis (while still recognizing that your work fits into a wider whole).*
- *If you are designing or evaluating an intervention or community program aimed at solving a public health problem, what other strategies have been tried in the past? If interventions/programs already exist, what were their limitations? What frameworks have been used to design/evaluate them? Are they evidence-based?*

Always conclude your introduction with a clear aim, objective or research question(s)/ evaluation question(s).

II. The body of the thesis

After the introduction & background (literature review), the next section is generally a *Methods* section that explains how you went about answering the question (or meeting the aim or objective) stated at the end of your introduction. It will detail what data was used if you are analyzing existing (secondary) data, in which case you will need to specify how you collected the documents. If you are collecting primary data (interviews, surveys/questionnaires) you will need to explain how the data collection tool was developed, how the data was collected and from whom (the sample). This section may be adapted according to the type of project you are working on.

Next, there should be a *Results* section that presents the data you collected and a *Discussion* that allows you to interpret the data in light of existing literature (how does your data compare and contrast to other studies on the topic?). Like the *Methods* section, these two sections may be adapted – however it is essential to keep a systematic and rigorous approach to your work that explains what you did and why you did it, no matter what headings you use and using the literature to support and justify your process (and appropriately referencing this literature).

All the different sections of your thesis need to be linked together and introduced so the overall document remains coherent. At the end of each section, there should be transition phrases that make this link by concluding the past section and introducing the next one.

III. Conclusion

In this section, it is important to not merely repeat what was said in the previous sections but rather to *re-present* them in a new light, with the lessons learned and perspective gained from having conducted the study. This section can also be called be used to

suggest recommendations or implications of your findings. It is important to keep a distance from your thesis topic, to gain some perspective, and focus on what has been acquired in terms of knowledge, or what new outlooks it may have opened for future research.

IV. References

The principles of research integrity and ethics requires that students accurately reference and cite all their sources. These include:

- books, articles, along with authors' names and years
- web sites
- anonymizing participants' data and using quotation marks for verbatim

The school uses COMPILATIO – an anti-plagiarism software. See EHESP regulation and disciplinary consequences for plagiarism at <https://mph.ehesp.fr/wp-content/uploads/2009/08/EHESP-Academic-Regulations-.pdf>

Other sections of the thesis include:

- Appendices, tables, illustrations charts etc.

- The appendices should only include information relevant to understanding the main text
- Cross-references to the appendices should be made in the main document.
- For simple graphics, ensure that colours can be printed legibly in black and white.
- All tables, graphics, figures and diagrams must include a label and be referenced in the text. In the event that they have been borrowed from other authors they must be clearly referenced.

- Abstract in English

The abstract should be between 250 and 300 words long, made up of simple, short sentences. The title and abstract together must form a comprehensible whole. It should provide answers to these four questions:

- What was the reason for the project? (context)
- How was this project carried out? (resources and methods)
- What discoveries were made? (results)
- What conclusions or generalisations may consequently be drawn? (conclusions)
- Include 3-5 key words

- Abstract in French

In addition to the English language abstract, the document must include an abstract in French, preceded by the translation of the title of the thesis.

2. FORMAT

The Cover Page:

Use the cover page below in your thesis. The title must be as explicit as possible, while still being concise (potential for inclusion of a sub-title).



Master of Public Health

Master de Santé Publique

<Title of the Thesis>

< First name and SURNAME >

Class and year of the Master:

Location of the practicum:

Professional advisor: (name, institution)

Academic advisor: (name, institution)

3. LAYOUT

When structuring your thesis, use the following to layout to organise the different sections:

- Cover page with a title and sub-title
- Acknowledgements
- Table of contents with page numbers (use of *Styles* is highly recommended)
- List of acronyms
- Abstract
- Introduction
- Methods
- Results
- Discussion
- Conclusion/Recommendations/Implications
- References
- List of Appendices
- Abstract in French

4. LENGTH

The thesis ***should not exceed 30 pages***, with Arial font, size 11 with 1.5 spacing and 2,5 cm margins.

The appendices and references are not included in the 30 pages. Efforts should be made to limit appendices to what is strictly relevant to the topic at hand. Illustrations should be included solely insofar as they contribute useful information.

THE THESIS MUST BE UPLOADED ON THE REAL BY: **JUNE 21, 2022**
BEFORE 23:55

CRITERIA FOR THE EVALUATION OF THE THESIS

The jury is composed of two reviewers and two presidents and their role is to assign grades to the theses.

The final grade takes into account both the oral and written components:

- Written thesis: 50%
- Oral defence: 30%
- Q&A with the jury: 20%

The jury also considers:

- elements gathered during the oral exchange with the professional and academic advisors,
- written evaluations from these same advisors which also cover the soft-skill competences (see section on the role of advisors) and the assimilation or otherwise of advice given at various stages of the practicum.

1 - EVALUATION OF THE ORAL DEFENCE

The oral defence evaluates the student's ability to present his or her work in a synthetic manner to a group of people who are not necessarily experts on the issue (but who are scientists/academics) and the student's ability to defend their choices throughout the project and respond to jury members' questions. The jury can use the table below to guide their evaluation of the oral defence:

| COMPONENT | CRITERIA | EVALUATION |
|--------------------------|---|------------|
| PRESENTATION | Quality of the oral & visual presentation Clarity of speech Coherence | |
| DISCUSSION WITH THE JURY | Relevance of answers Authenticity Reflexivity | |

2 - EVALUATION OF THE WRITTEN THESIS

Below is a rubric to guide students in the redaction of their thesis and guide the reviewers in their grading of it.

Thesis rubric

| Criteria | | Excellent (15-20) | Satisfactory (10-15) | Poor (<10) |
|-------------------------|-------------------------------------|---|--|---|
| Title (0,5) | | Title is informative, succinct & offers specific details about the issue, context & methodology | Title offers some detail about the issue, but is lacking in relevant details | Title is irrelevant or fails to offer appropriate details of the study |
| | | | | |
| Abstract (1,5) | | Clearly & concisely states the research question, context, methodology, results, conclusion & implications for public health | Includes parts but not all of the following: research question, context, methodology, results, conclusion & implications for public health. Also includes vague or confusing information | Does not clearly state the research question, context, methodology, results, conclusion & implications for public health and provides inaccurate or irrelevant information. |
| | | | | |
| Introduction (3) | <i>Background/literature review</i> | Identifies relevant literature that highlights a specific & significant public health problem. Articulates clear definitions of relevant concepts (operationalized if relevant) and frames the problem in its wider context. | Provides a few references from the literature that vaguely point to public health problem. Concepts are vaguely defined and operationally defined and problem is adequately framed. | Incomplete or disorganized literature review that does not adequately identify a public health problem or justify its importance, or the topic is of little importance. Fails to identify relevant concepts and the problem is not adequately framed. |
| | <i>Problem identification</i> | Clearly articulates the public health problem. Well-conceptualized. | States the public health problem in vague terms but understandable. | Incomplete or unfocused public health problem. |
| | <i>Research question/objectives</i> | Clearly formulates a research question or objective that is coherent with the literature & problem that was identified. | States the purpose of the research but questions lack focus or are disconnected from the background literature. | Does not provide a research question/objective. |

| | | | | |
|--|-----------------------------------|--|--|--|
| | | | | |
| | <i>Research design</i> | The research design is appropriate to answer the research question/objective. The purpose, question and design are coherent. | The research design has been described but lacks in detail or is insufficiently justified. | The research design is absent, confusing or not coherent with the research question. |
| Methodology (5) | <i>Sample design</i> | The description of the sample and sampling procedure is appropriate and clearly described and well justified. | The sample and sampling procedure is described but lacks in detail or is insufficiently justified. | The description of the sample and sampling strategy is vague or absent and lacks relevance and/or justification. |
| | <i>Data collection procedures</i> | Data collection methods are clearly and accurately described and are coherent with the research question. Ethical considerations are addressed. | Data collection methods are described but are lacking sufficient detail. Ethical considerations are addressed. | Data collection methods are confusing, incomplete or lack relevance with research question. Ethical considerations are not addressed. |
| | <i>Data analysis</i> | Data analysis methods are clearly described and appropriate given the research question and research design. | Data analysis method is vague but complete but is relevant with research question and design. | Data analysis method is absent or confusing and not relevant to the research question and design. |
| Results (2) | | Clearly and thoughtfully presented and described. | Accurately presented but lacking in thoughtful organization of data. | Inaccurate or messy presentation of data with no organization. |
| Discussion (Can include recommendations for actions in the context of the objectives) (5) | | Thoughtful, detailed and comprehensive discussion of the findings that relates back to the research question. Key findings are confronted with the literature and implications are clearly stated. Shows creative and critical thinking with insight into the topic. | Limited discussion with some comparisons with the literature. Relates material to research question with some implications. Show some critical analysis. | No confrontation with the existing literature, fails to discuss key findings or relate to the research question. Shows little or no critical analysis. |

| | | | | |
|-----------------------------------|-------------------------------------|--|--|---|
| | | | | |
| Quality of writing (3) | <i>Composition & formatting</i> | Manuscript is well-written, with attention to spelling, punctuation; sentence and paragraph structure and transitions that facilitate a logical flow from one section to the next. | Manuscript is well-written but there are some typos and poor punctuation (less than 5) with only minor problems with the flow of sentence and paragraph structure. | Manuscript is poorly written, disorganized and difficult to read. There are more than 5 typos or problems with punctuation. |
| | <i>Referencing system</i> | Well-referenced and appropriate and consistent referencing system (appropriate for publication) | Minor issues with referencing throughout the text and in the reference list (would need some minor revisions for publication). | Fails to cite references or mixes up different referencing styles within the manuscript (not appropriate for publication). |

THE JURY

1 – THE ORAL DEFENCE

It is the student's responsibility to inform their professional advisor of the dates of the oral defence which will be held the **4 and 5 of July 2022**.

The Oral Defence:

The oral defence is not simply a summary of the thesis. Rather it is intended to focus on the main findings and implications of the findings. The oral defence is public (except in the case of confidential theses) and lasts around **40 minutes**, according to the following schedule:

- **15 minutes** for the oral accounts of the candidate
- **25 minutes** of questions from the jury to the candidate and the candidates responses,

At the end of the oral defence, deliberations take place in private with only the reviewers and jury presidents.

Professional advisors can be present at the oral defence only if their presence will not interfere with the student's ability to provide a critical appreciation of the contents of their thesis. If present, professional advisors can provide their point of view, their motivations leading to the topic of the thesis, the conditions in which the project was conducted, their expectations and their level of satisfaction. If absent, the professional advisors will have provided this information in their final evaluation report for the jury. The professional advisors do not participate in the final evaluation of the thesis.

2 - THE ROLE OF THE THESIS REVIEWERS

As soon as the student's thesis has been submitted on REAL, these documents are sent to the members of the jury with this practicum guidebook and the thesis rubric.

As previously mentioned, there are two reviewers appointed by the HPM track coordinator according to the topic and methodology employed. Each reviewer is expected to read the thesis before the oral defence, prepare questions for the student and provide a final grade on the written work and oral defence.

3 - THE JURY PROCESS

The oral defences generally occur over two days. The jury is presided by the heads of the five disciplinary tracks and the thesis reviewers.