

**EHESP School  
of Public  
Health**



**Ecole des  
Hautes Etudes  
en Santé  
Publique**

**The Master  
of Public Health  
HPM track  
2023- 2024**

**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 advisor from the programme faculty (« academic advisor »).

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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## **BEFORE THE PRACTICUM**

### **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 that students 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, adaptability 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/objective”. 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 the necessary data,
4. Discuss and confirm your ideas of a thesis topic with your professional and the HPM track coordinator in the thesis framework due 1 month after the start of the internship.

Remember that while you may be an intern within an organization, becoming a public health professional implies that you are able to apply critical judgement *inside* this organization. You should be able to analyse issues and be aware of any biases that your organization may generate. What are the interests of the institution you have become part of, and to what point have you integrated them (intentionally or not)?

## **CHOOSING A PRACTICUM HOST & THESIS TOPIC**

### **The relevance of the host & topic:**

The practicum should allow the student to apply a number of the core competences targeted by the health policy and management track. Therefore, it is important to ensure that the internship's activities, tasks, missions and projects will allow the student to apply and develop these relevant 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**

### **THESIS FRAMEWORK REPORT**

At the end of first month, and after validation by the professional advisor and HPM track coordinator, students will submit a thesis framework report to their academic advisor who will provide feedback on the proposed project. Once the framework has been validated by your academic and professional advisors, the final report should be sent to the HPM track coordinator as this will inform the choice of the two reviewers who will be evaluating your work. This framework is not graded but aims to serve as a road map for your Masters' project and will ultimately be the outline of your thesis. It 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

*The final framework report should be co-signed by the professional advisor, the student and the academic advisor and uploaded on Real within a month of the start date of the internship.*

## ***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.

## ***THESIS PROJECT PRESENTATION***

Before the oral defence in July and before submitting your thesis, HPM students will participate in an online thesis project presentation during which they will give a 5-10 minute presentation of their work, followed by a short discussion with the HPM track coordinator and fellow students. Elements to be included in the presentation are those found in the framework report, supplemented by any available results and initial interpretation. The objective of this session is to allow HPM students to know what other students in the track are working on, to obtain feedback on your projects and ensure students are ready to submit and defend their theses on time.

This thesis presentation is one of several other workshops students will participate in smaller groups during the internship. These HPM thesis workshops will be organized and run by an academic advisor (see below for more details).

## ***ROLE OF 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 in terms of 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 questionnaire evaluating the student on aspects such as:

- the quality of the students' work
- the acquisition of relevant competences during the internship
- 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 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 will receive the questionnaire from the MPH coordination team toward the end of the internship and must return the evaluation before the oral defence.

Please note that professional advisors will be asked to **complete an evaluation form** that will be sent out to all advisors prior to the oral defences. These need to be completed by **Monday 17<sup>th</sup> June 2024**.

## ***ROLE OF THE ACADEMIC ADVISOR***

A small group of students will be assigned an HPM academic advisor who will organize monthly workshops throughout the internship. Each workshop will have different themes and objectives. These workshops will allow each student to get feedback not only from the academic advisor but also from their peers and act as a support group to guide you through the process of identifying a problem statement related to your internship all the way to the redaction and presentation of your thesis. It will also ensure you are keeping to a schedule and not falling behind on the advancement of your thesis.

The **academic advisor** is responsible for:

- constituting an expert resource insofar as the thesis topic and/or chosen methodology
- maintaining contact with the student on the progress of the project, in line with the provisional schedule.
- Helping the student with the construction of the thesis and preparation for the oral defence

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.

## **AFTER THE PRACTICUM**

### ***INTERNSHIP REPORT***

#### **WHAT IS AN INTERNSHIP REPORT?**

An internship report is a document summarizing your internship experience and contributes to a better understanding of the benefits it had in developing your public health competencies. In your report, you should mention the skills you developed and specify how you used these skills in the tasks that were assigned to you. Additionally, you can evaluate their value in terms of future work opportunities.

The internship report is a document ranging between 5-10 pages that should detail the activities and responsibilities held during your internship, and what you have learnt about this sector during your time there. Since students will be involved in a number of activities and projects during the internship that do not appear in the thesis, the internship report is an opportunity for students to share their experiences and reflect on what they learned and how it complements the theoretical content learned during the MPH program.

It is expected that you are able to demonstrate a good understanding of the organization in which you interned and its activities, and indicate the knowledge and skills acquired during the internship. Your report should be organized using the format presented below and be well-written and self-reflexive. Unlike your thesis, this report is an opportunity to reflect on your own professional development and does not require that you employ external references or citations.

The internship report must be submitted at the same time as the thesis in the designated folder on REAL.

#### **FORMAT OF REPORT**

*Introduction:* Outlines the organization and/or department in which you interned

Summarize the work you did (or are doing) and clearly state the objectives of your internship. You can also state the importance/contribution of your project and its relevance to you, the organization and to public health, more generally.

*Body:* Represents the main part of your report and consists of two parts

##### Part I: The Organization

This section should include a description of the environment, the kind of organization it is (NGO, consulting firm, agency, non-profit, government), its mission and values, how it is organized etc...

##### Part II: Your activities/responsibilities in the organization during your Internship

In this section you will detail your working conditions, time organization, software or other tools used, and projects you worked on. You can discuss challenges you might have encountered and the solutions you found.



You should end this part by reflecting on what kind of skills you acquired during this experience and those you may still need to acquire to enter once you've joined the job market. While this section will vary in length from one student to the next depending on the project, this section represents your work during the internship and therefore is expected to be longer than part I. (*Note: Part II is the major focus of your report*).

**Conclusions and Recommendations:** Summarizes how objectives stated in the introduction have or have not been met.

In this section, you want to make some concluding remarks and recommendations, briefly describing your professional plans for the future. Keep in mind that conclusions deal with the present and recommendations with the future.

## **THESIS**

### **CONTENT**

Since students in the HPM track often find 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 to be the object 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 scoping 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 (for example, the methods section would weigh slightly less; but the sound discussion of implementation or health policy ramifications would be more important). 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 (using a theoretical or conceptual framework for example) and an analysis of how 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/ 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, critical and rigorous approach to your work that explains what you did and why you did it, no matter what headings you use, and that uses the literature to support and justify each step of the 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 used to suggest recommendations or implications of your findings for the field of public health. 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.
- 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.

**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>**

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**< First name and SURNAME >**

**Class and year of the Master:**

**Location of the practicum:**

**Professional advisor:** (name, institution)

**Academic advisor:** (name, institution)

## LAYOUT

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

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

## 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: **TUESDAY JUNE 18, 2024 BEFORE 23:55**

## CRITERIA FOR THE EVALUATION OF THE THESIS

The jury is composed of two reviewers and one president 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/email exchanges 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.

### 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/professionals in the field) 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
<b>PRESENTATION</b>	Quality of the oral & visual presentation Clarity of speech Coherence Provides added-value from the written thesis	
<b>DISCUSSION WITH THE JURY</b>	Relevance of answers Authenticity Reflexivity	

### EVALUATION OF THE WRITTEN THESIS

Below is a rubric to guide students in the redaction of their thesis and guide reviewers in their grading of it. Please remember that HPM students have a variety of options when it comes to the objectives of their thesis (policy analysis, program implementation or evaluation, project management). This means that reviewers have the liberty to adapt the point allocation to the different sections according to the topic and objectives of the thesis (between 3-5 points) to arrive at a total score out of 20 points.

## Thesis rubric

Criteria		Excellent (15-20)	Satisfactory (10-15)	Poor (<10)
<b>Title (0,5)</b>		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
<b>Abstract (1,5)</b>		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.
<b>Introduction (3-5)</b>	<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.
<b>Methodology (3-5)</b>	<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.
<b>Results (3-5)</b>		Clearly and thoughtfully presented and described.	Accurately presented but lacking in thoughtful organization of data.	Inaccurate or messy presentation of data with no organization.
<b>Discussion (Can include recommendations for actions in the context of the objectives) (3-5)</b>		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.



<b>Quality of writing (3)</b>	<i>Composition &amp; 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).

## **JURY**

### **ORAL DEFENCE**

It is the student's responsibility to inform their professional advisor of the dates of the oral defence which will be held on the **1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> July 2024**. They are under no obligation to attend the oral defence but should be invited to do so.

The oral defence is not a summary of the thesis. Rather it is intended to focus on the main findings and implications of the findings and show evidence of maturation and perspective since submitting the thesis. 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. Students should prepare for potential questions and write down the questions if the reviewers ask a series of questions at one time.

At the end of the oral defence, deliberations take place in private with only the reviewers and jury president. Professional 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 the final evaluation questionnaire. The professional and academic advisors do not participate in the final evaluation of the thesis.

### **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. Two reviewers are 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.

Reviewers do not submit written reports unless the student does not receive a passing grade in which case the reviewers submit a written report to the student clearly explaining the weaknesses of the thesis and describing what is expected in the revised version. Students have two weeks to resubmit their corrected thesis and the reviewers must then confirm that the student has followed the recommendations and meets the requirements to pass.

### **JURY PROCESS**

The oral defences generally occur over two days online. Each jury is presided by the coordinators of the five disciplinary tracks and the two thesis reviewers. Most students validate their thesis, however when this is not the case, as discussed above, students must resubmit their thesis using the reviewers' recommendations to improve their work. There is no second oral defence.