

## UIC School of Public Health Student Handbook 2004-2005

### *The Master of Science*

#### **Learning objectives for the MS (Master of Science degree)**

MS students will achieve the following learning objectives during completion of the MS program in public health:

1. Demonstrate knowledge and understanding of a well-defined public health discipline and its connection to, and impact on, public health.
2. Demonstrate understanding of discipline-specific theoretical constructs, research design, research methodology and analytical strategies.
3. Demonstrate the ability to evaluate and interpret scientific literature.
4. Participate in an original research project that makes a contribution to the body of knowledge of their discipline.
5. Demonstrate the ability to disseminate research findings to the scientific community and the general public.

#### **Master of Science**

The Master of Science (MS) degree in Public Health Sciences prepares individuals to enter academic, research, or professional careers pertaining to broad areas of public health concern. It is the appropriate route for continuing studies leading to the PhD degree. Academic preparation is offered through a broad spectrum of public health courses and related research from which students can fashion individualized curricula to meet highly specialized objectives. Integrated with the course work (in all areas but biostatistics) is a research project, the findings of which must be described in a research thesis. Interdisciplinary studies that combine two or more of the School's program areas are encouraged. The MS degree is awarded under the University of Illinois at Chicago Graduate College. For the purposes of this degree program, the School of Public Health acts as the Department of Public Health Sciences (DPHS) of the Graduate College. All requirements related to the degree, as described in the UIC Graduate Study Catalog, must be met.

#### Requirements for Admission

See the [SPH Catalog](#) for admissions information.

#### Deadline for Completing Degree Requirements

In graduate programs requiring 32 to 40 semester hours of graduate work, candidates must complete all of the requirements within five calendar years after their initial registration in the Graduate College. In programs requiring 41 to 64 semester hours of graduate work, candidates must complete all of the requirements within six calendar years. Students pursuing combined degrees will be allowed an additional two years. Time spent on a leave of absence approved by the School and the Graduate College is not counted toward the degree time limit (see Leave of Absence).

## Program of Study

After admission to the MS degree in one of the four Divisions, the student is assigned a major advisor with interests and expertise compatible with the student's goals. Together, they develop an overall program of study. The program approval is the responsibility of the Division Director and the Director of Graduate Studies.

Minimum graduation requirements for the MS degree in the School of Public Health as well as all division specializations except Biostatistics, include 32 credit hours of course work and 16 hours of independent research leading to a thesis distributed as follows:

### Required Courses Semester Hours

EPID 400 - Principles of Epidemiology (3 sh)

OR

EPID 494a Introduction to Epidemiology: Principles and Methods\* (3 sh). Students must consult their academic advisors and the description of Division requirements in this Handbook to determine which epidemiology course is required of them. [In future offerings, EPID 494a will be offered as EPID 403.]

\*BSTT 400 - Biostatistics I \*\* (3 sh)

Division Course Requirements, Electives and 26 sh

Seminars. (At least nine semester hours must be at the 500 level)

Research (IPHS 598) 16 sh

TOTAL 48 sh

\* These courses are prerequisites for many 400-level and 500-level courses.

\*\*BSTT 400 not required for Biostatistics majors.

Independent Study (IPHS 596) - no more than 4 semester hours of independent study may be applied to the degree.

The Master of Science Program in Biostatistics substitutes a comprehensive examination for the thesis. The minimum course requirement is 48 semester credit hours.

With the exception of Biostatistics, a high degree of flexibility exists in the MS program of study in that only two courses are stipulated as school-wide requirements, and students are encouraged to select courses from more than one Division. Programs might consist, for example, of a blend of environmental and occupational health sciences with epidemiology and biostatistics. The School of Public Health courses might also be combined with studies outside the School. It is recommended that all students take BSTT 401, Biostatistics II, as part of their program of study in preparation for thesis research. A major requirement is that the program of study be designed and the entire 48 semester hours, including the electives, be directed toward a meaningful health-related goal. For full-time students, it is anticipated that at least four semesters, usually more depending upon the thesis topic, will be needed to complete the

requirements for the MS degree. The student's thesis format must adhere to the Graduate College requirements.

## **Research**

Before undertaking research leading to the required thesis, the student, with the assistance and approval of his/her major advisor, must select a Thesis Advisor, who must be a member of the Graduate College Faculty. In conjunction with the Thesis Advisor, the student selects the Thesis Examining Committee, subject to the final approval of the major advisor, Division Director, Dean of the School of Public Health, and the Graduate College. This committee consists of at least three members, one of whom must be a tenured full member of the Graduate College faculty. One committee member may be selected from outside the School of Public Health. The members of the Thesis Examining Committee will meet with the student to approve the thesis proposal, and to determine that the student is adequately prepared to undertake it. The thesis research may emphasize theoretical, laboratory, field, or computer-based investigations, but it should be feasible to complete in two to three semesters of full-time work. The members of the committee then provide guidance and assistance throughout the research experience of the student.

It is strongly advised that no more than one semester elapse following completion of course work before approval of the thesis proposal.

### Preparation for Thesis Approval

Students should seek the guidance of their advisors and the Graduate College at an early stage of thesis preparation. *It is highly recommended that MS students at the point of beginning work on their thesis see the SPH Office of Student Affairs, or the Graduate College on the 6th floor of University Hall, to obtain a copy of the Graduate College brochure, "Instructions for Completing Graduate College Degree Requirements and Preparation of Theses."* This handbook is also available [online](#). The handbook provides instruction for final thesis preparation and format approval. The advisor and SPH are responsible for the approval of the thesis content and style.

### Final Oral Examination

When a student has completed the thesis research work and a final draft of the thesis, s/he should request the advisor to convene the Thesis Examining Committee to conduct the final exam and for review and approval of the thesis for content. When the student and major advisor agree that the student is prepared, the advisor assembles the Thesis Examining Committee to conduct a final oral examination. The Thesis Examining Committee examines the student in a private session, indicating to the student whether any further work or revision of the thesis is required. The examination is then open to faculty and students for an oral presentation of the student's research. Finally, the Thesis Examining Committee reports to the Graduate College that the student has or has not passed his/her examination and thus has or has not satisfied all requirements for the MS degree. A candidate cannot be passed if more than one vote of "fail" is reported. The report to the Graduate College is made by the members of the Thesis Examining Committee and the advisor who sign and date the "Certificate of Approval" form (sent to the Thesis Examining Committee Chair by the Graduate College). When all Graduate College forms have been signed and dated by the Thesis Examining Committee and major advisor, they should be brought to the SPH Dean's Office for "departmental" signature, and then forwarded to the Graduate College to conclude the process. Upon approval of Dr. Sylvia Furner, the Director of Graduate Studies for the Department of Public Health Sciences, the student is recommended to the Graduate College for award of the degree.

Note: SPH requires that one copy of the thesis be deposited with the SPH Office of the Dean to be placed in a repository in the student's Division.

### **MS Bypass Procedure**

With the approval of the student's advisor and Division Director, a student may choose to enter the PhD program and not undertake the MS thesis. A written letter of application must be made to justify this transfer. The Division admissions committee will review the justification letter and an accompanying transcript. Recommendations for approving the bypass will be made to the SPH Director of Graduate Studies (Senior Associate Dean) for approval and transmission to the Graduate College for final approval. A list of courses to be transferred to the PhD program must accompany the justification letter and approval.

### **Transfer to MPH Degree**

If an MS student wishes to transfer to the MPH degree, a Change of Graduate Program Form must be completed. The appropriate Division admissions committee will review the application and forward its recommendation to the Dean for final review and approval.