

**SOUTHERN CONNECTICUT STATE UNIVERSITY
DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC HEALTH**

Graduate Public Health Program

THE THESIS

THE MOST FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

School of Health and Human Services

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GRADUATE PUBLIC HEALTH PROGRAM

THE THESIS

Most Frequently Asked Questions

1. What is the Thesis?

The Thesis is one of the culminating activities in the M.P.H. planned program of study. It is a research activity in which you are required to apply your general public health and specialized knowledge and skills (conceptual, human and technical) as applied to the investigation and analysis of a public health issue. The Thesis has five (5) chapters, the first three that comprise the Thesis Proposal or plan for the Thesis.

2. When is the Thesis initiated?

You enroll in PCH 590 - Thesis Seminar I in the fall semester of your final year of study. However, it is actually never too early to begin thinking about a topic or area of interest for your Thesis. The Department's *Thesis Guidelines and Requirements* contains a list of sources for generating ideas for Theses.

3. Does the Department offer an orientation to the Thesis?

Yes. During the spring semester preceding your enrollment in PCH 590, the Department will conduct an orientation to the Thesis and Special Project. At this meeting, you will have an opportunity to ask questions about the Thesis process.

4. Are PCH 590 – Thesis I and PCH 591 – Thesis II offered as regular courses?

No. In the fall, there will be an orientation session for all students enrolling in one of the two culminating experience options. This will be a time to ask questions about the special project and thesis, respectively. Following this session, your thesis advisor will inform you of his or required schedule of meeting times. With the exception of this initial session, subsequent contact with your thesis advisor will be through independent study with an assigned schedule of meeting times.

5. Does the Department require an application for the Thesis?

Yes. During the orientation session, you will be provided with an Application for Approval of Thesis Concept form. It requires you to provide information about your proposed thesis topic, purpose of study, research questions, study population, rationale and relevancy. In addition, it asks you to provide information about the scope of your literature review, theoretical frameworks, strategies for accessing your study population, proposed research design, data collection and analysis strategies.

6. Do I develop the topic for the Thesis on my own?

Maybe. Unlike the Special Project that most often is conducted in cooperation with a health-related agency, the thesis can be agency-related or of a type that requires no such affiliation. For the types of Theses acceptable to the Department, the *Thesis Guidelines and Requirements*.

6. How do I make contact with an agency if I select a Thesis that would require an agency affiliation?

If you presently work at a health-related agency, you can pursue the feasibility of conducting your Thesis there or accessing data found at the agency. If you do not work at such an agency or choose not to conduct your research at the agency you do work for, you can contact an agency that shares a particular interest you have. Your academic advisor or the Department's Coordinator of Graduate Studies will be available to assist you.

7. Does the Thesis have to be related to my program specialization?

Yes.

8. Does my academic advisor serve as my Seminar I Thesis Advisor?

Not necessarily. There is certain faculty designated as Thesis Advisors. The list of available faculty will be included on the Application. Your Thesis Advisor must be a full-time faculty member in the Department of Public Health. You will be asked for your preference of Thesis Advisor, although no choice is guaranteed.

9. Can I conduct my Thesis with another student?

No. As a culminating activity, it is required that you demonstrate your ability to apply your general public health and specialized knowledge and skills (conceptual, human and technical) as applied to the investigation and analysis of a public health issue.

10. What is the role of my Thesis Advisor?

You can conceive of your Thesis Advisor as the "gate-keeper" who is responsible to ensure that the Thesis Proposal and final Thesis conforms to the Department's *Thesis Guidelines and Requirements* and whether or not it is acceptable and ready for submission to the Department Chairperson and Graduate School Dean. Since it is your thesis, you will be expected to comply with the standards for scholarly writing, including spelling, punctuation and grammar. Your Thesis Advisor is not your personal editor, nor is he or she responsible for correcting deficiencies in structure, format, and style or content that are part of your responsibility as author. The role of the Thesis Advisor is described in the Department's *Thesis Guidelines and Requirements*.

11. Who are the other individuals involved in the Thesis approval process?

In addition to you (author), and your Thesis Advisor, there are the Second Reader, Department Chairperson, and the Dean of the School of Graduate Studies.

12. Does the Thesis require the approval of the Dean of the Graduate School?

Yes, in addition to your Thesis Advisor, Second Reader and Department Chairperson.

13. Can I change to a Special Project after I have initiated my Thesis?

It depends. The Ad Hoc Committee on Culminating Experiences may determine that your Application for Approval of Thesis Concept may be more appropriate as a special project. Once your Thesis Proposal has been accepted by your Thesis Advisor and Graduate School, you cannot change to a special project, unless you are willing to submit a new Application with a start date of the subsequent fall semester.

14. Can I expect my Thesis Advisor to tutor me in content, concepts or methodology that I did not master in my other courses?

Remember, that the Thesis requires you to demonstrate your abilities. Your Thesis Advisor will expect you to review or learn the knowledge or skills required to successfully complete your Thesis. New learning involved in completing the Thesis is incidental to the process. You can expect your Thesis Advisor to offer you guidance, consultation, and support as you demonstrate your ability to complete this culminating activity. The Application for the Thesis will require you to establish your credentials and capacity (knowledge, skills and access to resources) to complete the Thesis.

15. Is a Thesis more demanding than a Special Project?

No! Although the term "Thesis" seems ominous, it is actually no more or less demanding than the Special Project. Both culminating experiences involve substantial research and the ability to apply acquired knowledge and skills to a health-related problem.

16. Is it advisable to follow the format of a previously completed Thesis?

No, since requirements change from year-to-year. The only approved format is contained in the most recent edition of the Department's *Thesis Guidelines and Requirements* document, available online at the Department's Web site and from TYCO Printing.

17. What if I cannot finish my thesis proposal or final thesis within the prescribed time period?

If you are unable to meet the end-of-semester deadline, your Thesis Advisor will assign a "Q" grade. Although this grade will not impact on your grade-point-average, you will be required to re-register for PCH 590 - Thesis Seminar I, during the following fall. If you do not complete PCH 591 - Thesis Seminar II, during the spring semester, then you must register during the following spring.

18. Can I fail the Thesis?

Yes, as is the case for any course. Since the Thesis is a culminating activity, you will be permitted a maximum of three drafts of any section of the Thesis Proposal or Thesis. A minimum of two drafts is to be expected. If you are unable to complete a section within three drafts, obviously you cannot demonstrate the proficiency required to complete the Thesis. Failure to successfully complete the Thesis will result in dismissal from the Program.

19. What if my Thesis Advisor and Second Reader disagree about some aspect of my Thesis?

In most instances your Thesis Advisor and Second Reader will resolve their differences with a minimum of effort. In the final analysis, it is your Thesis Advisor who will make the ultimate decision.

20. When can I expect drafts of my work submitted to my Thesis Advisor to be returned to me?

Response time will vary according to Thesis Advisor. Once assigned, contact your Thesis Advisor to determine his or her policy on response time.

21. How often is it recommended that I consult with my Thesis Advisor?

In addition to the schedule prescribed in the course outline for PCH 590, you should establish a schedule of consultations with your Thesis Advisor.

22. Can I register for Thesis Seminar II if I have not completed Thesis Seminar I?

No. To be eligible to register for Thesis Seminar II you must have been assigned a passing grade for Thesis Seminar I.

23. Should I retain the services of an experienced editor to review my Thesis?

The Department neither encourages nor discourages the use of outside editorial assistance. It is your sole responsibility to meet the stringent grammatical and style requirements for the written parts of the Thesis. In most cases, students who spend the time, including online tutorials and written guides, usually can meet the expected standards.

24. Is there a requirement that my Thesis be microfilmed ?

Yes.

25. Is there a requirement that my Thesis be copyrighted?

No. This is optional.

26. How many hardbound copies of my Thesis am I required to prepare?

A minimum of three. One copy which is retained in the University Library, one by the Department of Public Health (with CD-ROM), and one which is presented to your Thesis Advisor. As a courtesy, you may want to present your Second Reader with a copy.

27. When can I expect to receive a grade for PCH 590 - Thesis Seminar I?

A grade will be assigned only after your thesis proposal has been approved by your thesis advisor, Department Chairperson and Dean of the Graduate School. Your grade for Thesis Seminar I, will be determined, in part, by receiving approval from the Dean of the School of Graduate Studies for your Thesis Proposal.

28. When can I expect to receive a grade for PCH 591 - Thesis Seminar II?

A final grade will be assigned only after you have submitted a bound copy of your approved thesis and CD ROM to the Coordinator of Graduate Studies. Your grade for Thesis Seminar II, will be determined, in part, by receiving approval from the Dean of the School of Graduate Studies for your final Thesis.



Absolutely no data collection without approval of the University's
Institutional Review Board (IRB)