

**UNIVERSITY COUNCIL  
ACADEMIC PROGRAMS COMMITTEE  
FOR INFORMATION ONLY**

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**PRESENTED BY:** Kevin Flynn; Chair, Academic Programs Committee

**DATE OF MEETING:** November 19, 2015

**SUBJECT:** Thesis Option for the Master of Public Health

**COUNCIL ACTION:** For information only

**SUMMARY:**

**The thesis option for the Master of Public Health program was approved by the Academic Programs Committee at its meeting on October 14, 2015.**

The School of Public Health proposed a thesis option for their M.P.H. degree program that is to be offered in addition to their existing course-based M.P.H. degree. The new option will allow for a research-enhanced program where students will be able to satisfy the requirements of the existing professional degree (the course-based M.P.H.) as well as write and defend a thesis. Students enrolled in either program will meet the core competencies outlined by the Public Health Agency of Canada.

Students who wish to complete the thesis option will apply following their first year in the course-based M.P.H. program. Students who enroll in the M.P.H. thesis-option will have a 16-week practicum in which to conduct research that will form the basis of their thesis, and will take two fewer electives in their second year to allow time for research and writing during the regular term.

The thesis option for the M.P.H. will increase both faculty and student research activity in the School of Public Health and will offer a unique option both at the University of Saskatchewan and amongst other post-secondary institutions offering public health programs. The thesis option is not intended to change the total enrolment at the School, but rather to act as a conduit for identifying, recruiting, and training highly qualified graduate student researchers from within the existing student body.

**ATTACHMENTS:**

1. Proposal for a thesis option for the Master of Public Health



UNIVERSITY OF  
SASKATCHEWAN

School of Public Health

# PROPOSAL FOR THESIS OPTION

Request for a Thesis Option within Existing MPH Degree

SCHOOL OF PUBLIC  
HEALTH

September 18, 2015

# PROPOSAL FOR A THESIS OPTION

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## Request for a Thesis Option within Existing MPH Degree

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## I. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The School of Public Health (SPH) wishes to offer a thesis option within the existing Master of Public Health degree. The current course-based Master of Public Health (MPH) program grew out of the University of Saskatchewan's (UofS) First Integrated Plan. It was part of University-wide initiatives to increase graduate student population and capacity for research and to build interdisciplinary approaches to research and teaching. As part of the Plan, the creation of an "inter-professional Master's program in Public Health" was proposed. This led to the development of the now well-established professional, course-based Master of Public Health (MPH) program and the subsequent need for a thesis option.

This proposal will provide a research-enhanced option where students will be able to satisfy the requirements of the existing professional, course-based Master of Public Health degree, as well as write and defend a thesis. The MPH thesis option would include 33 cu of course work plus a thesis requiring a 16-week 9-cu practicum (See **Appendix 1** for typical program timeline). The MPH degree with a thesis option is designed to meet both the Public Health Agency of Canada requirements for a professional public health practitioner and provide students with applied public health research training.

The students admitted to this program will have sufficient time to complete a thesis that is consistent with the expectations for an MSc student at the University of Saskatchewan in addition to the course load for the MPH program. This would typically consist of two defensible chapters in addition to an introduction and conclusions. The thesis-option students will have to complete a 16 week practicum focusing on their thesis in place of the 12 week practicum for course-based students, and they will have 2 fewer 3 credit unit elective courses during the second year of the program freeing up time for research during the regular term. Finally, they will typically enroll in the summer term following their second regular term to write and defend their thesis. Students will not defend until their committee is satisfied that the thesis meets the required standard for a Master's degree.

This program is **different from all other thesis-based options on campus** as there are no other thesis programs that include training in all of the core competencies for professional public health practice outlined by the Public Health Agency of Canada. Only students who have been admitted to the MPH course based program and then excelled academically in their first term of course work will be eligible to apply. Then, only those who have identified a supervisor and have a clearly defined and appropriate project by the end of their first term of study will be permitted to transfer to the thesis option. Students applying to the SPH and who want direct entry to a Masters level thesis program, as well as those who are not interested in completing the course work associated with the MPH degree, will be directed to other graduate programs.

The proposed MPH thesis option will substantially increase both faculty and student research activity within the SPH, but is not intended to change total enrollment in the MPH program. Specifically, the MPH thesis option will serve as a conduit in the identification, recruitment, training and possible retention of highly qualified graduate student researchers from within the MPH cohort, who upon completion of their degree might choose to continue their academic pursuits and research training in the SPH or other associated academic units at the University of Saskatchewan.

The first intake of MPH thesis option students is proposed for May 2016.

## II. PROPOSAL DOCUMENT

### 2.1 Proposal Identification

**Title of proposal:** Request for a Thesis Option within the Existing MPH Degree

**Degree(s):** Master of Public Health

**Field(s) of Specialization:** N/A

**Level(s) of Concentration:** N/A

**Option(s):** Thesis

**Degree College:** Graduate Studies and Research

**Home College:** School of Public Health

**Contact person(s) (name, telephone, fax, e-mail):**

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**Date:** September 18, 2015

**Approved by the degree college and/or home college:** School of Public Health

**Proposed date of implementation:** May 2016

### 2.2 Type of Change

#### Requiring approval by Council

- ☐ A new Degree-Level program or template for program.
- ☐ A new Field of Specialization at the Major or Honors Level of Concentration or template for a major or honors program
- ☐ Conversion of an existing program from regular to special tuition program.
- ☐ A change in the requirements for admission to a program
- ☐ A change in quota for a college
- ☐ Program revisions that will use new resources
- ☐ A replacement program, including program deletion
- ☐ A program deletion (consult Program Termination Procedures, approved by Council in May 2001)

#### Requiring approval by Academic Programs Committee

- ☐ Addition of a higher Level of Concentration to an existing Field of Specialization.
- ☐ Addition of a new Field of Specialization at the Minor Level of Concentration.
- ☒ A change in program options
- ☐ A change in the name of a Degree-level Program or Field of Specialization.
- ☐ A change in the total number of credit hours required for an approved degree program.

### III. RATIONALE

#### 3.0 Introductory Statement

The School of Public Health (SPH) faculty wishes to create a thesis option for the Master of Public Health (MPH) for four reasons.

First, students in the course-based MPH program have asked for opportunities to acquire applied research skills and investigative experience in addition to achieving a professional degree in the field of public health that meets the requirements of the Public Health Agency of Canada (PHAC).

Second, we wish to create a feeder program for our existing public health related doctoral programs in the SPH.

Third, the proposed MPH thesis option will provide necessary opportunities to increase both faculty and student research activity.

Finally, students enrolled in a thesis program have access to a wider variety of funding opportunities.

#### 3.1 Background

The School of Public Health wishes to add a thesis option to the existing course-based MPH degree. This MPH thesis option provides a research-enhanced experience for students while satisfying the requirements of the existing course-based, professional MPH degree. The proposal is for a 24-month, 33 course-based credit units (cu), plus a 9-cu 16-week practicum (a minimum of 480 hours) with a focus on public health research. A MPH degree with a thesis option will serve as a conduit in the identification, recruitment, training and possible retention of highly qualified graduate student researchers, who upon completion of their degree might choose to continue their academic and research training in the SPH or other associated academic units at the University of Saskatchewan. Thus, the current proposal directly addresses one of the key strategic priorities to “enhance research intensiveness” at the University of Saskatchewan.

This package contains several **letters of support from SPH faculty (Appendix 2)** showing the necessity of this program to support their research programs and increase the SPH’s scholarly capacity to train highly qualified personnel. For many faculty, this program will be the primary means of engaging graduate students to establish and enhance their research programs.

The MPH thesis option will create a level playfield as it will allow the participating MPH students to qualify for consideration of devolved funding by the University once the program has become established. In the interim, the thesis option students will be eligible to apply for non-devolved funding.

Access to this funding is crucial for supporting the research capacity of the SPH students and their corresponding supervising faculty. This is particularly important for young student investigators and junior faculty early in their careers.

Establishing a Masters level thesis option accessible to all faculty in the SPH will have a number of beneficial effects. Chief among them, the fact that the MPH thesis option will also enhance the SPH’s marketability among students and strengthen the programs ability to recruit and retain highly qualified, research-focused faculty.

#### 3.2 Mission

The MPH thesis option will produce highly-qualified public health professionals, who will have the training and experience needed to conduct relevant, applied public health research. Such researchers will play an important role in the increasingly complex public health issues emerging locally, nationally, and internationally.

### 3.3 Goals

1. To create a new MPH thesis option within the current MPH degree.
2. To increase the capacity for research in public health.

### 3.4 Objectives

1. To prepare graduate students for professional and research careers in public health or further graduate level training.
2. To recruit and retain highly-qualified graduate students and faculty with a background and a strong interest in conducting public health research.
3. To increase the capacity of the SPH to assess and respond to public health research needs and to translate the findings of this research into practice.

### 3.5 Foundational Principles

1. The MPH thesis option will complement and enhance the research of existing faculty, research groups, and graduate programs within the SPH and beyond.
2. The MPH thesis option will share the core curriculum of the established professional, course-based MPH. In addition, each student enrolled in this option will complete a thesis in public health research that best fits their background, interests and career goals.
3. The MPH thesis option will provide the necessary flexibility for students to pursue a research-intensive program in addition to meeting the core competencies for public health practice.
4. The MPH thesis option initiative is broadly supported by the university's integrated planning. It will contribute to the UofS in a number of significant ways:
  - a) Increase diversity of academic programming
  - b) Enhance research intensiveness and outputs
  - c) Attract and help retain students and faculty with a strong commitment to research

## IV. UNIQUENESS OF THE MPH PROGRAM THESIS OPTION

The MPH thesis option is an option within our existing course-based MPH and distinct from other Canadian MPH degrees. The MPH degree with a thesis option is **designed to meet the Public Health Agency of Canada requirements for a professional public health practitioner and to provide students with research training leading to a thesis.**

This program is **different from all other thesis-based options on campus** as there are no other programs that include training in all of the core competencies for professional public health practice outlined by the Public Health Agency of Canada.

Finally, the program is also distinct from the current MPH degree. The first year of the MPH thesis option will be the same as the course-based MPH. Starting in the second year, students will focus on electives providing the necessary skill sets for the thesis work, data collection, data analysis, and thesis preparation. The MPH thesis option students will have enhanced public health research experiences compared to students in the course-based degree.

## 4.1 University of Saskatchewan and Programmatic Setting

The SPH currently offers an MSc and PhD in Biostatistics and in Vaccinology and Immunotherapeutics, a PhD in Epidemiology and a professional, course-based MPH. Additionally, the SPH has plans to establish a PhD in Public Health. The MPH thesis option will serve as a conduit in the identification, recruitment, training and retention of highly-qualified graduate students for our doctoral programs.

This degree will require 33 cu of coursework (see Table 1) and a 16-week 9-CU practicum. It is critical to remember that students on completing this program will have both the professional credentials to practice in public health and the research experience necessary to pursue a PhD. We have had two special-case MPH students who have completed 33 cu of coursework and a thesis based on their practicum.

The practicum for MPH thesis option students will have a more intensive research focus compared to that for the course-based MPH program. The thesis will be based upon the work conducted in the 9-cu practicum. Consistent with other thesis-based Master's programs at the UofS, the student will be expected to conduct satisfactory research, prepare a written thesis, and defend the thesis before the advisory committee and an external examiner.

During Term 1 of their first academic year, students interested in pursuing a thesis option will need to identify a supervisor. The supervisor and student will together identify a practicum placement which has the potential to meet the thesis requirements. Then, before the student can be enrolled in the MPH thesis option, they will have to 1) meet the prerequisites for the practicum; 2) attain a minimum GPA of 80%; 3) establish an appropriate advisory committee before initiation of their thesis project and 4) write and present a draft of their thesis proposal that is satisfies the advisory committee that the student has both the academic potential and a suitable project to transfer to the thesis option. The supervisor and committee will assess the thesis proposal to determine if the student has the basic writing skills essential to complete the MPH on schedule. Typically these conditions would be met by the end of Year 1 Term 2; however, for part-time students this time frame can be modified to fit each student's unique circumstances.

This program does not compete with other MSc programs in population health at the University of Saskatchewan as it will only recruit students who have committed to completing the core requirements for the professional MPH degree. Students wishing for a research program leading to MSc degree that does not include all of the coursework necessary to attain the core public health competencies required by PHAC will continue to pursue other academic opportunities at the UofS. Dr. Mutwiri has discussed this option with Dr. Leis from Community Health and Epidemiology and clarified that this is not a direct entry alternative for students whose primary goal is a thesis-based program.



**Table 1:** Comparison of a typical time line and the course requirements for the existing course-based MPH degree and the proposed MPH degree with thesis option

		<b>Current course-based MPH program</b>	<b>Proposed MPH with thesis option</b>
Year 1	Term 1	4 x 3 cu required courses	4 x 3 cu required courses Identify supervisor Work with supervisor to identify an appropriate practicum
	Term 2	3 x 3 cu required courses plus 1 x 3 cu elective course	3 x 3 cu required courses 1 x 3 cu elective course <b>Apply to the program: 15 January</b> <b>Conditional acceptance to thesis option: 31 January</b> Form advisory committee Write and defend proposal
	Spring/ Summer Term	1 x 6 cu practicum (12 weeks)	1 x 9 cu practicum (16 weeks) <b>Formal acceptance to thesis option: May 1</b>
Year 2	Term 1	3 x 3 cu courses	2 x 3 cu courses Data analysis (if necessary) Begin writing thesis
	Term 2	1 x 3 cu elective plus 1 x 3 cu course (Capstone required course)	1 x 3 cu course (Capstone required course) Continue writing thesis
	Spring/ Summer Term	Not applicable	Finish thesis Defend thesis

*Note: The above table is a typical timeline. Some students may finish earlier. For example: Of the 59 full-time course-based MPH students who graduated in 2012, there were 12 who successfully finished all of the course requirements in 16 months. Of the 52 who graduated in 2013, there were 5 who finished all of the course requirements in 16 months. No students finished in 16 months in 2014 and 3 of 50 full time students who graduated in 2015 finished in 16 months.*

## 4.2 Student Setting

Students in the MPH program with a thesis option will acquire:

1. Training in the core competencies for public health outlined by the Public Health Agency of Canada.
2. Applied training in public health study design, data collection, analysis and interpretation of results, and the writing of a thesis/manuscript.
3. An in-depth understanding of important, current issues in public health practice.

The students admitted to this program will have sufficient time to complete a thesis that is consistent with the expectations for an MSc student at the University of Saskatchewan in addition to the course load for the MPH program. Students will not be accepted if they do not meet academic performance requirements and have identified a supervisor and a clearly defined and appropriate project by the end of their first term of study. The thesis-option students will have to complete a 16 week practicum in place of the 12 week practicum course, and they will have 2 fewer 3 credit unit elective courses during the second year of the program freeing up time for research during the regular term. Finally, they will typically enroll in the summer term following their second regular term to write and defend their thesis. Students will not defend until their committee is satisfied that the thesis meets the required standard for a Master's degree.

### 4.3 National/International Academic Setting

While there are many Masters of Public Health programs currently available in Canada, **only a relatively small number include the practicum requirement** suggested by the Public Health Agency of Canada. The Public Health Agency of Canada lists the Canadian MPH programs that include practica: Lakehead University, McGill University, Queen's University, Simon Fraser University, University of Alberta, University of Guelph, University of Manitoba, University of Saskatchewan, University of Victoria, and the University of Waterloo.

**Even fewer of the MPH programs with practica also have a thesis-based option.** The only comparable thesis-based options in MPH programs with practica were found at: Lakehead University – 7 full course equivalents (42 cu) (<http://healthsciences.lakeheadu.ca/thesis-master-of-public-health-programs/>) and Simon Fraser University – 50 credit hours (<http://www.sfu.ca/fhs/future-students/graduate/master-of-public-health/thesis-option.html>). For Lakehead the thesis is considered equivalent to 12cu and at Simon Fraser University the thesis is considered equivalent to 6 cu.

As a result of the unique interdisciplinary and inter-professional collaborations within the SPH and between the Colleges of Dentistry, Kinesiology, Medicine, Nursing, Pharmacy and Nutrition, and Veterinary Medicine; the School of Physical Therapy; VIDO/Intervac; and other health science units on campus, the University of Saskatchewan has distinctive strengths in the field of public health. The SPH has a distinct advantage as no comparable opportunities exist at other universities for such a wide spectrum of potential collaborations in applied health research projects and professional coursework in public health. Consequently, our proposed MPH thesis option will provide unique training and research opportunities in applied public health.

Graduates of our MPH program with thesis option will have an added advantage of having research training and will be highly competitive in the job market. Potential employers of these professionals include, but are not limited to: provincial ministries of health, agriculture and environment; regional, national and international health authorities and public health departments; First Nations health authorities; universities; and federal agencies such as the Public Health Agency of Canada, the Canadian Food Inspection Agency, and Health Canada. Private sector employers include national and international food and agriculture enterprises, environmental consulting firms, pharmaceutical companies, and private health care services.

## V. DESCRIPTION OF PROGRAM CHARACTERISTICS

### 5.1 Curriculum, Courses and Modes of Delivery

#### 5.1.1 Curriculum

##### General:

The MPH thesis option in the SPH is expected to be comprised of 42 CU (Table 1) and normally completed in 24 months. The course requirements will be fewer than the existing course-based MPH program (45 CU). The proposed calendar description for the one new required course and for the option itself are outlined in **Appendix 3 and Appendix 4.**

### **Acceptance to the MPH thesis option:**

All students will be initially admitted into the existing course-based MPH program. During Term 1 of their first academic year, students interested in pursuing a thesis option will need to identify a supervisor. The supervisor and student will work together to identify a practicum placement which has the potential to meet the thesis requirements. Then, before the student can be enrolled in the MPH thesis option the student will have to 1) meet the prerequisites for the practicum; 2) attain a minimum GPA of 80%; 3) work with their supervisor to establish an appropriate advisory committee before initiation of the thesis project; and 4) write and defend a thesis proposal.

Students who have identified a supervisor, a potential project, and have a minimum GPA of 80% can apply to the MPH option by January 15<sup>th</sup> of each year. Applications will be reviewed and students conditionally accepted by January 31<sup>st</sup> if the student meets the initial requirements. Students who maintain a minimum GPA of 80%, meet the prerequisite courses for the practicum, have established an advisory committee, and who have written and defended a thesis proposal will be formally accepted by May 1. A typical time line for this program is outlined in Appendix 1.

Although applicants may meet the minimum expectations for admission, the School of Public Health reserves the right to deny the request to transfer to the thesis-based option.

### **MPH degree with thesis option curriculum:**

The distribution of credit hours for the MPH with thesis option is as follows:

1. 24 credit units for required courses (7 x 3 cu in year 1 and 1 x 3 cu in year 2)
2. 9 credit units for elective courses
3. 9 credit units for a 16 week public health practicum
4. 0 credit units but mandatory registration in the 994 thesis course

A summary of the credit unit distribution and comparison to the existing course-based MPH program is provided in Table 1.

## **5.1.2 Courses**

### **Required courses (for credit) MPH program (with and without thesis option):**

Each student would be required to enroll in **8 required courses**:

1. Foundations of Public Health (PUBH 804.3)
2. Biostatistics for Public Health (PUBH 805.3)
3. Epidemiology for Public Health (PUBH 800.3)
4. Environmental Public Health (PUBH 810.3)
5. Health Policy and Politics (PUBH 867.3)
6. Health Promotion (PUBH 803.3)
7. Health Program Planning and Evaluation (PUBH 807.3)
8. Interdisciplinary Public Health Practice (PUBH 840.3) (Typically in term 2, year 2 of the program)

### **Required courses (non-credit) MPH program (with and without thesis option):**

1. PUBH 990: Public Health Seminar. Students will be expected to attend 75% of seminars during their MPH program.
2. PUBH 994: Master of Public Health Thesis
3. GSR 960 (Introduction into Ethics and Integrity) and
4. GSR 961 (Ethics and Integrity in Human Research).

MPH students conducting animal research will additionally have to complete GSR 962 (Ethics and Integrity in Animal Research).

### **Elective courses:**

Based on the individual student's area of focus for their research thesis, their thesis advisory committee will identify the most appropriate elective courses to strengthen the student's program of study. Typically one elective course would be completed in year 1 in term 2 before the practicum. The remaining 2 elective courses would be completed in term 1 of year 2 of the program.

### **Field Research and Practicum in Public Health (new course developed for thesis option) (see attached course proposal – Appendix 3):**

The purpose of the **Field Research and Practicum in Public Health** is to build upon the foundation courses with field experience in the student's area of research interest. Therefore, students in the proposed MPH thesis option will complete this course upon successful completion of the prerequisites (typically during the Year 1 Term 3).

The field research will provide MPH students with an opportunity to apply the theories and concepts learned in their academic coursework to practical public health problems faced in the field. They will be placed in a public health setting related to their research interest. They will be supervised by their thesis advisor and will be facilitated by a field preceptor from the placement organization. On a day-to-day basis, they will be expected to work closely within their assigned organization to complete projects related to their thesis research program under the guidance of their thesis advisor and field preceptor.

The students in the MPH thesis option will use this research intensive practicum to collect at least the initial data for their project and refine their MPH thesis proposal. MPH thesis students will be expected to present their work in the seminar series offered during the final year of the MPH program.

#### **Description of the MPH thesis:**

The thesis will be structured to conform with all of the CGSR expectations as reported at the website:

[http://www.usask.ca/cgsr/for\\_students/etd.php](http://www.usask.ca/cgsr/for_students/etd.php). The body of the thesis will cover the content areas referenced on the CGSR website ([http://www.usask.ca/cgsr/for\\_students/formatbody.php](http://www.usask.ca/cgsr/for_students/formatbody.php)). **The body of thesis will typically contain one chapter outlining the objectives and a focused literature review, two substantial chapters describing the Masters research, and a summary and recommendations chapter.** The chapters describing the actual research will contain the elements of at least one paper suitable for publication. In most cases this chapter will require some additional editing to fit journal format and word limit requirements before it can be submitted for publication. This paper-based approach is critical to ensure timely dissemination of key research findings, provide students with an understanding and experience of the peer review process and assist participating faculty to publish their work.

#### **Meetings of the Student's Thesis-Advisory Committee:**

The thesis advisory committee will include the student's supervisor, the graduate chair for the MPH thesis option, and at least one other faculty member. The faculty member will be selected by the supervisor after consultation with the student based on the research needs for the selected project. Ideally there will be 2 committee meeting per year. In Year 1, the first meeting should occur in Term 2 prior to the student commencing the 9 cu Public Health Practicum and a second meeting should occur after the completion of the practicum. In Year 2, the first meeting should occur at the end of Term 1 and the second meeting in Term 2 and prior to the Thesis defense.

In all instances, the student's Thesis-Advisory Committee needs to make a positive recommendation for the student to proceed to the next stage. In the cases of students, where the Thesis-Advisory Committee finds their practicum is not sufficient to build a thesis, the student cannot successfully defend any necessary final edits to the proposal completed after their practicum experience, or are making unsatisfactory progress, the students will be permitted to revert back to the course-based MPH program.

### 5.1.3 Modes of Delivery:

The modes of delivery for the MPH thesis option will be identical to the live and web-enhanced deliveries currently established in the existing course-based MPH program.

## 5.2 Faculty

Given the interdisciplinary nature of the SPH, it is difficult to list all potential faculty members who might be involved with the MPH thesis option. Listed below are the primary/joint and associate SPH faculty who will play significant roles in the MPH thesis option:

### 5.2.1 Faculty with standard or joint appointments in the SPH\*:

- Dr. Lalita Bharadwaj, Associate Professor, SPH
- Dr. Yelena Bird, Assistant Professor, SPH
- Dr. Carl D'Arcy, Professor, Psychiatry/SPH
- Dr. Tasha Epp, Associate Professor, WCVN/SPH
- Dr. Marwa Farag, Assistant Professor, SPH
- Dr. Cindy Feng, Assistant Professor, SPH/ WCVN
- Dr. Philip Griebel, Professor, SPH/VIDO
- Dr. Emily Jenkins, Associate Professor, WCVN/SPH
- Dr. Rein Lepnurm, Professor, SPH
- Dr. Janice MacKinnon, Professor, SPH
- Dr. John Moraros, Associate Professor, SPH
- Dr. George Mutwiri, Professor, SPH/VIDO
- Dr. Michael Szafron, Assistant Professor, SPH
- Dr. Suresh Tikoo, Professor, VIDO/SPH
- Dr. Hassan Vatanparast, Associate Professor, Pharmacy & Nutrition/SPH
- Dr. Cheryl Waldner, Professor, WCVN/SPH

### 5.2.2 Faculty with associate appointments in the SPH:

- Dr. Larry Brawley, Professor, Kinesiology
- Dr. Colleen Dell, Professor, Sociology
- Dr. John Gordon, Professor, Medicine
- Dr. Nancy Gyurcsik, Associate Professor, Kinesiology
- Dr. Paul Hackett, Assistant Professor, Geography & Planning
- Dr. Beth Horsburgh, Associate Vice-President, Research and Health
- Dr. James Irvine, Professor, Family Medicine
- Dr. Shelley Kirychuk, Associate Professor, Medicine
- Dr. Niels Koehncke, Associate Professor, Medicine
- Dr. Anthony Kusalik, Professor, Computer Science
- Dr. Hyun Ja Lim, Professor, Medicine
- Dr. Debra Morgan, Professor, CCHSA
- Dr. Donna Rennie, Professor, Nursing

- Dr. Thomas Rotter, Chair in Health Quality Improvement Science, Pharmacy and Nutrition
- Dr. Natalie Shiff, Assistant Professor, Medicine
- Dr. Kevin Spink, Professor, Kinesiology
- Dr. Ulrich Teucher, Associate Professor, Psychology
- Dr. Sylvia van den Hurk, Program Manager and Research Scientist, VIDO

\* All listed faculty are also members of CGSR.

## VI. RELATIONSHIPS AND IMPACT OF IMPLEMENTATION

The proposed MPH thesis option will complement the existing course-based MPH program while expanding the training and research opportunities in public health available to graduate students and faculty in the SPH. The existing course-based MPH program provides a strong base and a programmatic framework on which to include the proposed thesis option.

It is worthy to note the similarities and distinct difference between the proposed MPH thesis option by the SPH and the MSc program in Community and Population Health Science offered through the department of Community Health & Epidemiology (CHEP), College of Medicine. The MSc degree has a focus on social population health research whereas our MPH degree with thesis option is focused on the training of public practitioners with research experience in applied public health. Students who apply to transfer to the MPH thesis option will already be enrolled in and have completed two terms of the existing course-based MPH program. Consequently we do not envision any competition between CHEP and our MPH thesis option. Students who wish direct entry into a thesis-based Master's program will be referred to CHEP. In fact, both programs are distinct and yet complementary to each other and should thrive. Both thesis-based programs are essential to meet the diverse needs of students and faculty at the UofS and will play a role regardless of future changes to administrative structure of the SPH.

It is anticipated that approximately 50 students will enroll in the existing course-based MPH program during fall 2015. Based on student inquiries to faculty over the past 3 years and expressions of interest in completing a thesis, we estimate that approximately 5 students per year (approximately 10% of all MPH students) will pursue the MPH thesis. As all thesis-option students will be transferred from the MPH course-based program, there will be **no expected increase in total enrollment in the MPH program**.

The SPH foresees the MPH thesis option will attract students who are interested in advanced public health research training. Additionally, the proposed MPH thesis option could act as a feeder to the research-intensive, doctoral-level training programs in the SPH and other units on campus engaged in studies of population health. The MPH degree with thesis option increases the number of highly qualified, research-oriented, graduate students on campus and affords SPH faculty the opportunity to enhance their research output.

## VII. RESOURCES

### 7.1 Faculty Resources

Section 5.2 identifies existing faculty members, many of whom are currently offering courses for the SPH. It is not anticipated that new faculty resources will be required to offer the MPH thesis option. Faculty members will have the option of accepting MPH thesis students, but students will not be assigned to faculty who do not choose to engage in this program.

## 7.2 Support Staff

Clerical – Currently, the SPH does not anticipate a need for additional administrative staff specifically assigned to support the MPH thesis program as the SPH has a support person to assist with the practicum for all MPH students including those who will do the practica for the thesis-option. Other requirements related to the thesis-option program such as setting up advisory committee meetings, scholarship applications and defenses will be handled by the dedicated administrative assistant to the thesis-option programs in the SPH.

## 7.3 Space Needs

Students in the MPH thesis option will be housed with other SPH thesis students in the Academic Health Sciences Building E Wing.

## 7.4. Budget (Appendix 5)

### 7.4.1 Capital and Start-Up Costs

It is not anticipated that new faculty resources, space allocation, library or IT resources will be required to offer this option.

### 7.4.2 Permanent Operating Costs

All direct and indirect costs of the MPH thesis option will be assumed by the School of Public Health in its operating budget.

### 7.4.3 Sources of Funding

The operating resources associated with the MPH thesis option are already in place within the operating budget of the School of Public Health.

The students registered in the MPH program with thesis option will be eligible for SPH thesis scholarships and will initial qualify to apply for CGSR non-devolved funding. Once the program is established (after 2 to 3 years) students might be eligible for CGSR devolved funding if total program enrollment is sufficient. Student stipends maybe supplemented through supervisor funds.

### 7.4.4 Enrolment (Tuition Revenue)

Our goal is to have the first intake of MPH thesis option students in May 2016, upon satisfactory completion of the entrance requirements stated in Section 5.1.1. It is estimated that approximately 5 students (or 10% of each incoming class) will be accepted into the MPH thesis option each year. Revenue will be based on the new cost-sharing model and overall MPH tuition increases.

Tuition for the MPH students would be the same as that for MPH course-based students if they defend their thesis within the suggested timeline. However, students taking longer than 2 years to complete their thesis would continue to pay a flat term tuition as is consistent with other thesis-based programs on campus.

For example, the MPH tuition is currently \$9712 for domestic students. Tuition is assessed on a per credit basis, at approximately \$215.82 per credit unit. If the students enter the thesis option at the beginning of the 3rd term, and they are expected to finish the program at the end of the 6th term, a per term tuition rate should be \$1294.93 per term for 4 terms (Spring/Summer, Fall, Winter, Spring/Summer) assuming 24 cu completed before transfer. The total program cost would be \$9712 if the student defends on time ( $24 \times \$215.82 = \$5179.68$  plus 4 terms at  $\$1133.08 = \$4532.32$  for a total of \$9712).

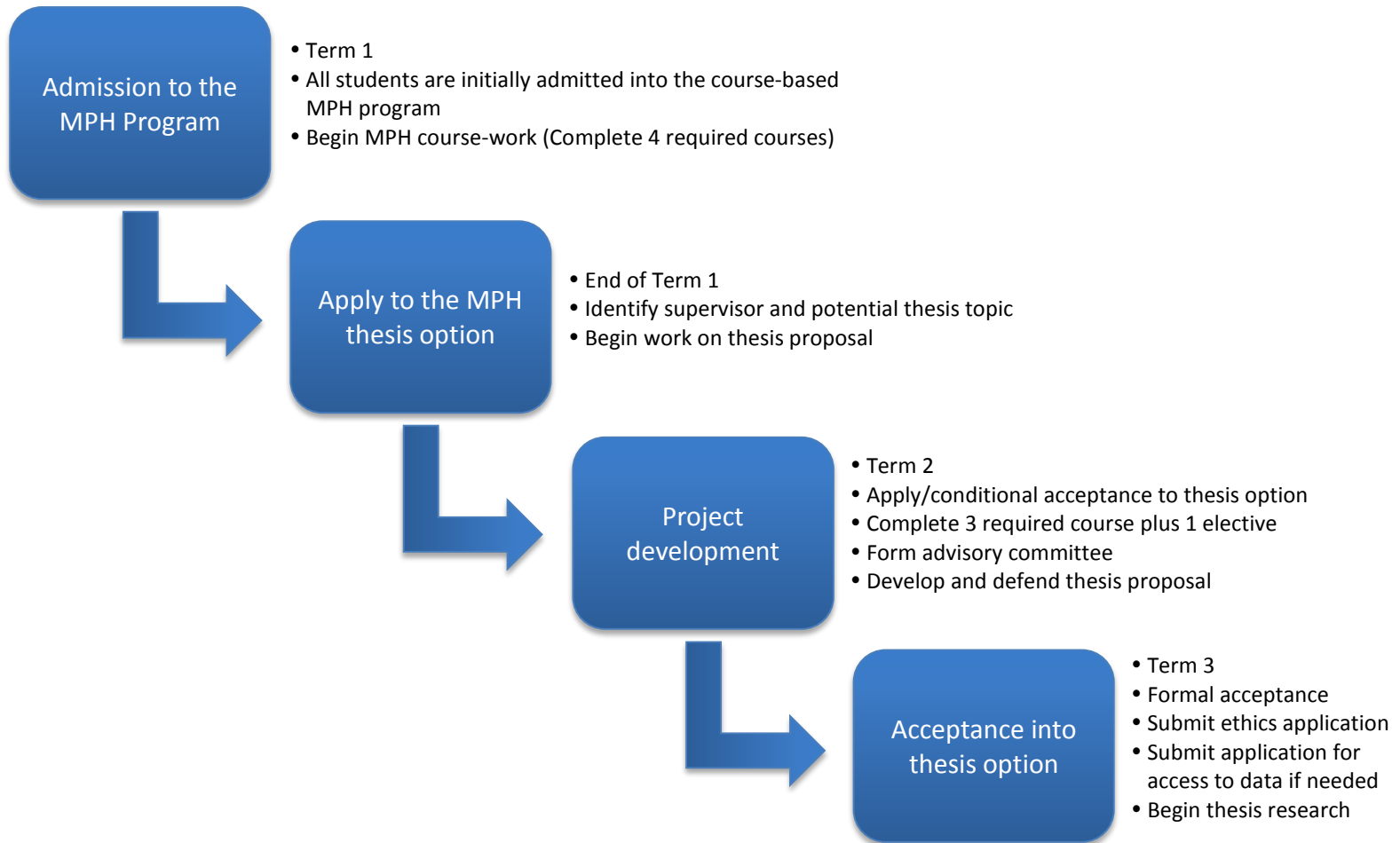
**Appendix 1:**  
**Summary of the typical timeline for the MPH**  
**thesis option**



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## *Overview of the MPH Thesis-option Year 1*

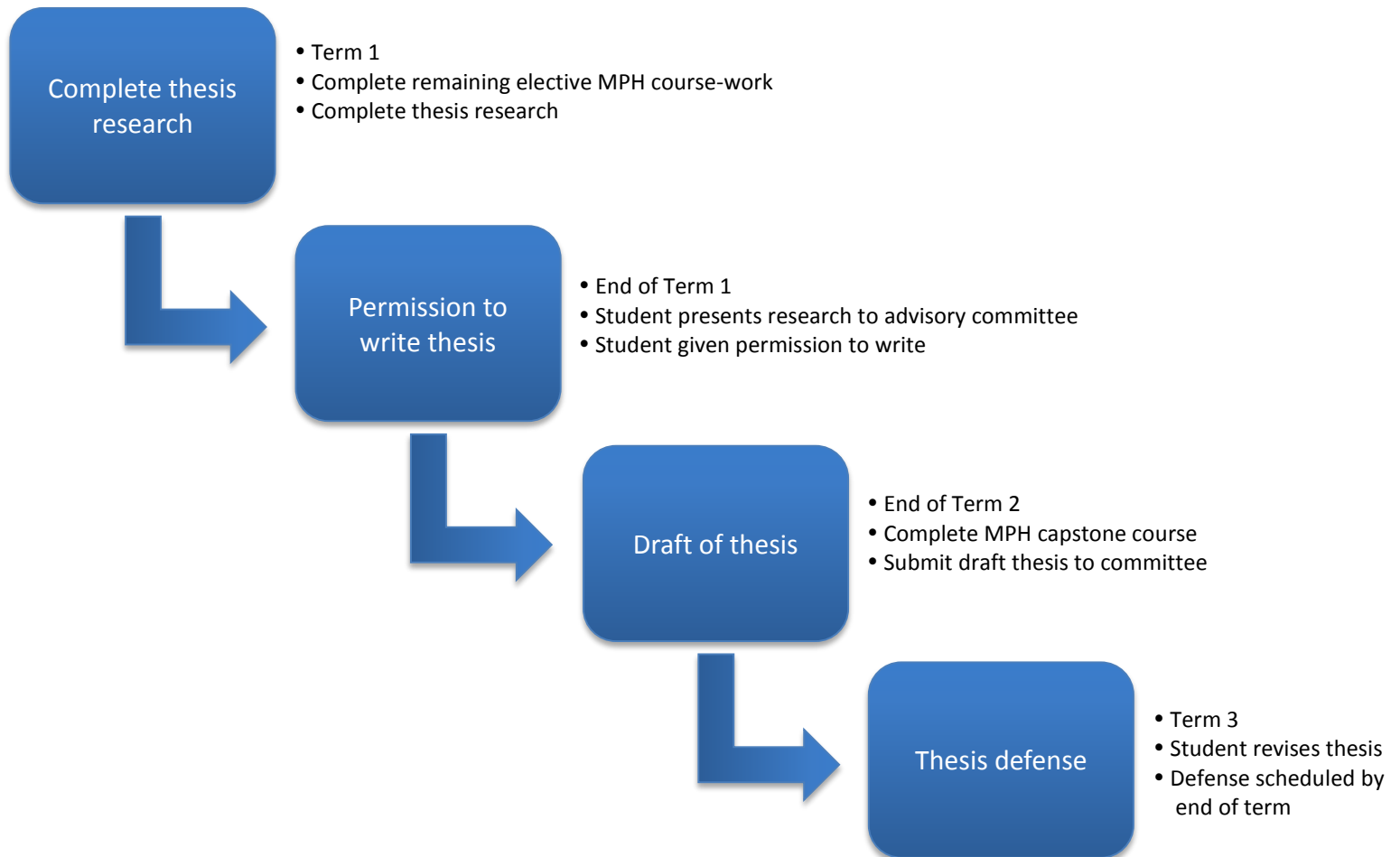
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## *Overview of the MPH Thesis-option Year 2*

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**Appendix 2:**  
**Letters of support for the**  
**MPH thesis option**

August 25, 2015

Dr. Cheryl Waldner  
Chair, MPH Thesis Option Sub-committee  
School of Public Health

Dear Dr. Waldner,

I am writing to support the proposed MPH Thesis option.

The MPH Program is the largest program in our school, with an annual intake of about 80 students. Currently, all students in this program complete their MPH degree requirements through coursework.

Every year, we have a few students in the MPH Program who are interested in research, and would want to pursue a thesis option. Unfortunately, we have not been able to meet this need in the past. Furthermore, our faculty who teach in the MPH Program have to seek appointments as associate members in other departments on campus that have thesis programs so they can supervise graduate students.

Availability of an MPH Thesis option in our program would meet the needs of those students who are interested in research, enable them to progress into the School's PhD programs on completion of the MPH, and also provide our faculty with graduate students.

The MPH Thesis option is intended for students who have already completed at least two terms (or several months) in the MPH program. Once this requirement is fulfilled, students will be eligible to apply for the MPH Thesis option should they wish to.

Please let me know if there is anything I can do assist the committee.

Sincerely,



George Mutwiri, DVM, PhD  
Interim Executive Director and Professor, School of Public Health  
Senior Scientist, Vaccine & Infectious Disease Organization/International Vaccine Center  
University of Saskatchewan  
Saskatoon, SK, Canada S7N 2Z4



Dr. Cheryl Waldner,  
Chair, MPH Thesis Option Sub-committee  
School of Public Health,

RE: Letter of support for MPH Thesis based option

Dear Dr. Waldner,

I am pleased to submit a letter of support for MPH Thesis option to an already existing unique MPH program at School of Public Health. The proposed addition to already existing MPH program in school of public Health will help the MPH students to get exposed to "Research", which will increase their interest in the "Thesis based graduate programs" in the school and elsewhere on the campus. Secondly, MPH thesis option will help our MPH teaching faculty particularly the junior faculty to supervise these students and publish the results of the research work in peer reviewed journals. This will not only help them to remain competitive in their field of specialization, but will also help them to successfully compete for award of research grants particularly from tri-council agencies (accepted benchmark for success). Finally, MPH Thesis based option should not have any impact on the existing Thesis based programs offered in other departments\college of the university as ONLY students already enrolled in MPH program will be eligible for registering in MPH thesis based option.

Sincerely

Dr. Suresh K Tikoo  
Professor & Director,  
Vaccinology & Immunotherapeutics program  
School of Public Health

July 30, 2015

Dr. Cheryl Waldner  
MPH Thesis Committee Chair  
Professor, Western College of Veterinary Medicine  
Professor, School of Public Health

Dear Dr. Waldner,

I am writing this letter to express the need for a thesis-option within our Master of Public Health (MPH) program in the School of Public Health (SPH).

As a recently hired assistant professor in the School of Public Health (SPH), I currently have limited funds for supporting graduate student research assistantships. Because the majority of my duties are associated with the SPH's MPH program and because the degree is not thesis-based, the program does not qualify for devolved funding. This provides unique challenges for new SPH faculty, particularly at the assistant rank, to compete with other faculty (i.e. those from programs that qualify for devolved funding) to recruit and retain the strongest research-oriented students.

This past year six MPH students spoke with regarding the possibility of completing a thesis within their MPH program. As this option currently does not exist, I had to tell these students that completing a thesis within their MPH degree was not possible. I have been told that one of these students has transferred to another academic unit on campus, a unit that offers a thesis-based Master's degree. In fact, each year the SPH loses several of its brightest MPH research-oriented students to other academic units that both have a thesis-based degree and provide financial support. Without these students, we cannot easily grow our research programs. Because the tenure and promotion processes both include a heavily weighted research component, assistant professors within the SPH are at a disadvantage when it comes to applying for tenure and promotion.

Offering a thesis-based option within our MPH degree is a solution that would resolve the issues described in the previous paragraph. Having a thesis option with our MPH degree and qualifying for devolved funding allow our research-oriented MPH students to remain in the SPH to complete their research and to receive financial assistance while they are conducting research. By retaining our top research-oriented students, SPH faculty are in an excellent position to develop strong research programs that are essential for tenure and promotion. Hence having a thesis-based option within our MPH degree is a win for our students, a win for our faculty, and a win for the University of Saskatchewan as a whole. Please accept this letter as my complete support for a thesis option within our current MPH degree.

Sincerely,

Michael Szafron, PhD  
MPH Practicum Coordinator  
Assistant Professor, School of Public Health



UNIVERSITY OF  
SASKATCHEWAN

School of Public Health

August 4, 2015

Dr. Cheryl Waldner  
Chair, MPH Thesis Option Sub-committee  
School of Public Health

Dear Dr. Waldner,

I am writing to give my full support to the proposed MPH thesis option. I strongly believe that this option will be very beneficial for our students, faculty, and the school. A number of MPH students approach me each academic year wishing to pursue their research interests under my supervision. However, we currently cannot offer MPH students this option. I see this thesis option as an avenue for me to mentor my students and assist them in conducting research resulting in publications, which will highly beneficial for my students and myself.

Finally, having the thesis option will assist us in achieving the SPH's mission: "The School of Public Health's mission is to improve the health of individuals and communities through the creation, dissemination and application of public health knowledge, the education of leaders, social change, partnerships with service providers, and service to the broader community." Therefore I strongly and fully support the MPH thesis option.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Marwa Farag'.

Marwa Farag, MSc., Ph.D.  
Assistant Professor, School of Public Health  
University of Saskatchewan, Health Sciences Building  
107 Wiggins Road, Room 2705 RUH  
Saskatoon, SK S7N5E5  
Phone (306)966-5959, Fax (306)966-7920  
E-mail: [marwa.farag@usask.ca](mailto:marwa.farag@usask.ca)  
Yours sincerely,

Dr. Cheryl Waldner  
MPH Thesis Committee Chair  
Professor, School of Public Health  
Professor, Western College of Veterinary Medicine

Dear Dr. Waldner,

**RE: Letter of Support for the MPH (Master of Public Health) thesis program**

I am writing the letter in support of the MPH thesis program in the School of Public Health.

As a professional program in the University of Saskatchewan, the School of Public Health needs to be recognized for both the value of practical engagement and the value of research-oriented activities. Establishing a MPH thesis based program can provide ample opportunities for students to get first-hand experience in research. It is an excellent way to gain skills and insight into the academic process and can assist in making the decision to pursue a further degree where a dissertation is required. In addition, by writing a thesis, the students will have the opportunity to learn the knowledge and skills to generate new knowledge.

On the other hand, thesis-based MPH program will provide faculty members at the School of Public Health the student resources to facilitate their own research programs, which will strengthen the research environment within the School of Public Health. In the past couple years, a number of students have expressed interests in working on thesis projects applying modern statistical approaches analyzing real datasets from various epidemiological studies under my supervision. Some of the students have great potential of conducting solid research; however, unfortunately the School has lost those students, since no MPH thesis program is available. I would, therefore, highly encourage initiate thesis based MPH program, as it is especially important for the faculty members within the School.

In closing, please accept my letter of support for the thesis-based MPH degree for the School of Public Health.

Sincerely,



Cindy Xin Feng, PhD  
Assistant Professor, School of Public Health  
Associate Faculty, Western College of Veterinary Medicine  
Room 3338, Health Sciences Building E-Wing  
104 Clinic Place  
University of Saskatchewan  
Saskatoon SK, S7N 5E5  
Phone: (306) 966-1948





August 24, 2015

College of Grad Studies and Research  
University of Saskatchewan

RE: Master of Public Health thesis option

To Whom It May Concern,

As director of the Master of Public Health program in the School of Public Health, I fully support the Master of Public Health thesis option as an alternative for students to attain a graduate degree.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be 'LB' or 'Lalita Bharadwaj', is written below the word 'Sincerely,'.

Lalita Bharadwaj, PhD  
Associate Professor and Director of MPH program  
School of Public Health  
University of Saskatchewan



UNIVERSITY OF  
SASKATCHEWAN

School of Public Health

To Whom it May Concern.

As Chair of the Epidemiology Program in the School of Public Health I would like to offer my full support for the "Request for a Thesis Option within Existing MPH Degree".

The addition of a thesis based option to the Master of Public Health (MPH) program will be welcomed by current and prospective students in the MPH program.

Internationally, many jurisdictions do not value a non-thesis based Masters degree as highly as a Master degree with a thesis. It is important for students returning to their country of origin that they have the type of degree that is highly valued.

Similarly, the thesis option provides an excellent platform and training for MPH students who wish to proceed to further graduate studies at the PhD level.

In comparison to competing MPH across the country the addition of the thesis option will add an additional element of uniqueness to the University of Saskatchewan program.

Yours truly

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Carl D'Arcy".

**Carl D'Arcy, PhD**

Epidemiology Program Director and Professor, School of Public Health  
Professor and Director of Applied Research, Psychiatry, College of Medicine  
Academic Director, Saskatchewan Research Data Centre (SKY-RDC)

Tel: (306) 844-1279



UNIVERSITY OF  
SASKATCHEWAN

College of  
Arts and Science

**Department of Sociology**

Room 1109, 9 Campus Drive  
Saskatoon SK S7N 5A5 Canada  
Telephone: (306) 966-5912  
Facsimile: (306) 966-6950  
E-mail: colleen.dell@usask.ca

August 24, 2015

Cheryl Waldner & George Mutwiri  
School of Public Health  
University of Saskatchewan  
E Wing Health Sciences  
104 Clinic Place  
Saskatoon, SK S7N 5E5

I am writing this letter in support of the thesis-based MPH program at the University of Saskatchewan. As a joint faculty member with the School of Public Health, I had the opportunity to supervise a thesis-based MPH student in the department and who graduated in 2012 – Stacy McHenry. Stacy was a very strong student who produced a stellar thesis titled, *Where is the Public in Public Health?* She collected and analyzed original data and produced an outstanding thesis. I was also Stacey's Academic Advisor in the program.

Since completing her MPH program, Stacy had entered the PhD program in the Department of Psychology at the University of Saskatchewan, and has been awarded several scholarships for her achievements. The MPH program, including the thesis option, well prepared Stacey for her PhD studies and in which she has since excelled.

Given my positive experience with the thesis-based option of the MPH program, I would be most willing to supervise students in the future.

Respectfully submitted,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Colleen Dell'.

Colleen Anne Dell, PhD  
Research Chair in Substance Abuse  
Professor  
Department of Sociology & School of Public Health (Associate Member)

---

52 Campus Drive  
Saskatoon SK S7N 5B4 Canada  
Telephone: (306) 966-7448  
Facsimile: (306) 966-7314

26 August 2015

Dr. Cheryl Waldner  
WCVM and SPH

RE: MPH Thesis Option Proposal

Dear Cheryl:

I strongly support the proposal for a thesis option to the existing MPH degree.

Most importantly, it adds a robust research and writing component to the MPH degree while maintaining the program requirements for a professional public health practitioner. It expands opportunities students and for faculty members whose research programs could directly benefit if this option was approved by the university. Jointly appointed faculty would be able to engage top ranked students from within the MPH cohort in their research activities. Continued active collaboration with the School of Public Health is also a very tangible way of showing the success of the One Health Initiative on this campus.

The proposal certainly strengthens the MPH program, and it provides greater opportunities for both students and faculty. I fully support the proposed thesis option within the existing MPH program.

Sincerely,



Douglas A. Freeman DVM, PhD  
Dean

52 Campus Drive  
Saskatoon SK S7N 5B4 Canada  
Telephone: 306-966-6542  
Facsimile: 306-966-7159

August 26<sup>th</sup>, 2015

Dr Cheryl Waldner  
Chair, MPH Thesis Option Sub-committee  
School of Public Health  
University of Saskatchewan  
E Wing Health Sciences

Dear Dr. Waldner,

I am writing to express the support of the Centre for Applied Epidemiology for the proposed MPH Thesis option.

The Centre for Applied Epidemiology is a newly established Centre at the University of Saskatchewan. The sole purpose of the Centre is to provide training and promote research with an applied epidemiology focus. Epidemiology is one of the core competencies for students in the MPH program.

While the Centre is at arms-length from the School of Public Health, we have a clear mandate to provide educational training opportunities. As the Centre Director, I currently am engaged with the School of Public Health in a joint faculty position. Presently I teach the "Field Epidemiology" elective course within the school, which has a strong enrollment every year. The Centre's mandate is to continue to provide other training opportunities of interest to students and faculty, as well as to parties outside of the University setting.

The Centre is committed to providing training and on the ground support for students with applied epidemiology based research projects. In conclusion, please accept this letter as support for the proposed thesis option.

Sincerely,



Tasha Epp  
Director, Centre for Applied Epidemiology  
Western College of Veterinary Medicine  
University of Saskatchewan  
52 Campus Drive  
Saskatoon, SK  
S7N 5B4

September 8, 2015

Cheryl Waldner, DVM, PhD  
Professor  
University of Saskatchewan  
52 Campus Drive  
Saskatoon SK S7N 5B4

Dear Dr. Waldner:

The Canadian Centre for Health and Safety in Agriculture (CCHSA) at the University of Saskatchewan has been pleased to host School of Public Health practicum students in the past and looks forward to continuing to do so.

The Centre supports the proposal of the School of Public Health to add a thesis option to the Master's of Public Health Program. Such a program will be a strong and positive addition to the School.

Sincerely



Niels Koehncke, MD, MSc, FRCPC  
Director

September 7, 2015

Dr. Cheryl Waldner  
Chair, MPH Thesis Option Sub-committee  
School of Public Health

Re: Thesis Option MPH Program

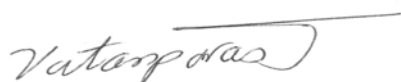
Dear Dr. Waldner

I joined the School of Public Health in 2009 as a joint faculty member with the College of Pharmacy and Nutrition. Within the last few years, as a member of Admission Committee, I have observed the growth in quantity of highly qualified applicants who would like to pursue MPH program at our school. We have the opportunity to select the most qualified applicants with research and practice background to enter to our MPH program. Consequently, as an academic supervisor I have approached by many MPH students who would like to apply their past experience as well as what they have learned in MPH program in research programs even on a volunteer basis. Sometimes the motivation is high enough to lead them to move to MSc program in other relevant disciplines.

I strongly support the thesis option in our MPH program given this growing interest in our students to be involved in research. That is why I volunteered to join the MPH Thesis Option Sub-committee to work with my other motivated colleagues who recognised the need, explored similar programs and drafted a realistic proposal considering our resources and limitations to provide an option of research-oriented MPH program.

In addition to the benefit that thesis option has for our students, faculty have the advantage of advancing their research program by employing highly skilled and motivated students. I am personally looking forward to working with MPH thesis-based students in my research program.

Sincerely,



Hassan Vatanparast, MD, PhD  
Associate Professor, School of Public Health/  
College of Pharmacy & Nutrition