

Fay W. Boozman College of Public Health
MS in Healthcare Data Analytics
Thesis Manual (COPH 5200)

The thesis requires each student to independently complete a research project under the guidance of an academic or professional mentor. The student must use analytics knowledge gained during the program's coursework and demonstrate the ability to analyze a healthcare or health-related dataset to answer a research question related to a relevant healthcare issue. The thesis will require the student to independently prepare the data, apply appropriate analytic approaches, prepare a high-quality written product, and present an oral defense of the project. The thesis is required of all MS candidates and is intended to be completed at the end of the program.

Thesis Initiation Policies

- The student must complete all core courses (24 hours) and a minimum of 1 elective course (3 hours) before beginning the thesis.
- A student who wishes to complete the thesis prior to successful completion of the required minimum number of core credit and elective credit hours must submit a formal request for early initiation for approval to the Academic Standards Committee (ASC) on or before 20 business days prior to the first day of classes for the intended semester of initiation of the thesis. The student must document unique and compelling circumstances exist (i.e., a unique one-time opportunity aligns with both the academic/professional interest of the student) and/or that the student has obtained the necessary analytic experience in other ways (i.e., 5+ years complementary to the required thesis work).
- The student should begin planning and preparing for the thesis well in advance of the intended thesis start date. The thesis advisor must approve of and sign the plan prior to the submission of the plan.
- The student must complete all required HIPAA and Institutional Review Board (IRB) online training prior to submission of the thesis registration packet. The student, with the assistance of the thesis advisor, should determine whether Biomedical training or Social Behavioral Research training is required for the thesis: (<https://irb.uams.edu/new-study-tools/human-subject-protection-training/>).
- Each student's Master's Thesis committee is composed of at least two faculty members, thesis advisor and a co-reader. The thesis advisor must be a COPH faculty and the thesis co-reader must be internal to UAMS. Thesis committee members should have interest or expertise in the area of the student's project. If the student's thesis research requires expertise beyond that covered by the mentoring team, third faculty mentor may be added to the mentoring team.
- The student must complete and submit all IRB forms **at least two (2) months** prior to the intended start date of the project. To determine if the project is IRB exempt, please submit the human subject research determination form in CLARA to the IRB. The thesis advisor will assist in completing the IRB forms and must approve the forms prior to submission. On the IRB application, the student will be listed as the primary contact and Principal Investigator (PI), and the thesis advisor will be listed as key personnel (sub-investigator or support staff).
- The completed thesis registration packet must be submitted to a program director on or before December 10th (Spring Registration) or July 10th (Fall Registration). The student will not be

enrolled in the course (COPH 5200) until the packet has been approved by the MS thesis committee. It is the student's responsibility, rather than the advisor's responsibility, to ensure that the thesis registration packet is completed on time.

Thesis Requirement Policies

- While the learning objectives of the thesis may closely align with a student's area of career direction, it is expected that work performed for credit should exceed those duties normally performed during the course of regular employment. For this reason, as a general rule, no credit will be provided for projects contained within the scope of the student's current work assignments.
- The thesis must explicitly contain components of data acquisition, data cleaning/management, and analysis.
- The student will have a total of three (3) semesters to complete the thesis. If the thesis is not completed before the last day of classes, the student is required to register and pay tuition/fees each semester until it is complete. It is the student's responsibility to ensure that all required activities are completed as outlined in the thesis plan or as agreed upon by the student and the thesis advisor. The student should notify the thesis advisor as soon as possible if the thesis will not be completed during the initially intended semester.
- The student must successfully complete three (3) credit hours of thesis hours (COPH 5200).
- The student is expected to provide a high-quality written product, including background information, a summary or relevant literature, data and methodologies utilized in the project, results, and discussion/conclusions. The product is expected to be a minimum of 40 pages, including the abstract, text, tables, and figures, but excluding citations.
- The student is expected to orally defend the final project by 10 business days prior to the final day of the semester (this date is available in the COPH academic calendar). The student and advisor will determine a date for the defense, which will be open to COPH students and faculty. The oral defense can be open to the general public at the discretion of the student and thesis committee. The oral defense is expected to be a minimum of 45 minutes of presentation, followed by 15 minutes of questions. MS HCDA theses will be evaluated by both the faculty thesis advisor(s) and the co-reader.

Thesis Grading Policies

- The student must submit the final product to 1) the thesis advisor and 2) a program director on or before 5:00 pm of the final day of the semester. The final written product of all these will be made publicly available (unblinded) in the COPH Office of Student Affairs.
- The thesis is graded on a pass/fail basis by the thesis advisor. The advisor will grade the student based on the MS Thesis Evaluation Form. The form includes an evaluation of the written and the oral defense components of the thesis.