

DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC HEALTH SCIENCES

GRADUATE STUDENT HANDBOOK

2020



Department of Public Health Sciences
Health & Social Services Building, Room 326
1335 International Mall
PO Box 30001, MSC 3HLS
Las Cruces, NM 88003 Telephone: 575 646 4300
Fax: 575 646 4343
Dept. web site: <http://publichealth.nmsu.edu>

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PURPOSE

The purpose of this handbook¹ is to provide information essential to student success in the program. Please review the information and refer to it periodically throughout the program as it includes important program policies and procedures. This information is supplemental to that which exists for the Graduate School and University regulations specified in the New Mexico State University catalog. This information is available online at www.nmsu.edu.

THE DEPARTMENT, THE MPH DEGREE, AND THE PEOPLE

Department Mission

The Department of Public Health Sciences' mission is to provide academic, professional, and service excellence in preparing public health professionals who demonstrate competent leadership, innovation, and technical expertise at local, state, national, and international levels, with a particular emphasis on the U.S./Mexico border, rural, and tribal communities.

MPH Program Accreditation

The MPH program began in the fall of 1996, was initially accredited by the Council on Education for Public Health (CEPH) in 2000 and has maintained this accreditation to the present day. NMSU is a member of the Council of Accredited MPH Programs (CAMP) and is a recognized Peace Corps Paul D. Coverdell Fellows program. The MPH Program is a member of the Western Interstate Commission for Higher Education (WICHE) Western Regional Graduate Program (WRGP) student exchange program.

MPH Program Goals & Objectives

Education Goal: Prepare and produce competent professionals who have essential knowledge and skills for public health practice with diverse populations and in varied settings.

Research Goal: Conduct ethically and scientifically sound research/demonstration and translational projects to protect, improve, and restore the health of diverse populations.

Service Goal: Engage in service activities benefitting the University, New Mexico and regional communities, and professional associations throughout the southwest, the country, and international venues.

MPH Program Overview

The Department of Public Health Sciences (<http://publichealth.nmsu.edu>) offers the Master of Public Health degree (MPH) with a concentration in Health Behavior and Health Promotion (HBHP) or Health Management, Administration, and Policy (HMAP). The 42 credit-hour degree prepares public health professionals in the breadth of public health practice while also including in-depth preparation in community health education or management and administration. The program educates health professionals who will provide leadership, innovation, and technical expertise at local, state, national, and international levels, and in particular, with border health problems in rural communities along the U.S.-Mexico border. The degree prepares public health professionals to function in a variety of settings, including health programs at the local, state, and federal government levels, profit and nonprofit organizations and agencies, worksite settings, and educational institutions.

The program offers HBHP classes on-campus and online, whereas it offers HMAP classes only online. The online programs are for people unable to attend classes on the main Las Cruces campus or who have commitments that prevent them from participating in person. **NOTE: On-Campus students, with some rare exceptions, should register for the on-campus sections of the classes. If students register for an online section without approval, the program may move them to the appropriate on-campus section.**

All students are expected to complete courses in pre-determined sequences so that they develop

¹ Although modified substantially, the original version of this document used concepts and ideas developed by the University of Northern Colorado.

prerequisite knowledge and skills before taking more advanced courses. Opportunities for research and internships are available so students can apply the knowledge and skills acquired in all classes.

US/Mexico Border Emphasis

NMSU is located approximately 50 miles from the international border between El Paso, Texas, and Juarez, Chihuahua, Mexico. This border spans 2,000 miles, from San Diego, CA to Brownsville, TX, comprised of 6 Mexican states and 4 US states. The population of the area is presently 15 million and is expected to double by 2025. NMSU's proximity to the border shapes and directs many of the research and service activities undertaken by the university and the MPH program relating to border health.



www.borderhealth.org

This rich research and service environment has helped and enhanced NMSU to become a Carnegie R2 Research Institution, with total external research expenditures exceeding \$110 million for FY16. NMSU has the distinction of being a US Department of Education-designated Minority Institution, Hispanic Serving Institution, and a NASA Space Grant University. Within the Department, the faculty conduct research and service projects that span a range of public health issues.

Dual MSW/MPH Program

In 2006, the Departments of Public Health and Social Work established the Dual Master of Social Work and Master of Public Health degree program. Students enrolled in the dual MSW/MPH degree program must take the Health Behavior and Health Promotion concentration and adhere strictly to a recommended sequencing of courses. Information is available at <http://socialwork.nmsu.edu/degrees-minors/msw-mph/>

The following serve as some of the benefits from this dual degree program:

- 1) The values and ethics of both programs are similar, and both programs have an emphasis on

social justice.

- 2) The programs complement each other: public health focuses on populations of people and is highly analytical; social work focuses on individual, groups, and communities within the social environment and provides both qualitative and quantitative research classes.
- 3) Both programs heavily emphasize cross-cultural content in classes.
- 4) The MPH requires 160 clock hours of field experience for the entire program with supervision by an MPH or a Certified Health Education Specialist in an agency relevant to public health. The MSW field program has numerous placements that fit these criteria.
- 5) Completion of the MPH makes students eligible to take the Certified Health Education Specialist exam; Completion of the MSW makes students eligible for the MSW exams. Both add to graduates' employability.

In the United States, the degree is becoming increasingly popular. Many students find these combined degrees appealing, particularly if they are interested in public health and community outreach. Students from other countries and students who have served in the Peace Corps find that this degree furthers their careers in international service.

Minors

The Department offers two minors: **Gerontology** and **US-Mexico Border Health**. Gerontology requires 12-credit hours; US-Mexico Border Health requires 9-hours of coursework. Students may also seek a minor in another department if it complements their professional and personal goals (e.g., Anthropology, Communications, and Psychology). On-campus MPH students may be required to complete some or all of their minor coursework online. The availability of minors outside the Department to online students depends on the course offerings of the host department.

The MPH Faculty

The faculty of the MPH program has expertise in public health, health behavior, community health education, and health management, policy, and administration.

Elizabeth S. England-Kennedy, Ph.D. (Assistant Professor) received her doctoral degree from the University of Arizona and has a specialty in medical anthropology, behavioral health, health disparities suicide and suicidality, and homelessness.

Sue Forster-Cox, Ph.D., MCHES (Professor), received her doctoral degree from the University of New Mexico and has a specialty in health education, border health, health promotion, tribal health, and non-profit organizations.

Jagdish Khubchandani, Ph.D. received his doctoral degree from the University of Toledo and has interests in social epidemiology and scientific writing.

Cynthia Kratzke, Ph.D., CHES (Associate Professor), received her doctoral degree from Old Dominion University and has a specialty in community health education, health disparities, and cancer.

Jill McDonald, Ph.D. (Professor), received her doctoral degree from the University of Washington. She is the Stan Fulton Endowed Chair in Health Disparities Research, Director of the Southwest Institute for Health Disparities Research.

Rebecca Palacios, Ph.D. (Associate Professor), received her doctoral degree from the University of Texas at El Paso and has a specialty in health psychology, cancer prevention, health disparities in chronic diseases.

Humairat Rahman MD, Ph.D. (Assistant Professor), received her doctoral degree from the University of South Florida and has a specialty in Environmental and Occupational Health, Toxicology, Chronic and Infectious Disease.

Satya P. Rao, Ph.D. MCHES (Professor), received her doctoral degree from Texas Women's University and has a specialty in domestic violence, HIV/AIDS, addictions, and community health education.

Dong Yeong Shin, Ph.D. (Assistant Professor) received his doctoral degree from the University of Alabama at Birmingham and has a specialty in health services administration in terms of strategic management, finance, human resources management, and information technology.

Tamara Stimatze, Ph.D. (Assistant Professor), received her doctoral degree from New Mexico State University and has specialized in statistics, social evaluations of LGBTQ+ identities, as well as health and educational disparities due to social class, gender, and sexual orientation.

Joe Tomaka, Ph.D. (Professor) received his doctoral degree from the University of Buffalo. He is the MPH Program Coordinator and Director of Crimson Research. His research specializes in stress, health behavior, brief intervention, and program evaluation.

Susan Wilson, Ph.D. (Associate Professor) received her doctoral degree from Southern Methodist University and has a specialty in health policy and administration, anthropology and public health, rural health, international health, and health disparities.

Department Administrative Staff

Monika Martens is the Administrative Assistant; **Mary Rasp** is the Program Coordinator.

MPH STUDENT ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

Academic Advising

Students are expected to seek academic advising before enrolling in each term/semester. The Graduate Coordinator assigns students a faculty advisor after acceptance into the MPH program. Students should discuss their course plans for each semester, field experience, thesis or non-thesis options, and any challenges or concerns they have.

Each semester, the Department places an "advising hold" that prevents students from registering for classes until (a) the student meets with his/her advisor, and (b) the advisor asks the Graduate Coordinator to remove the advising hold. During the "releasing" of advising holds, the Graduate Coordinator may discover registration holds placed by other units such as Accounts Payable or Parking Services. The Graduate Advisor does not have the authority to remove these holds, but he will notify students of their existence and the need to resolve the situation before the student can register for classes.

A student can request a change of advisor. The Change of Advisor form is located at <http://publichealth.nmsu.edu/graduate-programs/forms/>

Faculty office hours

Each faculty member establishes office hours each semester. Students are responsible for communicating with faculty advisors and developing times to meet, as needed. "Meetings" with academic advisors may be face-to-face, online via Zoom or Skype, or through the exchange of e-mails depending on the desires of the student and faculty advisor.

Orientation & the Department List-Server

At the beginning of each fall semester, an Graduate Student orientation (MPH and Graduate Certificate) is held on or near the main campus in Las Cruces to provide students with an opportunity to meet the faculty, gain an overview of the program, learn how to register for classes in sequence, and meet other graduate students. Each spring, the MPH Program Coordinator sends an announcement to each student detailing the date and time for the orientation meeting. Although the Department requires on-campus students to attend in person, it offers online students the opportunity to participate in person or online.

There are two Department listserves. One is used for student/department/university-related information (MPHlist). The second is a general, larger listserve (HSCInfo) and is used to distribute information from alumni, local, state, and national officials. To get on either list-serve, if you are not already on it, send an

email to Sue Forster-Cox (sforster@nmsu.edu) and provide your NMSU email and full name.

Student Expectations

Students are expected to adhere to the highest level of professional and personal ethics at all times, in their personal demeanor, conduct, performance, and their written and oral works. Please refer to the **MPH Student Code of Conduct**, towards the end of this document.

Student Performance Standards:

Graduate students are expected to attend and actively involve themselves in all class sessions and online activities.

Students should become proficient in and use the *Publication Manual of the American Psychological Association* (APA; the latest edition) when formatting their written work. APA is the recognized formatting style for the field of public health. Students are encouraged to purchase the *Publication Manual*. Students are to proof carefully all assignments, checking for grammatical errors, punctuation, and other errors, before submitting assignments.

The Writing Center, located in Clara Belle Williams Hall, Room 102 on the NSMU main campus, is a resource available to all students. Students can contact them at <https://towc.nmsu.edu/> to make an appointment to have their work reviewed/critiqued. They serve on-campus and online students.

MPH Student Outcomes

Student outcomes are defined by the Council on Education in Public Health and include 22 foundational competencies and concentration-specific competencies.

MPH Foundational Competencies (All MPH Students):

1. Apply epidemiological methods to the breadth of settings and situations in public health practice
2. Select quantitative and qualitative data collection methods appropriate for a given public health context
3. Analyze quantitative and qualitative data using biostatistics, informatics, computer-based programming, and software, as appropriate
4. Interpret results of data analysis for public health research, policy or practice
5. Compare the organization, structure, and function of health care, public health, and regulatory systems across national and international settings
6. Discuss how structural bias, social inequities, and racism undermine health and create challenges to achieving health equity at organizational, community and societal levels
7. Assess population needs, assets, and capacities that affect communities' health
8. Apply awareness of cultural values and practices to the design or implementation of public health policies or programs
9. Design a population-based policy, program, project or intervention
10. Explain basic principles and tools of budget and resource management
11. Select methods to evaluate public health programs
12. Discuss multiple dimensions of the policy-making process, including the roles of ethics and evidence
13. Propose strategies to identify stakeholders and build coalitions and partnerships for influencing public health outcomes
14. Advocate for political, social or economic policies and programs that will improve health in diverse populations
15. Evaluate policies for their impact on public health and health equity
16. Apply principles of leadership, governance, and management, which include creating a vision, empowering others, fostering collaboration and guiding decision making
17. Apply negotiation and mediation skills to address organizational or community challenges

18. Select communication strategies for different audiences and sectors
19. Communicate audience-appropriate public health content, both in writing and through oral presentation
20. Describe the importance of cultural competence in communicating public health content
21. Perform effectively on interprofessional teams
22. Apply systems thinking tools to a public health issue

Concentration Specific Competencies

Health Behavior and Health Promotion

1. Evaluate the social, behavioral, cultural, and educational determinants of health at the individual and community levels.
2. Analyze health communications and its interdisciplinary roots in education, psychology, and community health.
3. Critique health communication and its interdisciplinary roots in education, psychology, and community health.
4. Compare strategies used in health communication campaigns (planning for production, implementation, pre-testing, and evaluation).
5. Evaluate empowerment and engage in reducing health disparities in disempowered communities.
6. Identify the policy and legislative implications of community organizing and building on health disparities.
7. Analyze the needs, strengths, assets, and barriers that contribute to the public health of border, rural, and tribal communities.
8. Develop community-based and driven strategies and programs.
9. Differentiate the fundamental principles of quantitative research with an emphasis on research design and causal relationships in public health.
10. Organize the key components of qualitative research, grounded theory and the application of this type of research on health issues along the US/Mexico border.
11. Critique the importance of program evaluation in improving public health.
12. Apply the principles of program planning, development, budgeting, management, and evaluation in organizational initiatives.
13. Apply the principles of program planning, development, budgeting, management, and evaluation in community programs.

Health Management, Administration, and Policy

1. Compare types of public health leadership, motivation, and management skills needed for today's work environment.
2. Evaluate collaborative approaches for healthcare delivery to improve health and well-being.
3. Analyze operational responsibilities including budgets, financial and performance management
4. Evaluate potential legal problems that healthcare professionals are likely to encounter in the healthcare industry.
5. Analyze the interactions that shape health policy.
6. Apply the principles of program planning, budgeting, management, and evaluation in organizational initiatives.

MPH Course Requirements

The following courses are required of all MPH students. Check with your Faculty Advisor for the recommended course sequencing.

I. Public Health Core Courses (15 credits)

- MPH 510, Community and Psychosocial Aspects of Public Health (3)
- MPH 520, Biostatistical Applications in Public Health (3)

MPH 530, Epidemiological Approaches to Disease Control and Prevention (3)
MPH 540, Public Health Services Design and Operation (3)
MPH 550, Environmental Public Health Issues (3)

II. Concentration (18 credits in one of the following areas)

Health Behavior and Health Promotion

MPH 570, Foundations of Public Health Education (3)
MPH 572, Techniques of Health Communication/Education (3)
MPH 573, Community Organization in Public Health (3)
MPH 574, Health Program Planning (3)
MPH 578, Evaluative Approaches in Public Health (3)
MPH 579, Research and Resources in Community Health (3)

Health Administration, Policy and Management Core Courses

MPH 545, Health Services Organization & Delivery (3)
MPH 546, Healthcare Financial & Budgeting Management (3)
MPH 541, Principles of Health Program Management (3)
MPH 558, Public Health Policy Analysis (3)
MPH 578, Evaluative Approaches in Public Health (3)
MPH 547, Public Health Law and Ethics (3)

III. Cultural Foundation Course (3 credits)

One course from the cultural foundation series numbered MPH 560-MPH 569

IV. Additional Requirements (3 credits)

MPH 596, Field Experience (3)
One Graduate-Level Elective (3) **AND** MPH Comprehensive Exam (0) (non-thesis option)
OR
MPH 599 Master's Thesis (6) (thesis option)

Thesis and Non-thesis Options

The thesis option requires 45 credit hours including six thesis hours; the non-thesis option requires 42 credit hours.

The final examination for the non-thesis option includes both oral and written questions about the student's graduate course work. The final examination for the thesis option consists of an oral defense of the thesis and related course work. A thesis guidelines document is available at the Department Website or by contacting the Graduate Coordinator.

In most instances, HMAP students will not be allowed to complete a thesis. Certain courses should be taken prior to engaging in a thesis. Work with your advisor to see if this is a viable option.

Course expectations

The MPH Program expects graduate students to maintain the highest levels of academic performance. Accordingly, all students must maintain a grade-point average (GPA) of at least 3.0 in all graduate courses taken as a graduate student. Graduate courses transferred from the undeclared program at NMSU or transferred from other institutions will be included in determining grade-point averages.

Grading Scale

Starting with the spring 2018 Semester, the Department of Public Health Sciences will not employ a fractional grading system. Fractional grading involves giving grades that include a plus (+) or a minus (-)

such as A- or B+. Instead, faculty will use only non-fractional grades including A, B, C, D, and F.

C, D, and F Grades:

Any graduate course (required or elective) in which a student earns a C or D (including +/- grades) will not count toward a Master of Public Health degree or Graduate Public Health Certificate. Students must repeat the first course in which they earn a C or D grade. This can only be done one time. If a second grade of C or lower is earned in the repeated course or any other graduate course, the student will be dismissed (see Grounds for Dismissal).

In addition, students should be aware that a C or D grade, including a + or - grade, is included in the calculation of the cumulative grade-point average. Therefore, any grade lower than B, including B-, must be compensated for by passing grades of B or better in other courses (e.g., B+, A-, A) in order to attain or maintain a 3.0 grade-point average before awarding of the degree/certificate.

Grounds for Dismissal:

Two C or D grades, including those with +/- grades, in any graduate courses (required or elective) will result in dismissal from the MPH program. Any single course for which an F grade is earned will result in dismissal from the MPH program.

Please refer to the current NMSU Graduate Catalog version for other details and current policies.

Transfer of credits

Graduate students may transfer coursework from a previous institution to NMSU. For master's students, at least 50% of a student's master's degree credits must be completed at NMSU, but the remaining 50% *may* be transferred from graduate-level courses taken at another accredited university. Please refer to the current NMSU Graduate Catalog for more details and current policies.

Students should transfer credits from a previous institution, for other graduate work completed once they begin their first semester in the program. The coursework must not be older than seven years at the time of graduation from NMSU. Students need to complete the Transfer of Credit form, available online from the NMSU Graduate School and provide a copy of the course syllabus for review to their advisor. The student is also required to complete a Degree Audit Exception form. The form is reviewed and approved by the student's advisor, the Graduate Coordinator, and the Graduate School. It is important to note that course transfers and substitutions are at the discretion of the Graduate School and Department, respectively.

Independent Study (MPH 590)

Students interested in pursuing a specific topic or issue for credit may elect to take MPH 590, Independent Study for 1-6 credits. Independent study classes must have prior approval of the department head. Students identify a faculty member with whom they wish to conduct the Independent Study, establish a plan of action, complete the appropriate form, and obtain the necessary signatures before they may enroll in the course. The form is available at the department web site.

Field Experience

The field experience is a required of all MPH students, on-campus and online, and is an integral part of the Master of Public Health (MPH) degree program. The field experience provides students the opportunity to apply classroom learning to real-world problems and solutions. Placements are made according to career goals and location preferences. The field experience may occur after the second semester, when at least one-half of the classwork has been completed for the degree, for full-time MPH students, and later if possible.

Students are encouraged to seek creative field experience placements that allow them to apply skills acquired in the classroom setting, assist a group or community with a public health/education issue, and

promote personal and professional growth. Sites may be at local, regional, state, or national organizations or facilities. Affiliation agreements must be in place with the identified agency, program, or organization before a student starts his/her field experience. Students are to work with their advisor and the field experience coordinator in the selection of a site.

Complete information about the required internships is located on the Department website at <http://publichealth.nmsu.edu/field-experience/>

Comprehensive Exam Process, Policy, and Procedures

Purpose, Timing, and Eligibility

Students who pursue the non-thesis option of the MPH program must complete a comprehensive examination ("comp exam"). The purpose of the comp exam is to allow students to demonstrate their mastery of public health competencies and command of the subject matter taught in the MPH courses. The exam has a written component and may have an oral component, depending on the outcome of the written exam.

Students generally take the comp exam in their last or next-to-last semester in the program before their anticipated graduation. At the time of the comp exam, students must have an NMSU cumulative graduate grade-point average of at least 3.0. Students must enroll at NMSU during the exam semester or pay a course examination fee if they are not enrolled.

Comprehensive Exam Schedule for Fall and Spring Semesters

- The program offers the exam only during the spring and fall semesters
- All students take the exam at the same starting time
 - Fall Semester – 2nd Friday in October
 - Spring Semester – 2nd Friday in March
- The Graduate Coordinator may grant exceptions to these dates in extenuating circumstances.

Comprehensive Exam Committee

- The comprehensive exam committee includes at least two faculty members from the Department of Public Health Sciences (PHS) and one faculty member from outside the Department who serves as the Graduate Dean's Representative (rep).
- All participating faculty must be approved members of the NMSU Graduate Faculty <https://gradschool.nmsu.edu/For%20Faculty%20and%20Staff/gradfaculty.pdf>

Comprehensive Exam Format

- The exam includes three essay questions
 - Question 1: MPH Core. Assesses the student's command of the subject matter of the MPH core courses
 - Question 2: MPH Concentration. Assesses the student's command of the subject matter in the chosen concentration (i.e., *Health Behavior and Health Promotion OR Health Management, Administration and Policy*)
 - Question 3: Individual Emphasis. Assesses the student's command of the subject matter from the field placement, minor, or an area of specialization or interest
- Each question should be 5-7 double-spaced pages in length (excluding references) and in an acceptable size font (e.g., Arial 11 point or Times-Roman 12 point)
- The essays should be written using APA, AMA or other accepted professional writing style

Student Responsibilities

Students are responsible for selecting departmental faculty members to serve on their committee

- One faculty member will serve as the chair of the committee; the other will serve as the second member of the committee
- Students may or may not select their academic advisor to be their committee chair or a second committee member.
- The academic advisor may assist the student in the selection of committee members, even if he/she is not on the committee

Committee Member Responsibilities

The department committee members are responsible for selecting or working with the student to select an appropriate Dean's Representative (Dean's rep).

- The Dean's rep must be a member of the NMSU Graduate Faculty
- The committee chair sends the Dean's Rep instructions that they
 - Are required to participate in the examination process only if the student fails one or more exam questions and is required to take an oral exam (see grading process below)
 - In such a case, the dean's representative oversees the process to ensure that the committee administered the examination in a fair manner and according to graduate school policy
 - The Dean's Rep does not grade the exams

Completion of Required Paperwork

- All students must have a completed, signed Comprehensive Exam Form before participating in the comp exam.
 - On-campus students are responsible for completing the form, obtaining the required signatures, and delivering the form to the Graduate Coordinator.
 - For online students, the Committee Chair may sign the required form for the online students, gather the required signatures, and deliver the form to the Graduate Coordinator.
- The form is available on the department website

Exam Question Development

- The Graduate Coordinator will work with the Committee Chairs to develop the MPH Core and the MPH Concentration questions
- Committee chairs, working with the second faculty member on the committee, are responsible for developing the individual emphasis question and sending it to the Graduate Coordinator
 - The Chair may consult with others in developing each individual emphasis question.
- The Graduate Coordinator compiles the questions and creates the exam in Canvas

Exam Administration

- The Graduate Coordinator administers the comp exam via Canvas. Students will receive an invitation to join the comprehensive exam Canvas course once they have submitted the Comprehensive Exam Form and typically several weeks before taking the exam.
- The Canvas course will have general instructions for taking the exam and the grading rubric accessible to students before their taking the exam.
- The Canvas assignments, unique to each student, will open at 8:00 am on Friday and close at 8:00 am on Monday.
- Once complete, departmental committee members grade each question within Canvas and according to the established grading process. The Graduate Coordinator serves as the grade Moderator within Canvas.
- The Graduate Coordinator notifies students of the exam outcomes within 10 business days (excluding spring break) of their completing the exam.

Verification Process

- To ensure the integrity of the examination process, students are required to attest that they were the only person to work on the assignment by attesting to that fact twice.
- Students complete a verification process using the quiz function in Canvas. Students complete Verification Quiz 1 before starting the exam and Verification Quiz 2 after completing the exam.
- Students will not receive the results of their exam unless they complete both quizzes.

Instructions for the oral examination, if necessary

- The Committee Chair provides students with instructions on how to prepare for oral defense by reviewing exam responses about courses or other content.
- The Committee Chair coordinates a meeting with committee members, the Dean's rep, and student.
 - The Dean's rep attends oral exams.
 - For online students, the meeting may take place via teleconference
- The committee grades the oral exam according to the procedures outlined in the comprehensive grading process. Students are normally informed of the outcome of the oral examination at the conclusion of the exam.

Notifying the Graduate School

The Graduate Coordinator notifies the Graduate School of the exam outcomes for all students by sending a completed table with all results and a cover memo signed by the Department head to the Graduate School.

Faculty Grading Etiquette Within Canvas

Canvas creates a unique grading environment for department faculty members. This is because it gives all faculty, even those not on committees, access to comprehensive exam responses and grades. While promoting transparency of the process, faculty need to follow some basic principles and guidelines when accessing and using Canvas.

Specifically, faculty members should:

- Only grade responses for students on which they serve as committee members
- Not discuss exam responses or grades with the student taking the exam without the written permission of the Committee Chair.
- Not discuss exam responses or grades with other students privately or in public.

Preparing for the exam

It is difficult to provide students with specific advice about preparing for an exam designed to assess mastery of public health competencies and command and integration of the subject matter taught across the curriculum.

Given that caveat, however, students are advised to:

- Review books, notes, and other materials from core classes, concentration classes, and field placements.
- Review the CEPH core competencies
- Review the principles of public health including essential public health services

Comprehensive Exam Grading Process

After completion of the comprehensive exam, the two department members (sans the dean's representative) will grade **each question** using the approved grading rubric and scale (see below).

- PASS: Both department committee members assign grades of 80 or better to the exam question response using the approved rubric.

- **FAIL:** Both department committee members assign grades of 79 or lower to exam question response using the approved rubric.

In the event of disagreement between faculty members regarding a pass or fail grades for one or more questions, the committee, including the dean's representative, will meet to discuss and help resolve the disagreements in line with Graduate School policy. The proceedings of this meeting are to remain confidential, and participants should not share any details with students. Although he or she may participate in the mediation of disagreements, the dean's representative will not grade exams nor will he or she break ties in voting. If the discussion does not resolve the issue, the Graduate Coordinator will appoint a third grader from within the Department.

Three passing grades:

If a student receives three passing grades from both department committee members, he or she passes the exam. The student is not required to participate in an oral exam.

Three failing grades:

If a student receives three failing grades from both department committee members, he or she fails the exam and is required to retake the exam the following semester. (See re-take process below.)

One or Two Failing Grades:

If the student receives one or two failing grades on the same question(s), from both departmental committee members, the entire committee, including the dean's representative, will decide whether they will (a) allow the student to take an oral exam for clarification or (b) instruct the student to retake the exam the following semester.

- Oral exams will be required only for those questions receiving fail grades.
- Students failing any part of the oral exam will be required to retake the exam. (See re-take process below.)

Process for Re-taking the exam:

- Students failing all three, or one or two questions (after orals), must retake the entire exam the following semester (fall or spring).
- When retaking the exam, all new questions will be provided to the student.
- Students must attain three passing grades from both department committee members to pass the exam.
- There is no opportunity for an oral exam to clarify responses.
- Any failing grade, on one or more questions, will be grounds for dismissal from the program. (Disagreements between department graders may be resolved using the process outlined above.)
- Any decision to dismiss the student from the program will be made in consultation with the Dean's Representative and the Department Head.

Thesis Option

Students have the option of completing a thesis in their MPH program. The thesis option requires that a student complete 45 versus 42 credit hours for the non-thesis option. Students will take 6 thesis hours (MPH 599) as part of their 45 hours. Three thesis hours (MPH 599) may count towards the student's elective.

Students should decide, as quickly as possible, if they wish to pursue the thesis option, so they have ample time to develop their research plan, collect and analyze data, and complete the final written document, the thesis. Identification of a faculty member to serve as the faculty thesis advisor is a key step in the process that should be done as soon as possible.

NOTE: Normally, only students in the HBHP concentration may participate in the thesis option.

Four steps to completing a thesis

The following list was developed by MPH faculty to assist our students who elect to pursue the thesis option. This list is only a guide. Students should consult with their advisors for additional details. ***A document fully describing thesis guidelines is available at the Department website or by contacting the Graduate Coordinator.***

STEP #1 (to be completed during the 1st semester of full-time study)

- identify a thesis topic
- identify a faculty advisor to serve as the thesis chair
- begin the review of the literature

STEP #2 (to be completed by the end of the 2nd semester of full-time study)

- develop a 2-page prospectus
- identify all members of the thesis committee
- have all committee members approve the prospectus
- complete the review of the literature
- enroll in MPH 579

STEP #3 (to be completed by the end of the 3rd semester of full-time study)

- initiate all paperwork required for IRB approval of the research
- meet/communicate regularly with the committee
- complete the initial draft of chapters 1-3 of the thesis
- have the committee approve data collection methods
- complete all data collection

STEP #4 (to be completed by the end of the 4th semester of full-time study)

- complete all data analysis
- complete all chapters of the thesis
- submit the final draft of the thesis to the committee at least one month prior to the scheduled defense date
- complete an oral defense of the thesis
- schedule your defense date in accordance with NMSU Graduate School deadlines
- apply for graduation!

Thesis Manuscript Option

The thesis guidelines document described above and available at the Department website provides details on the Thesis Manuscript Option. In the thesis manuscript option, one publishable manuscript will be developed and submitted to a journal.

Graduate School Deadlines & Forms

Refer to the Graduate School website for Graduation deadlines, which are specific for each semester, to include dates for defending comprehensive exams and submitting a thesis. It is the student's responsibility to know the different deadlines and complete the necessary paperwork and activities, in order to graduate. All forms for the Graduate School are found at <https://gradschool.nmsu.edu/Current%20Students/Graduate%20Forms.html>

Leave of Absence

If a student needs to take a leave of absence from the program or withdraw from the university altogether, he or she should refer to the section in the Graduate Catalog about Leaving Graduate School and follow the instructions. <https://catalogs.nmsu.edu/>. If the leave is for less than one year, the student should discuss their plans to return with their academic advisor.

If the leave is for more than one year, students may be required to complete a re-admission process. Students anticipating this situation should consult with their advisor and the Graduate Coordinator. Students taking leave should recognize that graduate degrees must be completed within seven years of admission.

MPH STUDENT CODE OF CONDUCT

The departmental policies below apply to all students pursuing any degree program, certificate program, minor, or course offered by the Department of Public Health Sciences. All departmental policies are in addition to all related policies at New Mexico State University (see <https://deanofstudents.nmsu.edu/>)

Each student is responsible for becoming familiar with the Department of Public Health Sciences Student Code of Conduct contained within this document. If a student is unsure about the application or interpretation of the Student Code of Conduct, it is her or his responsibility to seek clarification from department administrators (E.g., the Graduate Coordinator or Department Head).

The Department Head and relevant faculty will review all suspected violations of departmental policies. Such review may also include a recommendation for action by others (e.g., a faculty review panel, a student review panel, etc.), at the discretion of the Department Head. Sanctions will depend on the severity of the violation and can range from a written warning to dismissal from the class, program, Department, or University.

The Code of Conduct addresses the Department's expectations of students in several areas: Discrimination, harassment, professional conduct, academic integrity, and acceptable use of electronic communication.

Discrimination:

The Department of Public Health Sciences does not discriminate or tolerate discrimination by or against members of the department community on the basis of race, color, national origin, gender, sexual orientation, religion, age, mental or physical disability, veteran status, marital status, or other protected characteristics in the admission to, access to, or treatment or employment in any of its programs or activities.

Harassment:

The Department of Public Health Sciences is committed to maintaining an environment that is free of unwelcome and disrespectful conduct and communication and in which department members feel safe and comfortable. As such, it is a violation of this policy for any Department of Public Health Sciences employee, instructor, or student to engage in harassing conduct or communication directed toward another employee, instructor, student, or any other person affiliated with the Department. Unwelcome conduct, directed at others and based on other protected characteristics, such as race, sexual orientation, gender, religion, age, and other characteristics as set forth in the Department's nondiscrimination policy, violates both the harassment policy and the discrimination policy. Please note that faculty and staff have an obligation to report any suspected harassment, even if discussed in confidentiality.

Professional Conduct and Behavioral Standards:

As part of its commitment to integrity and respect in the community in which it operates, the Department of Public Health Sciences expects that its students will conduct themselves in a professional and respectful manner at all times, both when interacting within the department community and when representing the Department at events outside the institution. In that regard, students will not at any time engage in unduly disruptive, threatening, unethical, disrespectful, or abusive conduct toward other members of the department community, including fellow students, instructors, and staff.

All students are expected to honor and respect faculty, staff, guest speakers, and other students in the program. If a student has concerns about a particular assignment, grade, or anything else related to their academic program, they are asked to make an appointment and meet with the faculty member or student.

Academic Integrity and Misconduct

Academic integrity can be defined as

a commitment to five fundamental values: honesty, trust, fairness, respect, and responsibility. We believe that these five values, plus the courage to act on them even in the face of adversity, are truly foundational to the academy. Without them, everything that we do in our capacities as teachers, learners, and researchers loses value and becomes suspect.

-The International Center for Academic Integrity (2014)

As part of the academy, New Mexico State University and the Department of Public Health Sciences view academic integrity as fundamental to the university's research, teaching, and service functions. This commitment to academic integrity relies on the collective and individual behavior of every one of its faculty, staff, and students. Each individual must not only recognize the importance of academic integrity but assume responsibility for promoting and maintaining it. By definition, students who enroll in the department share this dedication and commitment to maintaining academic integrity in all scholarly pursuits.

Academic misconduct is the antithesis of integrity and refers to action or attempted action, whether intentional or unintentional, that violates the fundamental values that underlie academic integrity. Academic misconduct often creates an unfair academic advantage for the student relative to other students, or a member of the academic community over others in that same community.

This section defines violations of academic integrity and gives examples of actions that are considered misconduct. The Department encourages students with questions or concerns about the definition and forms of academic integrity violations described herein to contact their course instructor or academic advisor.

Plagiarism

Plagiarism is the use of intellectual material produced by another person without acknowledging its source. For example:

- Direct copying of passages from works of others into an assignment, paper, discussion board posting, or thesis or dissertation without acknowledgment or citation.
- Using the views, opinions, or insights of another without acknowledgment.
- Paraphrasing another person's characteristic or original phraseology, metaphor, or other literary devices without acknowledgment or citation.

Faculty may monitor student work for evidence of plagiarism, using anti-plagiarism programs, applications, databases, or services of the Department of Public Health Sciences' choosing. By enrolling in Department classes, students grant the Department of Public Health Sciences permission to:

- review work submitted for the purpose of comment, criticism, originality, and grading of the work;
- distribute the work to other Department of Public Health Sciences faculty for independent evaluations of the work;
- submit the work to anti-plagiarism applications, databases, or services (e.g., Turnitin, Grammarly, etc.); and
- make and retain copies of the work.

Student Use of Their Own Scholarly Work

- Students should avoid direct copying of material from academic papers written for previous assignments. Although the ideas contained within the original work may be valid in the present

context, students should strive to produce an original intellectual work that is independent of earlier versions and which is directly relevant to the new assignment.

- If the student wishes to use previous work as a source for a new assignment, he or she should cite the work as he or she would any other reference document using APA principles, citation guidelines, and quotations where appropriate. The student should provide copies of all unpublished original works to the instructor.

Other forms of academic dishonesty

Cheating. Cheating is defined as fraud, deceit, or dishonesty in an academic assignment. It includes using or attempting to use materials, or assisting others in using materials that are prohibited or inappropriate in the context of the academic assignment in question. For example:

- Copying or attempting to copy from others during an exam or on an assignment.
- Communicating answers with another person during an exam.
- Preprogramming a calculator or phone to contain answers or other unauthorized information for exams.
- Using unauthorized materials, prepared answers, written notes, or concealed information during an exam.
- Allowing others to complete an assignment or portion of an assignment, including the use of a commercial term paper service.
- Submitting the same assignment for more than one course without the prior approval of all the instructors involved.
- Collaborating on an exam or assignment with any other person without prior approval from the course instructor.
- Taking an exam for another person or having someone take an exam for you.

Providing False Information. For example:

- Furnishing false information in the context of an academic assignment.
- Fabricating or altering information or data and presenting it as legitimate.
- Providing false or misleading information to an instructor or any other department staff member.

Copyright Violation. The Department of Public Health Sciences recognizes and respects intellectual property rights. As part of its mission to maintain the highest standards for ethical conduct, the Department requires its employees, instructors, students, and other department community members to use copyrighted materials lawfully.

No employee, instructor, student, nor other department community member may reproduce any copyrighted work in print, video, or electronic form in violation of the law. The easiest way to avoid violating the law is by receiving the express written permission of the copyright holder. Copyright laws in the United States may protect works even if they are not registered with the US Copyright Office and even if they do not carry the copyright symbol.

Copyrighted works include, but are not limited to, printed articles from publications, television and radio programs, videotapes, music performances, photographs, training materials, manuals, documentation, software programs, databases, World Wide Web pages, and CD-ROMs. In general, the laws that apply to printed materials are also applicable to visual and electronic media.

The Department of Public Health Sciences directs its employees, instructors, students, and other department community members to obtain appropriate permission from copyright holders or their licensing representative when reproduction or duplication exceeds fair use. The fair use doctrine allows limited exemptions to copyright infringement liability when copyrighted works are used for purposes such as comment, criticism, teaching, scholarship, or research, particularly when the use of the work is limited in amount and scope and is for non-commercial purposes.

Misrepresentation of Credentials. Statements made and documents supplied by the Department of Public Health Sciences applicants and students must be complete and accurate. The Department will not tolerate any misrepresentation by a student or applicant of past or current academic programs, degrees, or professional accomplishments. If unexplained discrepancies appear between statements or documents provided to the Department of Public Health Sciences and information obtained otherwise, except in the case of misspellings and other such inadvertent errors, applicants may be rejected for admission and enrolled students may be dismissed.

Theft or Damage of Property. For example:

- Sabotaging or stealing another person's assignment, paper, project, electronic hardware, or software.
- Obtaining improper access to, or electronically interfering with, the property of another person or the Department via computer or other means.
- Obtaining a copy of an assignment or exam prior to its approved release by the instructor.

Alteration of University Documents. For example:

- Forging an instructor's or department official's signature on any document.
- Submitting an altered transcript of grades to or from another institution or employer.
- Putting your name on, or copying, another person's paper or assignment.
- Altering a previously graded exam or assignment for purposes of a grade appeal or for gaining points in a regarding process.

Acceptable Use of Electronic Communication

Electronic communication networks, the Internet, and any NMSU Electronic Systems are not to be used to cause harm, no matter how minor, to any individual, entity, or facility.

The following electronic communication activities are specifically prohibited:

- Harassing other users.
- Engaging in illegal activities.
- Contributing to unwelcome and/or unwarranted commercial pressure.
- Accessing or using accounts of others without their permission.
- Giving away or selling information about accounts to allow other non-owners to access or use accounts.
- Destroying or damaging equipment, software, or data belonging to others.
- Copying copyrighted materials without authorization.
- Disrupting service to other users or the system.
- Monitoring electronic communications without authorization.
- Disclosing passwords to others.
- Using illegally obtained software on the system.
- Copying, altering, or deleting someone else's files without that person's permission.
- Forging messages.
- Cracking passwords and systems.
- Sending harassing, unwelcome, or threatening messages.
- Sending unauthorized anonymous messages.
- Sending bulk unsolicited messages.
- Reading someone else's files without permission.
- Contributing to system attacks, denial of services, and other malicious uses of the network and systems.
- Libeling or slandering any person.
- Invading another person's privacy.
- Soliciting employment or sales.

1. Students must use their official NMSU email address (not Gmail, Yahoo, etc.) to communicate with faculty advisors, administrators, and staff. Due to privacy laws and security concerns, we are unable to respond to emails that do not originate from an official NMSU email address. NMSU policy requires all students to communicate with the university via their NMSU email account.
2. Students must use the NMSU email or the email within CANVAS learning management system to communicate with the NMSU faculty regarding a course in which they are enrolled. For communication with faculty on other matters, students may use the NMSU email system.

Instructor Response Time

Email is a great way to get your question to your professor, but realize they may not be able to answer immediately. Expect faculty to respond to emails between 9 A.M. and 5 P.M. on Monday through Friday within 48 hours. The 48-hour response time does not include; weekends, holidays, or school breaks. In some cases, professors may not have access to information about your question, or may not have immediate access to email due to various reasons, including being away for professional conferences. If a student does not receive a response from a faculty within 48 hours during the business week, it is the student's responsibility to follow up with the faculty by sending another email or calling the faculty or the department office phone number.

MPH STUDENT DISMISSAL POLICY

Dismissal from the Program

The graduate faculty of the Department of Public Health Sciences has the responsibility to prepare students to function as competent and ethical public health professionals. In this regard, the graduate faculty have an obligation to terminate a student from the MPH or GCPH program before completion of his/her program when the student fails to maintain minimum expected academic and professional standards in the classroom or the field practicum.

Upon review by the graduate faculty, a student will be terminated from the MPH program if the student:

- Receives two C or D grades, including those with +/- grades, in any graduate courses (required or elective);
- Receives one F grade in any single course;
- Receives a grade of D or lower in the field experience;
- Earns below the minimum 3.0 cumulative grade point average at the end of two consecutive grading periods;
- Demonstrates inappropriate or disrespectful conduct toward faculty, staff, and/or student peers;
- Engages in academic dishonesty of any kind (e.g., plagiarism, cheating);
- Fails to demonstrate ethical conduct.

The Public Health Sciences graduate faculty routinely reviewed all students after the first fall semester and every fall during their program. Any graduate faculty member may request a graduate faculty review of a student at any other time if he or she believes that circumstances warrant such a review. The request for special review must be in writing to the Department Head. The Department Head and Graduate Coordinator must approve the request before the review is scheduled with the graduate faculty. The graduate faculty review committee will consist of a minimum of three graduate faculty members and is subject to approval by the Department Head.

Students will be notified, in writing, of dismissal following a graduate faculty vote to dismiss.

Petition for Reinstatement

Upon receipt of a dismissal notice, a student who believes there are extenuating circumstances that led to the noted deficiencies may submit a written request for reinstatement into the program.

Students must submit such requests within ten working days after receipt of the Department's notice of

dismissal.

Once the Department receives a reinstatement request, the following process will occur:

1. The student shall submit a written petition explaining the extenuating circumstances leading to the notice of dismissal;
2. The Department Head will constitute a Reinstatement Review Committee consisting of three MPH graduate faculty. The Reinstatement Committee will meet within five working days following receipt of the student's written petition;
3. The committee shall deliberate in private and transmit its recommendations to the Department Head within five working days following the reinstatement meeting;
4. The department head shall consider the Reinstatement Review Committee's recommendation and provide written notification to the student and the committee of his/her decision within three working days of receipt of the committee's recommendation.

The Department will automatically and permanently terminate any student reinstated as a result of an appeal, but who subsequently violate the above policies. The student will not be allowed an additional opportunity to request reinstatement.

Commonly used forms

Can be found at the Graduate School website:

<https://gradschool.nmsu.edu/Current%20Students/Graduate%20Forms.html>

Degree application:

Students are responsible for completing their degree applications in a timely manner. They may complete the application through the my.nmsu.edu portal. Students must complete the degree application for their degree to be certified. More information can be found at

<http://commencement.nmsu.edu/>

Exit Survey

All MPH students MUST complete an exit survey before the Department can clear them for graduation. The Exit Interview is available online, and students will have approximately three weeks to complete this form. The exit interview is used by the Department to identify the strengths and weaknesses of the program. In conjunction with other data, such information is invaluable in reviewing the curriculum.

Certified Health Education Specialist (CHES)

Students completing the Health Behavior and Health Promotion concentration are eligible to sit for the Certified Health Education Specialist (CHES) exam. Information on the exam can be found at <https://www.nchech.org>. The mission of the National Commission for Health Education Credentialing, Inc. (NCHEC) "is to enhance the professional practice of Health Education by promoting and sustaining a credentialed body of Health Education Specialists." (NCHEC, 2014).

Students are encouraged to prepare and sit for the exam. Obtaining one's CHES is an indication of competency in the profession and one's continued commitment to growth, through the continuing education required to maintain one's CHES. For more information, visit the NCHEC site at

<http://www.nchech.org/>

Certified in Public Health (CPH)

Becoming Certified in Public Health (CPH) demonstrates that you can meet and maintain a national standard in public health through continuing education focused on emerging and established public health issues. There are several eligibility pathways for students in and alumni of the MPH program to become CPH:

- Students in the MPH program may be eligible to sit for the CPH exam prior to graduation, receiving provisional certification upon passing the exam. Following confirmation of their graduation, they will be Certified in Public Health.
- Graduates of the MPH program upon sitting for and passing the exam will be Certified in Public Health
- Individuals with a Bachelor's Degree and five subsequent years of public health work experience OR a relevant graduate-level degree and least three subsequent years of public health work experience OR a graduate Certificate in Public Health and at least three subsequent years of public health work experience may be eligible to sit for the exam.

The CPH credential is administered by the National Board of Public Health Examiners (NBPHE). Students are encouraged to learn more about eligibility, exam content and administration, study guides/exam preparation resources, and continuing education requirements by visiting the NBPHE website at <https://www.nbphe.org/>

GENERAL RESOURCES FOR GRADUATE STUDENTS

Resources and services available on campus and online

There is a wide range of resources and support available to students on campus.

Visit <http://currentstudents.nmsu.edu/> to gain an overview of resources and links for:

- Health and Wellness
- Campus Media
- Computer and Web services
- Conduct and Policies
- Library Services
- Student Involvement
- Support Programs
- Writing Center

Computer Labs – Times & Locations

Student Computing Services maintains computer labs that are conveniently located throughout NMSU's main campus; trained lab assistants monitor some of these labs. These labs are equipped with Macintosh and Windows PC systems and software.

For a comprehensive list of computer lab locations, lab hours, hardware, and software available in each lab, visit <http://studenttech.nmsu.edu/computers-wireless/labs/>. To speak to a Lab Monitor, call (575) 646-2661.

Employment opportunities on campus

Many on-campus MPH students serve as Graduate Assistants (GA) to faculty members in the Department, the College, and elsewhere across the university. This opportunity is not available to online students. Typically, this is a 10-20 hour/week position depending on student interest, availability of funds, etc. If interested in being considered as a GA, complete and submit the following form to the Department by the due date indicated on the Department of Public Health Sciences website <https://publichealth.nmsu.edu/graduate-programs/forms/>.

For students wanting to work on campus, aside from a GA position, connect with the Student Jobs site: <http://hr.nmsu.edu/jobs/student-jobs/>

Some basic information for graduate students working on campus:

- Must be degree-seeking, enrolled in a minimum of nine (9) graded graduate credit hours fall

and spring semesters, and maintain at least a 3.00 cumulative grade-point average.

- To maintain employment eligibility from one semester to the next, a graduate student must have completed and passed nine graduate credits the previous semester.
- Employment is limited to a maximum of 20 hours per week during the fall and spring semesters.
- During summer, class enrollment is not required, but if students take classes, they may take as many as four (4) credits per session and work up to 40 hours per week. More than four (4) credits limit them to 20 hours per week.

Students may seek employment off-campus. Refer to local newspapers, the Las Cruces Sun-News, the Bulletin, and the El Paso Times for want ads. Bulletin board postings, faculty, the Department list-serve, and other students are good sources of information about jobs.

Fellowship and grant information from the Graduate School

Refer to this site <https://gradschool.nmsu.edu/Future%20Students/Funding%20Opportunities.html> to learn about grants and other resources for graduate students.

Public Health Student Organization

This group meets throughout the school year for the purpose of networking, performing community service, and socializing.

Professional Public Health Organizations

A listing of local, regional, state and national public health organizations are listed later elsewhere in this manual. Most of the organizations offer discounted student memberships. Students can benefit from beginning to establish their public health network while in school, by joining the organizations, attending meetings, presenting papers or posters at conferences, etc.

Returned Peace Corps Volunteers Student Organization

This group, established in 2009, is for RPCVs across campus to network, perform community service and maintain international connections.

Scholarships, College of Health and Social Services

Refer to this site to learn of available scholarships available within the College:
<http://health.nmsu.edu/current-students/scholarships/>

University Research Council (URC) Annual Research Fair

The fair is held every fall, on the main campus. This is a format to showcase student and faculty research and projects. For more information, contact <http://research.nmsu.edu/>

Public Health & Health Education Organizations

Local

- Eta Sigma Gamma, Beta Omega (Department-based organization)
- Public Health Student Organization (PHSO) (Department-based organization)

Regional

- New Mexico Public Health Association (NMPHA) <http://www.nmph.org/>
- Paso Del Norte Society for Public Health Education (Paso Del Norte SOPHE)
- Texas Public Health Association <https://www.texaspha.org/>

National

- American Public Health Association (APHA) www.apha.org
- Society for Public Health Education (SOPHE) (national organization) <http://www.sophe.org/>

MPH Alumni Networking

The Department has an MPH Alumni Networking page: <http://publichealth.nmsu.edu/alumni-2/>

ACKNOWLEDGMENT OF READING THE GRADUATE HANDBOOK

All students are required to acknowledge that they have read, understand, and agreed to the terms outlined in the NMSU Graduate Handbook. Students can provide such acknowledgment in the Canvas course dedicated to graduate orientation.

