

**University of West Attica**

**DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC HEALTH POLICY**

**MASTER OF SCIENCE IN PUBLIC HEALTH**

**REGULATIONS FOR THE PREPARATION OF SEMESTER COURSE ASSIGNMENTS**

**REGULATIONS FOR ASSIGNMENTS PREPARATION FOR THE SEMESTER OF MSc "PUBLIC HEALTH" COURSES**

**Academic Year 2022-2024**

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**REGULATIONS FOR ASSIGNMENTS PREPARATION FOR THE SEMESTER**

**1. Aim and objectives of the semester's assignments**

The aim of the semester course assignments is for the students to gain experience in research methodology and in writing a scientific text.

Objectives of the preparation of a six-month thesis by the postgraduate students are:

o The engagement and deepening of the students in a modern scientific topic of public health

o The utilization and synthesis of the knowledge and skills acquired by the students during his studies

o The study of dealing with and attempts to solve specific scientific public health problems.

o The students's exercise in bibliographic research, mainly.

o The development of synthetic ability and critical thinking.

o The acquisition of experience in the scientific formulation of problems, in the design, selection and implementation of methods and/or tools, in conducting empirical studies and evaluating their results and, finally, in writing scientific assignments and in written and oral presentation (if available).

o Familiarity with writing a scientific assignment in the form of a scientific article.

o The development of the possibility of cooperation in small groups (in the case of group work).

o The development of the skill of summarizing and oral presentation of the main findings in the classroom (provided oral presentation is provided).

o The preparation for the writing of the General Part of the Thesis, for its presentation and for the writing of a scientific article and/or an announcement for a conference.

**2. Procedure of assignments in a six-month course**

Particular importance is given to producing quality assignments that can equip postgraduate students with important skills, but also inspire innovative solutions while recognizing the potential and dynamics of postgraduate students.

Supervisors/examiners of the semester assignments are the professors of the MSc programs. Co-supervisors or co-examiners may be faculty members or EDIP members of the Department, as long as they hold a doctoral degree.

The topics of the semester assignments are posted by the professor on the course page on the Moodle online platform before the start of the course. On the first day of the semester course, the professor informs the students that the method of examination of the semester course will be the preparation of written assignments and about the process of undertaking a topic by a student (individual work) or by a small group of students (group work). The professor also informs the students if the assignment will be accompanied by an oral presentation in the classroom. The topics of the assignments fall within the subject matter of the specific course and its applications and are characterized by variety, which will allow the students to choose.

The topic of the thesis can be proposed by the postgraduate students themselves and is finalized after consultation with the professors.

The assignment of the Work topic by the student takes place at the beginning of the semester, within the deadlines announced by the professor. After choosing the topic they are interested in, the students communicate in writing with the professor and declare their topic and their group (in the case of group work) until the deadline for declaring the topic, which is set in a relevant announcement.

The work is prepared individually by each student (and in special cases in groups).

Completion and submission of the semester assignment takes place during each examination period of the course. In the event that the semester work has not been completed at the end of the semester, specifically by the examination date of the course set by the Coordinating Committee of the MSc each semester, it is registered as a chargeable course by the Secretariat of the MSc.

**3. Obligations of Professors**

1. For the professor, the semester assignment is an important educational activity.

2. Assignments as a way of examining students in the context of a six-month course is the professor's obligation. He chooses this method of evaluating students if he believes that it will contribute to the better education of graduate students.

3. Informs the students about the assignments as a way of examining the course and informs them of the topics of the assignments from the first day of the semester course.

4. Assignment topics are posted on the corresponding course page on the Moodle online learning platform, before the start of the semester course. The topics should be clear and with an estimated duration of preparation that will allow the completion of the work within the time period of the semester, without being an inhibiting factor for the students to deal with their other obligations during the semester.

5. The professor has the responsibility of supervising the work, providing clarifications and monitoring the course of its writing within the specific time period that has been set.

6. The professor ensures the observance of scientific ethics, regarding plagiarism by identifying signs of plagiarism using the electronic system (Turnitin) available at the University of West Attica.

7. The professor evaluates the students' work based on the evaluation criteria listed below.

**4. Preparation of the student for the semester work**

It is important that the student follow the following steps before and during the writing of the assignment:

* To understand the topics discussed in the postgraduate course during the lectures.
* To carefully and critically study the literature and lecture traditions
* To be able to conduct bibliographic research with the aim of correctly formulating, documenting and synthesizing his arguments
* Be able to formulate his arguments in a convincing and effective manner.

**5. Basic characteristics of the semester** **assignment**

o A key feature of a master's thesis is that it has a main theme, i.e. an issue to explore. The main topic is formulated in the initial (introductory) section of the assignment, where reference is made to the main expected findings and the structure of the assignment. The topic under discussion must be specific and clearly stated. In a term assignment there is limited space for developing arguments. The more clearly formulated the main topic is, the easier it is to locate the relevant literature and cite the arguments.

o The assignment must be characterized by objectivity, i.e. it is based on valid sources that have been published (monographs, articles in scientific journals, valid sources from the internet). Arguments should always be supported by references to the literature.

o The postgraduate assignment is characterized by elements of originality. The student should demonstrate that he/she has studied and understood the main issues discussed in the relevant (Greek and international) literature. Also, it should demonstrate originality in the treatment of the topic under discussion, either by citing additional sources that offer a new perspective on the topic, or by formulating a personal position in the form of an argument, which is based on sources, Simple summary or synopsis of the literature, without some kind of original or critical appraisal, it should be avoided.

**6. Submission and way of examining the work**

1. The student submits the full text of his assignment to the professor on the date set by the professor, via the Moodle online platform. Upon submission, the assignment is automatically checked for the percentage of identity with the available literature with the Turnitin application. The maximum allowable percentage of identification, excluding literature, is 20%. If an oral presentation is also planned, the delivery date is set at least 1 week before the presentation date.

2. The presentation-examination of the assignments takes place in the classroom or online, at the end of the educational semester and after notification of the date which is announced at least 15 days in advance.

3. The presentation of the work lasts 10-15 minutes. The total duration of the presentation and discussion does not exceed 20-30'.

4. In the context of the examination, questions are asked to the student related to the assignment by the professor. The attending students also have the opportunity to ask questions.

**7. Evaluation of the semester course assignment**

The evaluation criteria of a assignment vary according to the specific research question and the scientific field. In general, however, the evaluation of the assignment is based on the completeness of its content, the degree of response of the student to the requirements of the subject and the successful presentation-examination. Criteria for the successful grading of the assignment are also the correct structure of the text units, the understanding and, to a certain extent, the critical evaluation of the findings of the previous research, the correct documentation of opinions and arguments and the correct organization, formatting and manner of expression content.

The grade of the work is determined by taking into account the student's response during the work preparation phase to the relevant obligations that had been determined, the quality of the text of the assignment, the quality of its presentation (if any) and the adequacy of the answers to the questions during the process of the presentation-examination (if any).

The exam is passed when the final grade is between five (5) and ten (10). In the event that the assignment is graded with a grade of less than five (5), the student submits the same (with the corrections indicated by the professor) or another assignment in the September examination period.

The following criteria are considered important for the successful grading of the assignment: A) Knowledge and understanding of the subject

* Knowledge and understanding of theories and findings which are analyzed in the lessons of the course as well as in the relevant literature.
* Emphasis on the main issues of the subject and synthesis of similar views from different authors.
* Summary of the positions of the bibliography with a description of the student rias.
* Correlation of the positions of the bibliography researches with the topic examined in the work.

B) Critical evaluation of literature findings.

* Description, summary and evaluation of literature findings in a critical manner.
* Use of comparison and contrast to present the positive elements but also the limitations of previous research.
* Formulation of the issues that remain unanswered.

C) Proper documentation and argumentation.

* Effective support of the reasoning developed. Simply making claims is not considered effective. All claims must be accompanied by documentation, i.e. analysis and interpretation of the findings presented.
* The use of valid and reliable methodology, in cases of research-type work where the collection and analysis of quantitative or qualitative data is needed.

D) Individual criteria for the successful grading of the assignment are the correct organization and structure of the units of the overall text of the assignment, the correct way of referencing as well as the correct formatting of the content as well as the way of writing and expression.

# Semester assignment evaluation criteria

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| **ID** | **Assignment evaluation criteria** | **Grade**  |
| 1. | Knowledge and understanding of the subject | 0-2 |
| 2. | Critical appraisal of literature findings | 0-2 |
| 3. | Sound documentation and argumentation | 0-3 |
| 4. | Organization and structure of work | 0-1,5 |
| 5. | Form and expression of the text | 0-1,5 |

**8. INSTRUCTIONS FOR WRITING A SEMESTER ASSIGNMENT**

Listed are general and specific instructions that students must follow regarding the composition, structure, content and formatting of the text of the semester assignment.

Structure of the Semester assignment

The typical structure of a semester assignment, despite the individual particularities possibly imposed by its subject, is suggested to be the following:

Cover page

The cover page includes the logo of the Department, the title of the postgraduate program and the Specialization, the topic of the thesis, the full name(s) of the student(s), the name of the professor and the place and date of the thesis.

Title

The final title of the work, which epigrammatically mentions the content of the work and immediately informs the reader, is formulated during the final phase of the work.

Structured abstract on a separate page (up to 300 words).

The abstract is a concise presentation of the main findings and conclusions of the assignment, together with a brief reference to the objectives and methodology followed. After the end of the abstract, the scientific "identity" of the assignment will be declared with 5 (five) key words. The total length of the abstract and keywords should not exceed one page.

Table of Contents

It must include the following along with the page numbers where they appear:

o Chapter titles (numbered 1, 2, etc.)

o Subtitles within chapters (numbered 1.1, 1.2, etc.)

o Subtitles (numbered 1.1.2.1 etc.)

o Appendices numbered A, B, C and with corresponding titles: "Guidelines", "Tables",

"algorithms", etc.

o List of tables

o Catalog of images-photos

o List of charts

Introduction

The introduction should include the following:

* Brief description and delimitation of the object. Reference to the importance of the subject and to the scientific interest from the point of view of public health. Brief reference to the relevant research directions and the research gaps identified in the international literature.
* Delimitation of the work: The basic research objective and the methodological approach adopted.
* The individual objectives and the expected scientific contribution of the work.
* The structure of the work

The introduction gives the reader a clear picture of the topic of the assignment, without, however, formulating arguments and positions. In the introduction, the main topic of the assignment is formulated (e.g., The present assignment...), the position/opinion of the student on the subject (In this assignment an attempt is made to demonstrate that...), the structure of the assignment (Initially what is meant by epidemiologic research will be considered…, then it will be…, and finally it will be presented…), an explanation of the methodology followed (This research uses the theory of … to …) and a description of a brief report on the findings (The main finding of this work...).

Aim and objectives of the work

In this section, the aim and individual objectives of the work are briefly and clearly stated.

Material and Method

• Key elements for the methodology used during the literature search are listed. This section may include the following:

• Literature databases searched

• Keywords used

• Articles inclusion criteria (date of publication, language(s) of publication, characteristics of the sample under study, etc.)

• Criteria for excluding articles (date of publication, language(s) of publication, characteristics of the sample under study, etc.)

Main text

The main text of the thesis is divided into chapters, which should include the following elements:

Detailed description of the subject of the work, the development of the subject and the literature review. This section is divided into sub-sections and individual paragraphs, so as to facilitate focus on the more specific aspects of the topic explored in the assignment. Key scientific questions and answers provided by previous published work are highlighted.

In general, the main part presents:

a) the theoretical background/framework of the topic, which includes a brief literature review of the topic under consideration, and

b) the rationale and main points of the student's arguments.

Equal emphasis is given to all the arguments and sub-topics of the assignment so as to ensure the harmonious development of the paragraphs/sections. Paragraphs/sections are linked together by common reference to the main topic, and each paragraph or sentence is linked to the next by words or phrases that show the parts of the text's organization (also, then will ... therefore).

More specifically:

• Historical review (other related research – works – records – efforts – data mentioned in the literature).

• Newer information or knowledge has emerged, etc

and are imported for examination - study.

• Theoretical background (if any) in which the theoretical support of the subject is described. Possible use of flowcharts to describe processes etc.

• Empirical data or practices, if available.

• Analysis of the topic. Break it down into structural units.

Discussion

Commenting and synthesizing the results as a whole. What do they mean; How are they interpreted? What do they matter? Why are they important? What do other studies specifically support in comparison to the results of this study? There is some theory that supports these results (even if it does not apply to the sample of these results). Confrontation with the goals set.

Limitations of the study: The methodological or possibly specific reasons why the results cannot be generalized to every population, etc.

Conclusions

Overall generalized conclusions of the study. Care must be taken to avoid repeating what has been mentioned in previous sections. The conclusions summarize all the findings. The epilogue reflects what is stated in the introduction/position of the assignment. No new arguments, positions or references to literature are presented. Reference may, however, be made to relevant issues not covered by this assignment and which would be of interest to the reader, always within the bounds of the given topic.

References

The aim of listing the bibliography is to enable the reader to have all the necessary information to locate the scientific publications. Therefore, absolute accuracy is required while writing it.

Worldwide, various bibliographic reference systems have been developed from time to time, which differ in the way in which bibliographic information is structured and presented.

All systems provide the same information but each has its own unique requirements. This is why only one system should be used when writing your assignment.

In the academic community and at the European level, the most widespread forms of bibliographic references are: the Harvard system, the Vancouver or Numeric system and the APA system. Depending on the type of work and in consultation with the Supervising Professor, the student will be able to choose which system to use.

Harvard System: Known as the "Harvard" method or the alphabetical bibliography method. In-text references are written in the format (Johnson et al 2011) (https://guides.library.uq.edu.au/referencing/uqharvard/).

Vancouver or Numeric system: It is the numerical method of bibliography. References in the text are written in Arabic numerals, in ascending order, in superscript form or in parentheses or brackets. In the bibliography they are listed in numerical order as they are mentioned in the text (1, 2, 3, …) (https://guides.library.uq.edu.au/referencing/vancouver).

APA (American Psychological Association) system. It is mainly used in the social sciences. References within the text are written in the format (Eriksson et al, 2009). They are listed in alphabetical order in the bibliography (https://guides.library.uq.edu.au/referencing/apa6/).

It is RECOMMENDED to use reference management software such as Zotero, Mendeley, ProQuest of the Health Research Premium Collection database (found on the Department of Public Health Policy website), etc., to cite the bibliographic reference within the text and the final list of literature, because it minimizes the possibility of error.

Examples of Reference list

The literature should include all sources cited in the text. The presentation of the bibliography is proposed to be as follows:

Journals: Le, T. T., Andreadakis, Z., Kumar, A., Román, R. G., Tollefsen, S., Saville, M., & Mayhew, S. (2020). The COVID-19 vaccine development landscape. Nat Rev Drug Discov, 19(5), 305-306.

Books and monographs: Diggle, P. J., & Giorgi, E. (2019). Model-based geostatistics for global public health: methods and applications. Chapman and Hall/CRC.

Conference Proceedings: Bock, H., & Plitt, K.-J. (2021). Prevention of STIs: Recommendations based on best practice and evidence of effectiveness. Proceedings of the 9th World Health Organization Conference. Budapest: Pergamon Press, 274-279.

Multi-author text: Deuflhard, P., & Nowak, U. (2019). Planning a public health program, or planning a strategy to meet targets. In P. Deuflhard, & B. Enquist (Eds.). Key Topics in Public Health. Basel: Birkhäuser.

Appendices

Appendices include data tables or specialized texts (eg questionnaires, templates, guidelines) that are used in the work, but are not inserted into the main text in order to preserve its coherence. The appendices are numbered with Mr capital Greek letters A, B, C, etc.

2. Guidelines for Formatting the text of the work

Each copy of the term assignment must be bound using the cover and first page of the template.

Text format

The work is written on A4 size assignment, and the text covers a space of dimensions such that it is 3 cm from the left border and 3 cm from the right border of the page. Also the distances from the top and bottom border of the page are 2.5 cm.

The text should have the following format:

• The text should be written in 10pt font with single spacing and 3pt paragraph spacing.

• The first paragraph of each section should not have a first line indent while the following ones should have a first line indent.

• Page margins should be 3 cm on all four sides (top, bottom, left, right).

• All titles should be in Arial Black font and not Bold. Heading 1 should be 12pt font size, heading 2 should be 11pt, heading 3 should be 10pt. Do not use more titles.

• There should be no blank lines before or after titles and each title level should be spaced 18pt before and 6pt after.

• Captions in figures and tables should be left aligned and written in Arial bold font size 9pt.

Page numbering

Introductory pages are numbered in small Roman letters (i, ii, iii, iv, etc). The pages of the main text are numbered in Arabic script i.e. 1, 2, 3, 4 ...)

Tables

Tables should be placed as close as possible to the text that refers to them and should be left-aligned. They are numbered appropriately and their title is placed above the table as shown in the example below. Below the table is the source of origin.

Figures and pictures

Diagrams and figures should be placed as close as possible to the text they refer to, centered on the page, and numbered appropriately. The chart title is placed below the chart and numbered appropriately. Below each diagram or figure the source is indicated.

3. Plagiarism

Plagiarism is "the use of the idea and text of another scientist/author without clear acknowledgment of the source of the information".

Plagiarism while writing any scientific assignment and of course while writing the term assignment is academically, morally and legally reprehensible practice. Therefore, any use of the same or directly translated text should be marked by the author of the work in an appropriate way (e.g. "quotes and italics"), should only concern a small number of words within the permitted limits of the Law and accompanied by a bibliographic reference of the source.

Based on the above, in recognition of the importance of the integrity of the work and with the aim of ensuring its quality and scientific ethics, the final text of the work is determined to be checked for signs of plagiarism using the electronic system available at the University of Western Attica for that reason. If, from the control of the work, the specific phenomenon is identified, then the latter is revised following the instruction of the professor. The opinions and conclusions contained in the thesis are solely those of the student and do not represent the official positions of the University of Piraeus.

4. Practical Advice

• In case of group work, it is recommended to make a fair distribution of roles among the group members from the beginning.

• In the case of an oral presentation, it is recommended that all members of the group participate.

• The assignment to be typed in a word processing program (eg Word).

• Keep more than one copy of it in electronic form (backup) in the unfortunate event of destruction or loss of the file.

• Discuss and agree from the outset with the supervisor whether you can send the contents and/or any part of your work to them for checking and/or guidance or the whole text together at the end.

• Discuss with the supervisor which bibliography system to use.

• The translation of the text should be done with great care, in order to preserve the semantic performance of the original text. Do not use automatic translators.

• Pay special attention to the correct translation of special terminology. If in doubt, ask the supervisor of the work. If there is no testable translation of the term in Greek, quote the original term in English in parentheses after the Greek translation.

• Don't just rely on the computer's automatic spell check.

• Pay attention to the syntax. The correct written word is not a simple transfer of the spoken word to assignment

• The language of the assignment must be concise, clear and understandable. Avoid using absolutes (eg proved).

• Prefer to use the passive rather than the active voice.

• Do not write long and complex sentences (eg a paragraph consists of one sentence) because the risk of misunderstanding increases.

• Use punctuation carefully to convey the correct meaning.

• Never put a period before the reference parenthesis.

• Use only literature that is relevant to your work.

• Carefully read and understand the publication you are citing and including in your bibliography

• Understand and judge scientific publications.