

Master of Public Health Critical Review Handbook 2025/26

Description

Critical Review Handbook Masters in Public Health

Academic Year 2025/26

This handbook is for those of you embarking on the 30 credit Critical Review of the MPH. Use this handbook in conjunction with the Programme Handbook, [SHS Student Handbook](#) and Faculty/University [regulations](#).

Important Contacts

Course unit lead

Dr Andy Jones

andrew.jones@manchester.ac.uk

Programme Director

Dr Paula Whittaker

mph.director@manchester.ac.uk

Student Support Contact

shs.assessment@manchester.ac.uk

For help with:

- Examination queries
- Assessment queries
- Assessment submissions
- Resit/reassessment queries

shs.attendance@manchester.ac.uk

- Attendance Monitoring

shs.dc@manchester.ac.uk

- Disability Support

shs.mitcircs@manchester.ac.uk

- Mitigating Circumstances

shs.placements@manchester.ac.uk

- All Placement queries

shs.programmes@manchester.ac.uk

- Registration advice and guidance
- Course unit selection and enrolment
- Timetable queries
- Programme content

shs.wellbeing@manchester.ac.uk

- Wellbeing student support, appointments and signposting

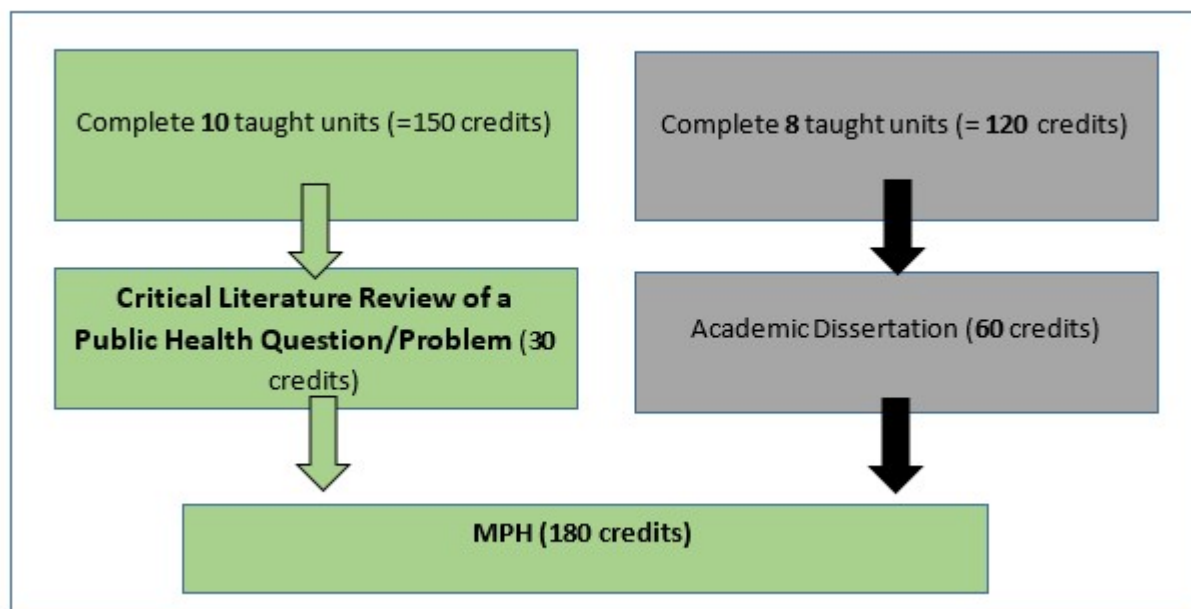
shs.hub@manchester.ac.uk

- Student support hub – general queries and advice not covered by the above teams

Introduction

Students registered on the MPH programme (not the MRes) have the option of completing a 30-credit Critical Literature Review as an alternative to the 60-credit dissertation, in addition to taking two additional 15 credit units. This requires students to take ten taught units plus the 30-credit Critical Literature Review (producing the equivalent of 60-credits). The differences in the pathway for this approach, compared with a dissertation are shown in the diagram below.

(N.B. This option does not apply to MRes students)



What is the Critical Literature Review (CLR)

In its simplest form, the CLR is an extended critical essay focusing on a public health research question or problem. The CLR will need to incorporate:-

1. A clear research question/problem within which some of the sub-questions might include, for example:
 - a. What is the current knowledge gap?
 - b. What needs to be found out to fully address the question/problem ?
2. A clear structure/method for identifying the evidence. This is not to be confused with a more formal and detailed Systematic Review (such as a Cochrane style review)
3. Detailed critique and summary of the evidence as a whole, in relation to the original question/problem and what this means in relation to the context/setting
4. Discussion/reflection on the strengths and weaknesses of the evidence that has been identified to answer the initial question. This then needs to be considered in terms of the strength of the evidence:
 - a. How much confidence can be placed on these findings?
 - b. What do they mean? How might it differ in different settings/contexts?
5. What are the implications of what was found / what ought to happen next

Some students may want to continue to expand and investigate a topic from one of the taught units and assessment. However, the CLR must extend this work, and not simply be the same material presented in a different format. Students are encouraged to reference the assignment and provide a brief description (just several sentences) to explain how the CLR extends the original assignment.

Intended learning outcomes

Category of outcome	Students should be able to:
A. Knowledge and understanding	A1 Describe a specific public health issue and establish a coherent research-related question that forms the foundation of the critical literature review B1 Use appropriate methodology to obtain the information necessary to address the research question
B. Intellectual skills	B2 Use appropriate methodology to synthesise the information collected C1 Construct a meaningful synthesis and critical interpretation of the results of information/evidence collected
C. Practical skills	C2 Explore the implications of the findings of the review
D. Transferable skills and personal qualities	D1 Demonstrate the ability to be a reflective and self-directed learner, to accomplish a substantial piece of academic work

Registering for the 30-credit critical literature review

MPH students will register their preferred option (that is for the dissertation or additional units and the critical literature review) at the start of their final academic year. This process will be similar to that for selecting individual course units. Note that the fees for the critical literature review plus the two additional units, are the same as that for the option of the MPH dissertation.

Exemptions to the UoM Degree regulations for students taking 30 Credit CLR

This programme will treat 30 credit CLR as 'Research' units and all other 150 credits as 'Taught'.

Up to 75 credits are eligible for referral.

Compensation limited to 40 credits as per normal regulations.

AP(E)L up to 60 credits for Masters- The CLR is not eligible for AP(E)L

Standard Dissertation regulations are applied to 30 credit CLR : Students will only be permitted to resit if first mark is above 30%. The Exam Board can grant up to 3 months to re-submit.

Process flow chart

We recommend that all students consider the workload implications of the course work for a taught course unit, and their critical literature review. In the majority of cases, part time students are recommended to complete their 10 course units followed by the critical literature review. However, each student will have different circumstances and their own time management plans to consider. Students also need to take in to consideration the workload implications for selecting a course unit which runs in Semester 3 as this is a time when many people complete this final part of the programme.



Do not leave it too late

Once a student has formally enrolled on the Critical Literature Review, they **have to submit this by the September at the end of the academic year**. In other words, students need to plan carefully for this work, alongside the additional units they must complete.

Submitting your idea

Students need to complete a short title form to indicate the title and a very brief outline of what they will be focusing on. There are **five fixed dates** when students can submit the title form. The title forms will not be processed between these dates. These dates reflect the academic timetable, and help account for assessment times and holidays. However, make sure you plan as much time as possible for working on your actual critical literature review. The earlier you start in the academic year, the better.

Title Form submission dates

The Canvas area for the Dissertation and CLR will include a calendar with the dates/deadlines for each of the opportunities you have to submit your title form (**do not** confuse this with the submission date for the completed piece of work which is always a date in the first week in September).

Academic supervision

Students will be allocated an academic supervisor soon after registering for the CLR. **Students are responsible** for making contact with, and introducing themselves to, their allocated supervisor.

Role of the supervisor

The role of the supervisor is to support a student's academic development. Remember the project is the work of the student and not that of the supervisor. Students will have different needs for support and guidance. Some of the areas a supervisor might help with include:

- Helping students to develop a meaningful time plan for the months ahead
- Supporting the development of the structure of the critical literature review in terms of sections and themes that it includes
- Giving constructive feedback on sections of written work/preliminary drafts. This includes feedback on the general style of writing, appropriate use of references, and the depth of critique/appraisal that the work contains and relevance to the original aims and objectives of the work.

The Supervisor will not provide any comments/feedback on the additional course units that the student is undertaking

In addition:

- Supervisors aim to give feedback to students within 2 weeks of submitting drafts. As a result, it is important that students plan their time and allow for the return time for feedback on their work
- Please do not expect supervisors to be able to give feedback very close to the submission date. Also, this would not provide enough time for students to respond to their comments
- Supervisors are expected to provide 8 – 10 hours of support for the CLR. This includes reviewing student drafts and individual meetings.

N.B Supervisors are asked to let students know if they will be taking annual leave in August/early September. This will help students plan their work and when supervisory support can be provided. It is a good idea for students to clarify this with their supervisor.

Maximising supervision

Students are encouraged to maximise the opportunities for support from their academic supervisor. A few suggestions to facilitate this include:-

- Send supervisors an email as a way of introduction, a time plan, and any immediate concerns/support needs
- Identify specific queries or questions as a way of preparing for a discussion/meeting with the supervisor
- Have a good awareness of the marking template used to assess the final written work (see end of document). Knowing the assessment criteria helps guide a student's work and supervisory discussion
- Make the supervisor aware of any difficulties affecting the ability to study. Students do not need to specify the detail, but enough to help the supervisor signpost the student to other sources of support.
- It is helpful for any students with issues impacting on their studies, to let their supervisors know.

Raise any issues associated with supervision by contacting Roger.Harrison@Manchester.ac.uk or Andrew.Jones@Manchester.ac.uk

Additional support

All students are encouraged to utilise the [My Learning Essentials](#) packages provided through the online UoM library. There are also helpful resources provided in the [MPH Programme Community](#) relevant to both the dissertation and the Critical Literature Review.

Word count

The upper word limit for the critical literature review is 5000 (penalties apply at 10% over the maximum). The same marking penalties as for a standard course unit assessment will apply.

Scientific Abstract

The submitted work needs to include a scientific abstract. The abstract is to be a maximum of 300 words. This **is not included** in the main word count of 5000 for the rest of the submitted work.

Using Appendices

Information in the appendices is not marked by the examiner and is not included in the word count. Therefore, whatever you include in the appendices must not form a considerable component of the work to be marked.

Referencing

The use of referencing will be assessed by the examiners. On this programme, the preferred referencing style is Harvard. However, Vancouver is acceptable. Students must correctly reference their work. Poor approaches to referencing can suggest academic malpractice. Guidance can be found on academic writing and referencing in the Study Skills course within the MPH Programme Community space in Canvas and from the University My Learning Essentials.

It is essential that students develop correct referencing within their work. There are a number of free online and cloud-based programmes to facilitate this process (including Endnote and Mendeley). Please ensure that the final reference list is produced correctly, especially if you are using an automated process, through Endnote/Mendeley for example.

The use of Artificial Intelligence (AI)

We urge students to be cautious when using a chatbot or AI tool within their learning. Chatbots and AI tools can be useful, but there are a number of risks associated with using them. Please ensure that you are aware of what is permissible use of AI for each assignment. You can utilise AI to generate ideas, key themes, and plan your assessment but not to write your assessment. Do not use AI to generate

text, or partial text for use in your assessment unless the assignment brief explicitly states that this is permitted, otherwise use will be deemed academic malpractice. This is academic malpractice because the words and ideas generated are not your own and not an accurate reflection of your learning. Further to this, the words and ideas generated by the chatbot or AI tool may make use of other, human authors' ideas without referencing them, which is plagiarism. Where a chatbot or other form of AI has been used, make sure you acknowledge that use. Information on how to cite can be found here: <https://manchester-uk.libanswers.com/teaching-and-learning/faq/264824> Some units, for example those on AI and technology, permit the use of AI. However, they require you to sign a code of conduct which must be adhered to. Make sure you understand and follow these codes. If you are unclear on what is permissible, speak to the unit lead.

Submitting your completed work

Students need to submit one electronic copy of their assignment using Canvas. There is a specific submission section on the main left hand menu, one for dissertations and one for the critical literature review.

- Students need to submit work as .PDF or .DOC file.
- Ensure that the saved document has the correct formatting and layout, including the generated reference list. If working on a Mac computer, please save the document to a Word or .PDF format
- Use the same format for saving and submitting the file, as for the assignments (i.e. unit code followed by your student number)
- The submission box in Canvas will become open nearer the final submission date.

Release of marks

Marks are usually released around mid-November and written feedback will be available in Canvas. Note that the work must be submitted within the same academic year that the student registered for this specific unit.

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Marking framework

Students work will be marked using the same process as for a taught unit assignment.

ASSIGNMENT GUIDANCE ON CONTENT AND PRESENTATION

- All assignments should be submitted as word documents or in a rich text format.
- Submit word-processed work as 1.5 spacing and number all pages.
- **All students work must have an accurate word count stated at the top left hand corner of their written assignment.** Please note that you may lose marks if you do not do this, as per word count below.
- Include your **student number** in the header of your document as a means of administrative identification. **DO NOT WRITE YOUR NAME ANYWHERE IN THE DOCUMENT.**
- On Canvas, name the submission title assignment file / document in the following format: **yourStudentNumber_courseCode**
- References should be consistently laid out in either Vancouver or Harvard format.
- Ensure you are familiar with the Faculty PGT Assessment Criteria, which can be found in the [student handbook](#)

Word Count

Students must adhere to the specified maximum word limit stated.

In accordance with the University [Policy on Marking](#):

Each written assignment has a word limit which you must state at the top of your first page. It is acceptable, without penalty, for you to submit an assignment within a range that is plus 10% of this limit. The assignment will then be marked but 1% will be deducted from this mark for every 100 words over the maximum word limit plus 10%.

E.g. If your maximum word limit is 5,000 words, and you submit your assignment with 5,501 words, you will be penalized 1% of your final mark.

In accordance with accepted academic practice, when submitting any written assignment for summative assessment, the notion of a word count includes the following without exception:

- All titles or headings that form part of the actual text. This does not include the cover sheet/front page or reference list.
- All words that form the actual essay.
- All words forming the titles for figures, tables and boxes, are included but this does not include boxes or tables or figures themselves.
- All in-text (that is bracketed) references.
- All directly quoted material.

Suspected Academic Malpractice

The University of Manchester takes academic malpractice seriously e.g. plagiarism, self-plagiarism, contract cheating, use of artificial intelligence. All assessed student work on the MPH/MRes is electronically screened for plagiarism (including self-plagiarism) and collusion. Any cases where this is suspected will be referred for investigation at Faculty level. Please see the link below:

<http://www.regulations.manchester.ac.uk/guidance-to-students-on-plagiarism-and-other-forms-of-academic-malpractice/>

However, this screening also identifies students who are not referencing their work as carefully or as comprehensively as they should. The most common problem is the incorrect referencing of “direct quotes”. Please go to the Study Skills Resource in Canvas and ensure that you understand how to reference direct quotes, or you may find yourselves accused of plagiarism in the future. **All students are encouraged to utilise these resources.**

Submission

All assignments are due at 1.00pm UK time on the day of submission. If you have any technical issues with submitting your assignment you should contact the [eLearning team](#).

Work submitted after the deadline without prior approval will be subject to a late penalty in accordance with the University [Policy on Submission of Work for Summative Assessment on Taught Programmes](#). The penalty applied is 10% of available marks deducted per day/24 hours (from the time of the original or extended deadline), until the assignment is submitted or no marks remain.

Penalties for late submission relate to 24 hours/calendar days, so include weekends and weekdays, as well as bank holidays and University closure days.

The mark awarded for the piece of work will be reduced by:

- 10% of the available marks deducted if up to 24 hours (1 day) late
- 20% of the available marks deducted if up to 48 hours (2 days) late
- 30% of the available marks deducted if up to 72 hours (3 days) late
- 40% of the available marks deducted if up to 96 hours (4 days) late
- 50% of the available marks deducted if up to 120 hours (5 days) late
- 60% of the available marks deducted if up to 144 hours (6 days) late
- 70% of the available marks deducted if up to 168 hours (7 days) late
- 80% of the available marks deducted if up to 192 hours (8 days) late
- 90% of the available marks deducted if up to 216 hours (9 days) late
- 100% of the available marks deducted if up to 240 hours (10 days) late

For work submitted more than 10 days late, it is regarded as a non-submission and will not be marked. In this case a mark of zero will be awarded and normal resit regulations will apply. The sliding scale will only be applied to first-sit submissions. For all referred (resit) assessment, any late submission will automatically receive a mark of zero.

The unit tutor may take the decision to provide you with feedback about your performance, but this will be considered formative feedback only.

FEEDBACK

All students will receive feedback for their assignment through SpeedGrader in Canvas.