

# **Guidelines for MPH Culminating Projects Academic Year 2009-2010**

**OSU College of Public Health  
Division of Environmental Health Sciences**

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## Introduction

The culminating experience is intended to provide the opportunity for students to address a public health question or issue of their interest that draws from their academic experience. It provides students with the opportunity to apply, integrate, and synthesize knowledge and experience obtained during their academic course of study to a question or problem of public health relevance. Ideally, the culminating project idea or opportunity will evolve from the student's practice placement experience.

The culminating project (CP) is to address an environmental health problem or issue and can take the form of 1) an applied research project; 2) a grant proposal; or 3) a critical review. Other forms are possible with the approval of your advisor. The applied research project will entail the collection or acquisition of data for the purpose of answering an environmental health question. Ideally, this applied research will be suitable for submission as a peer-reviewed journal publication. The grant proposal addresses a practical public health issue and can take the form required by the targeted funding agency, but must include a clear statement of the problem and methods for addressing the problem. The critical review will provide an in-depth analysis of a problem or issue relying on published literature. Projects that involve human subjects must adhere to policies and procedures of the University's Institutional Review Board (IRB) (<http://orrp.osu.edu/irb/>).

The culminating project is completed at the end of the program so that students have the advantage of drawing on and synthesizing their academic experience. However, it is never too early to start thinking about potential projects. The critical steps in the process of a successful culminating project include the following.

- 1. Develop an Idea.** Be thinking about possible projects and appropriate faculty to work with to complete your culminating project. Your academic advisor should be a primary resource for this purpose but you may also rely on other faculty within the Division, College, or University. College and Division seminars are also useful in generating possible ideas for culminating projects. To get a sense for what a culminating project might look like, you may want to review projects from previous years. The Division Coordinator maintains a file of all culminating projects. Appendix A includes a partial list of past culminating projects. The idea stage for preparing your culminating project should occur within the first three quarters of your MPH academic program.
- 2. Choose Your CP Advisor.** This can be your academic advisor but does not have to be. It does need to be an EHS faculty member. Consult with your advisor and identify a faculty member from within the Division who has a research interest aligned with your CP interests.
- 3. Proposal Approval.** Complete and have your academic advisor approve the "Culminating Project Proposal Approval Form." With this form, include an outline of your proposal that includes a draft title, the environmental health question that will be addressed, and the methods that will be used for addressing the question. Include some discussion of challenges you may expect and how you will address those challenges.
- 4. Form Your Culminating Project Committee.** Consult with your advisor to identify a second faculty member from within the Division who will serve as the second reader you're your CP. If your CP advisor is not your academic advisor, then your academic advisor must be your second reader, i.e. your academic advisor must be a member of your CP committee. The culminating project advisor and the second reader constitute your Culminating Project Committee.
- 5. How Does Your Practicum Relate to the CP?** The relationship between your CP and practicum may vary from extensive to none. The purposes of these two MPH experiences differ. The practicum is largely externally directed and is intended to provide real-world environmental health experience with government, private industry, or NGO. In contrast, the CP is self-directed and defined (with faculty advice). However, there can be synergy between the practicum and CP in that ideas and opportunities for the CP can arise from the

Practicum. Data from the practicum can be used to develop the CP. Synergy between the Practicum and CP can enhance both experiences.

6. **Register for CP Credit.** During the time that you are preparing your CP, you are to register for three to six hours of PUBH-EHS 793.
7. **CP Report Requirements.** Your CP will be evaluated based on your written report and oral presentation. The written report requirements include 25 pages, double spaced, with at least 25 references (Table 1). The oral presentation occurs in two parts. The first part is a public seminar that is 30-40 min in duration and includes 10 min for Q&A. This oral presentation is typically scheduled as a part of the Division's weekly seminar series. Students are to work with their CP and academic advisor in developing their presentations. It is the student's responsibility to schedule the seminar at a time when both the CP advisor and 2<sup>nd</sup> reader are available to attend. Both the advisor and second reader must attend the public seminar. The second part of the oral presentation typically follows the public seminar and includes the student, CP advisor, and 2<sup>nd</sup> reader. Faculty will "discuss" the project with the student to evaluate the student's mastery of the project and the underlying environmental health principles and concepts. This portion of the exam typically lasts from 30 to 60 minutes. The culminating project is graded S/U.
8. **Timeline Considerations.** It is the student's responsibility to plan their efforts so that faculty have adequate time to review their CP draft submissions well before the deadline for signing-off on the Master's Examination form. Students should plan to submit two complete drafts of their report to their CP advisor before their final draft is submitted to both their CP advisor and 2<sup>nd</sup> reader. Students should allow a minimum of one week for Faculty to review and comment on draft reports. See additional timeline considerations in the checklist below.

Table 1. Written Report Requirements.

1. 25 pages in length not including tables, figures or appendices;
2. Include at least 25 [see reference numbers under #7 above.] references (2/3 should be primary literature)
3. Single-side printed on white paper (8.5 x 11 inches) and bound or stapled;
4. Double-spaced with margins of at least one inch on each side.
5. 12 point font; however tables and footnotes may be in 10 point font if necessary;
6. Page numbers should be inserted (center bottom) on each page except the Title Page and the Table of Contents.
7. All Figures and Tables must be numbered and be accompanied by descriptions that allow the reader to understand their content without referring to the CP text, and all appendices must be labeled alphabetically.
8. The Title Page should include the title of the project, the student's name and degrees, the committee members' names, The Ohio State University, the month and year of the final project.
9. The report should include the following sections:
  - A) Title Page
  - B) Table of contents
  - C) Abstract or an executive summary
  - D) Introduction and Background
  - F) Methods
  - G) Results
  - H) Discussion
  - I) References
  - J) Appendices
10. References should follow the American Psychological Association format ([http://webster.comnet.edu/apa/apa\\_index.htm](http://webster.comnet.edu/apa/apa_index.htm)).
11. A hard and electronic copy of each completed report are to be provided to your advisor and 2<sup>nd</sup> reader, the Division Coordinator, and the Office of Academic Programs.

## TIMELINE CHECKLIST

When	Date to be completed	Check when complete	What you must do
First three quarters		[ ]	Be thinking about culminating project ideas and discussing with faculty.
		[ ]	Provide your advisor with an outline of your culminating project that includes the draft title and the environmental health question that will be addressed and the methods for addressing the question.
		[ ]	Work with your advisor to identify your CP advisor.
Practicum		[ ]	Your Practicum may provide an opportunity for your Culminating Project. For example, an environmental health question may emerge from your practicum experience or through your practicum you may be provided the opportunity to acquire or collect data suitable for addressing an applied research question. Efficiency can be gained through synergism between your Practicum and Culminating Project.
Quarter before you intend to graduate		[ ]	Meet with CP advisor and agree upon timeline to meet the requirements on this checklist.
		[ ]	Register for PUB HLTH-EHS 793 during the quarter in which graduation is expected. The call number will be your CP advisor's individual number.
First week of quarter		[ ]	Complete "Application to Graduate" form with appropriate signatures and submit to GPSO.
Week 1-6		[ ]	Update CP Committee members on your progress.
		[ ]	Present your CP as a part of the EHS Division Seminar series with your advisor and 2 <sup>nd</sup> reader present.
		[ ]	Submit drafts of your CP report to your CP advisor allowing review and comment on two revisions before submission of final.
Two weeks prior to review mtg.		[ ]	Provide both committee members with a hard copy of the final draft of the project.
		[ ]	Make sure your CP advisor has received your Master's Examination form from the GPSO.
One week before Graduate School deadline		[ ]	Meet with your advisor and 2 <sup>nd</sup> reader for a discussion of the CP
Two days before Graduate School deadline		[ ]	Submit hard copy and electronic copy of final, revised version of CP paper.
		[ ]	Submit signed Master's Examination form to GPSO.

Abbreviations: CP=culminating project GPSO = Graduate and Professional Studies Office (contact: Judy Dawson, dawson.6@osu.edu, 293-6787)

