# Guidelines For MPH Culminating Project
# Academic Year 2008-2009

## OSU College of Public Health
### Division of Health Behavior and Health Promotion

Revised June 2008

# GENERAL GUIDELINES

The culminating project for the Division of Health Behavior and Health Promotion is intended to provide students with the opportunity to integrate and synthesize knowledge and experience obtained during their academic course of study. For ideas of appropriate topics, review previous culminating projects in the HBHP Division Office (Room 450, Cunz Hall) and speak with your advisor. The culminating project is completed at the end of degree requirements, and although every project will be different, there are some general guidelines that are relevant to every project.

1. Students must choose a culminating project advisor. The culminating project advisor does not have to be your academic advisor, but needs to be a faculty member in the Division of Health Behavior and Health Promotion.

2. Students must also choose another faculty member with a primary appointment in the College of Public Health (preferably a member of the Division of Health Behavior and Health Promotion) as a "second reader." If your culminating project advisor is not your academic advisor, then you must select your academic advisor as your second reader. The culminating project advisor and the second reader constitute your Culminating Project Committee. You may add additional readers to your Committee, although this is rare.

3. The topic and format of each culminating project must be approved by your culminating project advisor. Most culminating projects will fit approximately into one of the following areas: (A) Community assessment; (B) Program planning and implementation; or (C) Program evaluation. The criteria for each of these options appear on pages 7-12. Other topics and format are possible with the approval of your advisor.

4. Before beginning work on your culminating project, write a one or two page proposal which describes your topic; what you will do for the project; and which of the three project types (above) best describes your project. Have your project advisor and second reader sign and date the proposal, and give each of them a copy to keep. Keep one copy for your own records. This proposal should ordinarily be completed at least two quarters before you intend to graduate, to allow time for a thorough and thoughtful project to be carried out.

   If you subsequently decide to change your project, project advisor, or second reader, write a new proposal as above, and inform in writing, any project advisor or reader who will not be involved in the revised project.

5. Students may choose the Master's Thesis option for their culminating project (refer to page 3). Most students choose the culminating project option, but if you intend to pursue a doctorate or a research career you should strongly consider completing a thesis option.

6. The culminating project should be equal to three to six hours of course work, although most students choose four credit hours. The culminating project is graded S/U.

7. Students are required to present their project at a meeting with their Culminating Project Committee members and interested others. The project presentation generally lasts 20-30 minutes and is followed by a closed meeting of the student with the Culminating Project committee.

# HUMAN SUBJECTS REQUIREMENTS AND STUDENT RESEARCH

Student research **that collects data from human subjects** needs to be approved by the OSU IRB (Institutional Review Board). This includes culminating projects, theses and doctoral dissertations. In a few cases, practice placements might also need approval, but this would be the rare case of a practice placement that is collecting research-type data and has not already been reviewed.

When IRB approval is necessary, such approval must be obtained before any data collection begins. Allow 6 weeks or more from submission to approval. The form for requesting approval is available on the OSU ORRP website, http://www.orrp.osu.edu/irb/ under "forms." Your project advisor should be able to guide you in completing the form. You might also want to look at the IRB's FAQ page, http://orrp.osu.edu/irb/faqs/.

Students who are conducting projects needing IRB approval must also complete an on-line training in human subject's protection. This training can be accessed at www.citiprogram.org/. Ordinarily, HBHP students will take the training in Social and Behavioral Research.

When do projects need IRB approval?
Any project which

a) Is collecting data from human beings, which the IRB defines as "living individual(s) about whom an investigator (whether professional or student) conducting research obtains (1) data through intervention or interaction with the individual or (2) identifiable private information."

b) is defined as research, "a systematic investigation including research development, testing and evaluation, designed to develop or contribute to generalizable knowledge." The Ohio State web site goes on to say "For example, if the intent of the activity is to share knowledge by publishing or presenting the results, the activity should usually be considered research." The OSU web site specifically points out that data collected by administering surveys, interviewing, or observing individuals generally involves human subjects.

Some low-risk research (e.g., non-sensitive surveys) may qualify for "exemption" from full committee review; however, the determination that the research is exempt needs to be made by IRB staff. A specific form for requesting exemption is available on the OSU ORRP website, http://www.orrp.osu.edu/irb/, under "forms."

Students who are using data collected by faculty members as part of their (the faculty member's) research also need to submit a request to the IRB, using the exempt status form.

One aspect of student research which should be noted is that for purposes of the IRB application, the student's advisor must be listed on the form as the "Principal Investigator", i.e., the person responsible for the research. The student is a "co-investigator". Both the student and the advisor must have completed the on-line human subjects training. The IRB will not review an application unless everyone listed as principal or co-investigator has had the on-line training.

If you have additional questions or need to discuss specific issues concerning research you are undertaking, contact the IRB office at 688-8457.

## THESIS OPTION

*(This page refers only to students who choose to complete a Masters Thesis option for the culminating project.)*

Students choosing the thesis option are usually planning to pursue a career in research and/or academia. Students will use skills in research design and data analysis. Usually, completion of a thesis option will entail working with original data. Students are expected to analyze data specifically collected for the thesis option or analyze a previously existing data set. A thesis option typically is organized as follows:

| | |
|---|---|
| Chapter 1 | Introduction to the Problem |
| | Hypotheses or Problem Statement |
| Chapter 2 | Review of Literature |
| Chapter 3 | Methods |
| Chapter 4 | Results |
| Chapter 5 | Conclusions and Recommendations |

Topic choice and manuscript development must be completed under the supervision of an advisor. Students are required to complete a defense of their thesis option before their committee members and interested others. Students choosing a thesis option should plan to present their work at a national meeting and submit it for publication. The Graduate School has additional requirements for a Master's Thesis option and some different forms are required. These requirements can be found in the Graduate Student Handbook: http://www.gradsch.ohio-state.edu/Depo/PDF/Handbook/Handbook.pdf. The remainder of this document applies only to the culminating projects. Students considering a thesis option are encouraged to visit the CPH library and review the theses of others who have completed their graduate work in the CPH. If you think you are interested in completing a Master's Thesis option, notify your advisor at least three quarters before you anticipate graduating.

# TIMELINE REQUIREMENTS

Students and their culminating project advisor must agree upon a timeline for completion of their project. On the next page is a timeline checklist list for the requirements of the culminating project which can help guide you and your advisor through this process. In addition, your advisor may also ask that you meet other deadlines, such as submitting an outline or draft of your culminating project paper. Remember, ***you are responsible for meeting all of the deadlines***. The deadlines for each quarter are available at the Graduate School (http://www.gradsch.ohio-state.edu/Depo/PDF/Calendar/Grad_deadlines.pdf) and are also posted outside the College of Public Health's Office of Academic Programs Office (Room M-006 Starling-Loving Hall). The following requirements are especially important:

1. Once your culminating project advisor and second reader agree on your timeline, obtain an "Application to Graduate" form from the Office of Academic Programs, complete your personal information, obtain the signature of your culminating project advisor, and return the form to the Office of Academic Programs (Room M-006 Starling Loving Hall) for the appropriate signature. This form should be filed with the Graduate School during the first week of the quarter in which graduation is expected. Please note: the application is valid for that quarter only. Note that the final date for completing all requirements (including the project presentation) and delivering the Master's Examination Report form to the Graduate School is generally in the 9th week of the quarter. A specific calendar of dates is available on the Graduate School web site (www.gradsch.ohio-state.edu, click on "Graduation Calendar.")

2. As noted in the Timeline Checklist, which follows, it is expected that your advisor will be kept fully appraised of your progress and will see drafts of your project write-up as it develops. The project advisor may require multiple changes before the draft is ready to be presented. Your project advisor must see a <u>complete</u> draft of your project a minimum of one month before your expected review meeting date. Once the project advisor is satisfied with the draft, he/she should append to the draft a notice stating that "I agree that this project is ready to be presented." The second reader should receive a copy of that notice along with the draft project. You must provide both of your committee members with a correctly formatted (refer to page 6) hardcopy of your manuscript <u>at least two weeks prior to the review meeting date</u>.

3. Your presentation and review meeting must be scheduled in a timely fashion so that you have sufficient time to make the usual necessary changes after the meeting, and so that your committee members have time to approve your revisions by the due date.

4. Upon completion of the review meeting and any final revisions to your culminating project paper, your committee will sign your Master's Examination form. Take the signed copy to the Office of Academic Programs (M-006 Starling-Loving).

If you do not meet published graduation deadlines, but have completed all degree requirements by the last business day prior to the first day of classes for the following quarter, you may graduate the following quarter without registering or paying fees. Many HBHP faculty, however, are not available during break to schedule a review meeting or approve revisions to your culminating project paper. Therefore, failure to meet these requirements may require you to enroll for an additional quarter.

# TIMELINE CHECKLIST

| When | Date to be completed | Check when complete | What you must do |
|---|---|---|---|
| About two quarters before you intend to graduate | | [ ] | Recruit an HBHP faculty member to be your CP advisor. Meet with your CP advisor and agree on a timeline to meet the requirements on this checklist. Remember to allow time for IRB review if necessary.<br>Recruit a second reader for your project.<br>Prepare a one or two page project proposal and have both the CP advisor and second reader sign the proposal. |
| During the two or more quarters you are working on the project | | | Meet regularly with your project advisor to keep him/her fully informed of your progress; share drafts of materials (program materials, data collection materials, drafts of sections of the final project) as you complete them. |
| Quarter before you intend to graduate | | [ ] | Register for PUB HLTH-HBP 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 OAP. |
| Fifth week of quarter | | [ ]<br><br>[ ]<br><br>[ ] | Update CP Committee members on your progress.<br><br>Contact CP Committee members to arrange a time for the CP presentation and review meeting.<br><br>Contact the Division Coordinator to reserve a room and equipment for the presentation and review meeting. |
| One month prior to review meeting | | [ ] | Present complete project draft to the CP advisor; obtain advisor's approval that the draft is ready to be presented before preparing final copy for distribution to committee members. |
| Two weeks prior to review mtg. | | [ ]<br><br>[ ] | Provide both committee members with a hard copy of the final draft of the project.<br><br>Make sure your CP advisor has received your Master's Examination form from the OAP. |
| One week before Graduate School deadline | | [ ]<br><br>[ ] | Make presentation; followed by a review meeting with Committee members.<br><br>Provide committee members with a written summary of intended revisions to CP paper. |
| Two days before Graduate School deadline | | [ ]<br><br>[ ] | Submit hard copy and electronic copy of final, revised version of CP paper.<br><br>Submit signed Master's Examination form to OAP. |

Abbreviations: CP=culminating project OAP = Office of Academic Programs.

# MANUSCRIPT REQUIREMENTS

1. Although each culminating project will vary, most manuscripts will be at least 20-25 pages, not including tables, figures or appendices.

2. The manuscript must be typed on one side of the page only and on white paper (8.5 x 11 inches) and bound or stapled.

3. The manuscript must be double spaced, and with a margin of at least one inch on each side.

4. The manuscript must be in 12 point font; however tables and footnotes may be in 10 point font if necessary.

5. Page numbers should be inserted (center bottom) on each page except the Title Page and the Table of Contents.

6. All Figures and Tables must be numbered, and all appendices must be labeled alphabetically.

7. 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.

8. The manuscript may include:
   A) A Title Page
   B) Table of contents
   C) Abstract or an executive summary
   D) Literature review
   E) Agency Description
   F) Methods
   G) Results
   H) Discussion
   I) References
   J) Tables
   K) Appendices

9. References should follow the American Psychological Association format (http://webster.commnet.edu/apa/apa_index.htm).

10. A hardcopy and an electronic copy of each completed manuscript must be provided to your advisor.

# COMMUNITY ASSESSMENT

This option for the culminating project is to provide students with an opportunity to take a principal role in planning a community assessment. This option involves an assessment for a community agency/organization. Remember that your culminating project advisor must approve the topic for your project. In addition, it is strongly advised that you update your committee members on a regular basis. The details of the final project report for this area of concentration are provided below. The sections listed below should be followed in most cases; however, modification may be appropriate. In such cases, the student should provide some rationale for the exclusion of a particular section.

**Abstract/Executive Summary**

An abstract is a brief summary of approximately 250 words. The major components are: Purpose, Methods, Results/Outcomes, Conclusions, and Implications. An executive summary is an expanded version of the abstract and is typically one to two pages in length.

**Table of Contents**

The table of contents lists all the major topical areas of the document with the corresponding page numbers.

**Introduction/Purpose**

The introduction should state the rationale for the project. Why is the assessment being conducted? Exactly what do you hope to learn? What were your hypotheses before beginning?

**Agency Description**

The agency description presents the agency/organization involved in the project. It should include a graphic presentation of the organizational structure and a discussion of how the project fits in with mission and other programs of the agency.

**Literature Review**

Place the assessment in the context of what is already known about the topic by reviewing relevant research in this area. A literature review is a synthesis option of what researchers/scholars have written about a topic organized according to a guiding concept. The purpose is not to list as many articles as possible, rather, to demonstrate your ability to recognize relevant information, to synthesize the information and evaluate it according to the guiding concept that you have identified for your project. The literature review should include the epidemiological information, the related behavioral and environmental information, information about the target population, and any gaps in the literature that you have identified. Remember to define specific terms that will be used in the text of your report and remember to “tell a story”.

**Methods**

This section should describe each data set used to perform the assessment, including how, when, where and why each was collected. Be sure to discuss any limitations of the data sets and how these limitations might bias your results. When students collect original data, include a description of the research design and data collection methods. Also, be sure to discuss how the limitations of your design (i.e., threats to validity) may bias your results. Data collection materials (i.e. survey, interview protocol, consent forms) should be included in the appendices.

**Results**

This section presents the results in the same order as the purpose of the assessment was described earlier. Students are strongly encouraged to employ tables and graphs to clarify the presentation of results. The section should highlight key findings from the table and charts but need not reiterate every number from every table in narrative form.

**Discussion**

Discussion of the findings (interpretation of the data) as they relate to the needs assessment should be presented in this section. This section should also include the student's self-reflection about the project.

**Conclusions**

Discuss to what extent the results provide clear answers to the questions posed in the purpose section. Also, provide recommendations for action and suggestions for what the agency could do to learn more about the topic.

**References**

All literature and personal communications cited in the proposal must be listed in the reference section. References should follow the American Psychological Association format.

**Appendices**

Anything not included in the text of the project report that is important for the understanding of the community assessment should be attached as an appendix. All appendices must have references within the text of the project report and must be included as part of the table of contents.

# PROGRAM PLANNING AND IMPLEMENTATION

This option for the culminating project is to provide students with an opportunity to take a principal role in planning a health promotion project for a community agency. This option focuses on the planning, implementation, analysis, and the interpretation of a health promotion project. Remember that your culminating project advisor must approve the topic for your project. In addition, it is strongly advised that you update your committee members on a regular basis. The details of the final project report for this area of concentration are provided below. The sections listed below should be followed in most cases; however, modification may be appropriate. In such cases, the student should provide some rationale for the exclusion of a particular section.

**Abstract/Executive Summary**

An abstract is a brief summary of approximately 250 words. The major components are: Purpose, Methods, Results/Outcomes, Conclusions, and Implications. An executive summary is an expanded version of the abstract and is typically one to two pages in length.

**Table of Contents**

The table of contents lists all the major topical areas of the document with the corresponding page numbers.

**Introduction**

The introduction should state the rationale for the project.

**Literature Review**

A literature review is a synthesis option of what researchers/scholars have written about a topic organized according to a guiding concept. The purpose is not to list as many articles as possible, rather, to demonstrate your ability to recognize relevant information, to synthesize the information and evaluate it according to the guiding concept that you have identified for your project. The literature review should include the epidemiological information, the related behavioral and environmental information, information about the target population, and any gaps in the literature that you have identified. Remember to define specific terms that will be used in the text of your report and remember to “tell a story”.

**Theoretical Framework**

The structure and organization of the program planning process provide the framework on which to build the project. There are several different models that have been used for planning health promotion programs. In this section discuss which planning model you are using and why it applies to your project.

**Agency Description**

The agency description presents the agency/organization involved in the project. It should include a graphic presentation of the organizational structure and a discussion of how the project fits in with mission and other programs of the agency.

**Goals and Objectives**

The project goals and objectives define the scope and the direction of the project. Goals are broad timeless statements that include all aspects of a program. Objectives outline in measurable terms the specific changes that will occur in the target population in a designated time frame as a result of your program.

**Intervention Methods**

The approach used to address the project questions or reach the goals and objectives. Examples of what this section may include are a discussion of the project target population, instruments that may be used, potential data collection methods, project implementation plans, a plan for data analysis and evaluation. Limitations should also be presented in this section.

**Discussion, Implications, and Recommendations**

Discussion of the findings (interpretation of the data) as they relate to the project questions, goals, and objectives should be presented in this section. Implications of the findings for the agency/organization should be included and how the findings may impact policy. Recommendations for use of the findings and for future research should also be presented in this section. This section should also include the student's self-reflection about the project.

**References**

All literature and personal communications cited in the proposal must be listed in the reference section. References should follow the American Psychological Association format.

**Appendices**

Anything not included in the text of the project report that is important for the understanding of the design, implementation, or conclusions of the project should be attached as an appendix. For example: instruments, consent forms, the budget and budget justification, timeline, etc. All appendices must have references within the text of the project report and must be included as part of the table of contents.

# PROGRAM EVALUATION

This option for the culminating project is to provide students with an opportunity to take a principal role in the evaluation of a health promotion project for a community agency. Remember that your culminating project advisor must approve the topic for your project. In addition, it is strongly advised that you update your committee members on a regular basis. The details of the final project report for this area of concentration are provided below. The sections listed below should be followed in most cases; however, modification may be appropriate. In such cases, the student should provide some rationale for the exclusion of a particular section.

**Abstract/Executive Summary**

An abstract is a brief summary of approximately 250 words. The major components are: Purpose, Methods, Results/Outcomes, Conclusions, and Implications. An executive summary is an expanded version of the abstract and is typically one to two pages in length.

**Table of Contents**

The table of contents lists all the major topical areas of the document with the corresponding page numbers.

**Introduction/Purpose**

The introduction should state the rationale for the project. Who are the key stakeholders in the evaluation and what are their unique and collective interests?

**Literature Review**

A literature review is a synthesis option of what researchers/scholars have written about a topic organized according to a guiding concept. The purpose is not to list as many articles as possible, rather, to demonstrate your ability to recognize relevant information, to synthesize the information and evaluate it according to the guiding concept that you have identified for your project. The literature review should include the epidemiological information, the related behavioral and environmental information, information about the target population, and any gaps in the literature that you have identified. Remember to define specific terms that will be used in the text of your report and remember to “tell a story”.

**Program/Intervention Logic Model or Theory of Change**

What conditions make the program necessary? What activities are provided to address conditions? What outcomes are anticipated? What long-term impact is desirable?

**Evaluation Question**

What specific question or questions must be answered by the evaluation study?

**Agency Description**

The agency description presents the agency/organization involved in the project. It should include a graphic presentation of the organizational structure and a discussion of how the project fits in with mission and other programs of the agency.

**Evaluation Design**

What design was used to answer the evaluation question? Was that design sufficient? What are the major threats to validity in the evaluation design? How might those threats be dealt with in follow-up studies?

**Methods, Key Variables and Instrumentation**

What methods and procedures were used to collect and analyze data? What were the key variables of interest? How were those variables measured?

**Results**

Presentation of the evaluation findings should be included in this section. Describe the results of the data analyses. All tables and figures should be referred to within the text. If a table or a figure is used from another source there needs to be a reference citation. If possible, tables and figures should be placed within the text.

**Conclusions and Recommendations**

How was the data used to facilitate decision-making or program improvement? This section should also include the student's self-reflection about the project.

**Ethics**

What ethical issues were presented by the evaluation study and how were they addressed?

**References**

All literature and personal communications cited in the proposal must be listed in the reference section. References should follow the American Psychological Association format.

**Appendices**

Anything not included in the text of the project report that is important for the understanding of the evaluation project should be attached as an appendix. All appendices must have references within the text of the project report and must be included as part of the table of contents.

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