

**Master of Public Health
Program for Experienced Professionals
Guidelines for the Culminating Project**

**The Ohio State University
College of Public Health**

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Note:

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GENERAL PROJECT GUIDELINES

The culminating project for the MPH Program for Experienced Professionals is intended to provide students with the opportunity to integrate and synthesize knowledge and experience obtained during their academic course of study. Although every culminating project will be different, there are some general guidelines that are relevant to every project.

1. Each student must choose a culminating project advisor, and get that person's consent to serve. The culminating project advisor does not have to be your current academic advisor, but needs to be a faculty member in the College of Public Health.
2. You must also choose another faculty member of the College of Public Health 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 second reader should be chosen as early as possible, but no later than the beginning of your final quarter. 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. Your culminating project advisor must approve the topic and format of your project. For MPH/PEP students, the available formats are: (A) grant proposal, or (B) applied research project. The criteria for each of these options appear on pages 7-10.
4. The culminating project is eligible for four or eight hours of course credit, graded S/U. The level of credit is established by the scope and requirements of the project. Because the typical MPH/PEP course carries four credit hours, a rough guide would be that the hours should approximate the work required for either one or two regular courses. According to OSU guidelines, one hour of credit should require approximately three hours per week for ten weeks in order to earn an average grade. Translated for this purpose, a four-credit project should take approximately 120 hours of work, and an eight-credit project approximately 240 hours. You and your adviser will need to discuss and agree on the appropriate credit assignment for your project in order to complete the ***Culminating Project Proposal Approval*** form. The hours of credit may be taken over more than one quarter. Students can be approved for up to four hours of credit in order to begin work on the project. Increasing to a total of eight hours of credit requires that you have an approved proposal and your adviser has agreed that it justifies the higher credit level.
5. You should establish clear progress expectations with your culminating project advisor. These should include the number and timing of meetings with your advisor, what sort of drafts your advisor wants to review, etc.
6. The actual timing of registration for credit for your culminating project should be discussed with your adviser and the Office of Academic Programs staff ***before you register***. Because of the impact on tuition, in some cases it may be advantageous to distribute the hours in different ways across quarters, depending on what other courses are being taken at the same time.
7. After completion of your project, you are required to review the project at a meeting with your Culminating Project Committee members. With the permission of your committee, others may be invited to this meeting.

PROJECT TIMELINE REQUIREMENTS

You and your culminating project advisor must agree upon a timeline for completion of your project, subject to the constraints of Graduate School deadlines. On the next page is a timeline checklist for the culminating project requirements, which can help guide you and your advisor through this process. In addition, your advisor may require that you meet other deadlines, such as submitting outlines or drafts of your culminating project paper. Remember, ***you are responsible for meeting all of the deadlines***. The following requirements are especially important:

1. You must schedule a review meeting with your committee during the quarter you expect to graduate. The meeting should 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.
2. You must provide your committee members with a correctly formatted (refer to page 5) printed draft copy of your manuscript at least two weeks prior to the review meeting date.
3. 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 one copy of the form to the Graduate School (Room 247 University Hall) and take the second copy to the Office of Academic Programs (M-006 Starling Loving Hall).

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. Please remember, however, that some faculty members may not be available between quarters to schedule a review meeting or approve revisions to your culminating project paper. If you expect to meet these "end of quarter" deadlines, it is your responsibility to determine whether your committee will be available. Failure to meet any of these deadlines may require you to enroll and pay tuition for an additional quarter.

PROJECT TIMELINE CHECKLIST

When	Date to be completed	Check when complete	What you must do
Not later than the beginning of the quarter before the quarter you expect to graduate		[]	Obtain consent from a faculty member to be your culminating project (CP) advisor.
		[]	Meet with CP advisor and agree upon topic, hours of credit, and timeline to meet the requirements on this checklist.
		[]	Complete Culminating Project Proposal Approval form and submit to Office of Academic Programs (OAP).
As needed during quarters of work on CP		[]	Register for PUB HLTH 793 as necessary to accumulate approved credit hours, including at least 3 credits during the quarter in which graduation is expected. The call number will be your CP advisor's individual number, available from the OAP.
First week of final quarter		[]	Recruit, as your second reader, a faculty member who agrees with your timeline.
		[]	Complete "Application to Graduate" form with appropriate signatures and submit to OAP.
Not later than fifth week of final quarter		[]	Update CP Committee members on your progress.
		[]	Contact CP Committee members to arrange a time and place for the CP review meeting.
		[]	Contact OAP to reserve a room for the review meeting.
Two weeks prior to review mtg.		[]	Provide both committee members with a hard copy of the final draft of the project. Because of the remote location of MPH/PEP students, you may discuss with your committee whether electronic copies are adequate, but must provide printed copies if requested.
		[]	Make sure your CP advisor has received your Master's Examination form from the OAP.
At least one week before Graduate School deadline		[]	Attend review meeting with CP committee members.
		[]	Provide committee members with a written summary of intended revisions to CP paper.
Two days before Graduate School deadline		[]	Submit hard copy or electronic copy of final, revised version of CP paper to OAP.
		[]	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. The length and content will obviously depend on the scope of the project and hours of credit.
2. The manuscript must be typed on one side of the page only, double spaced, with a margin of at least one inch on each side, on white paper (8.5 x 11 inches), and bound or stapled.
3. The manuscript must be in a readable 12-point font; however, tables and footnotes may be in 10-point font if necessary.
4. Page numbers should be inserted (center bottom) on each page except the title page.
5. All figures and tables must be numbered, and all appendices must be labeled alphabetically.
6. 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.
7. The sections of the manuscript will depend upon the nature of the project, as explained on the following pages. However, every project should have a title page, table of contents, abstract or executive summary, and references. The remainder of the work will vary according to the project requirements.
8. Citation of references should follow a standard format, such as that used for biomedical journals or the American Psychological Association. Staff of the Prior Health Sciences Library can help if you have questions about citation styles.

A Note on Using the Internet

Most students make use of sources discovered by Web search strategies. It is particularly important that students recognize three points regarding such sources: First, the "unfiltered" character of much of this information means that it needs to be evaluated extremely carefully. Second, most topics will require some resources not readily available on the Internet. Third, simply listing an Internet address is not an adequate citation. Any information must be identified so that it is unambiguously clear who produced it, what it is, and when you accessed it. It should be obvious that the technical possibility of "cutting and pasting" from the Internet does not lessen the expectation of complete citation of sources and avoidance of plagiarism.

Guidelines concerning appropriate citation are available both in print and at several Internet sites. The Columbia University Press web site includes excerpts and general examples from a particularly useful source:

Columbia University Press. "Columbia Guide to Online Style." Excerpted and adapted from Janice R. Walker and Todd Taylor, *The Columbia Guide to Online Style* (Columbia University Press, 1998). <http://www.columbia.edu/cu/cup/cgos/> (27 September 2004).

9. A printed copy and an electronic copy of your completed manuscript must be provided to the OAP.

GRADUATION REQUIREMENTS SUMMARY

IN ORDER TO GRADUATE, YOU MUST:

- 1) Register for a minimum of 3 graduate credit hours in the quarter in which you intend to graduate. These hours will be under your advisor's individual studies number (PUB HLTH 793). The Office of Academic Programs (OAP) will provide you with the call number, if the Culminating Project Proposal Approval form has been submitted and approved.
- 2) Complete an **Application to Graduate** form (available online and from the OAP). Fill out your personal information and have it signed by your academic advisor; contact the OAP if you have any questions about the form. Return form to the OAP for the graduate studies chair's signature. This form must be filed with the Graduate School no later than the first Friday of the quarter you intend to graduate, and is valid for that quarter only. Submitting this application indicates that you expect to complete all degree requirements that quarter. If you do not, you will need to complete a new *Application to Graduate*.
- 3) Meet the requirements noted in the **Graduate School Handbook** :

Responsibility II.5.13.2

. . . the student:

1. must have earned a cumulative point-hour ratio of at least 3.0 for all graduate credit hours taken at this university (ref.II.4.1)
2. must have fulfilled all additional requirements published by the Graduate Studies Committee [essentially, the courses required for the degree]
3. must have final grades for all courses received in the University Registrar's Office by the deadline published
4. must have fulfilled all other requirements by the deadlines established by the Graduate School

End of Quarter II.5.13.3

A student who does not meet published graduation deadlines but who does complete all degree requirements by the last business day prior to the first day of classes for the following quarter may graduate the following quarter without registering or paying fees.

- 4) The Graduate School graduation deadlines for each quarter are available from the Graduate School (www.gradsch.ohio-state.edu) or from the OAP.
- 5) A **Master's Examination** form will automatically be provided to your culminating project advisor after your *Application to Graduate* form has been filed with the Graduate School. The *Master's Examination* for the MPH/PEP is your culminating project. In response to any direction from your culminating project committee, you must revise your document until the committee finds it satisfactory, making sure that the Graduate School deadlines are met. Upon successful completion of your culminating project, your committee will sign off on your form. Take the first copy of the form to the Graduate School (247 University Hall) and give the OAP (M006 Starling Loving) the second copy for your file.

Plan ahead, give yourself plenty of time, and make sure you are aware of all the deadlines. These are not negotiable!

GRANT PROPOSAL

Many public health professionals have occasion to seek funding for design and implementation of interventions, evaluation of programs, delivery of services, or research. For that reason, the standard culminating project option for students in the MPH Program for Experienced Professionals is the preparation of a grant proposal.

In order to be appropriate for this purpose, a grant proposal should be more than a simple “boilerplate” request for funds to continue operations of an existing program. At a minimum, the proposal should require some basic elements, including design of a program, intervention, evaluation, or service; a justification of the proposed approach based on a careful literature review and/or other evidence; and a budget with appropriate justification. If you wish to receive eight credit hours rather than four for this project, you will need to select a topic that permits a fairly significant effort, probably with a more substantial element of literature review and justification of your approach.

It is expected that your grant proposal be “real” in the sense that you have a specific target funding source, whether you actually submit the proposal for review by the sponsor or not, and an agency or organization under whose auspices the work described in the grant proposal would be conducted. As part of the proposal for your project you are required to provide a copy of the Request for Proposals (RFP) to which you are responding, or other evidence of the priorities and expectations of the target sponsor. The choice of funding source is up to you, but typical choices would include federal and state agencies (CDC, NIH, ODH, etc.), national foundations (Robert Wood Johnson, Pew, Kellogg, etc.), other non-profit organizations (American Cancer Society, Red Cross, etc.), or various local foundations and organizations (Columbus Foundation, Columbus Medical Association Foundation, Osteopathic Heritage Foundation, etc.). 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, to avoid any unwelcome surprises.

The details of the final report for this type of project are provided below. The sections listed below should be followed in most cases; however, modification may be appropriate because of the nature of the proposal or the sponsor’s requirements. In such cases, the student should provide some rationale for the departure from the typical contents and have the adviser’s approval.

Abstract/Executive Summary

An abstract is a brief summary of approximately 250 words. The major components are: Purpose, Methods/Approach, Expected Results, and Resource Requirements. 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 basic rationale for the project. What do you propose to do and why is it important?

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 outcomes or products of your work. For example, objectives of an intervention program might be specific changes that will occur in the target population in a designated time frame as a result of your program.

Agency/Organization Description

This section presents the agency/organization on whose behalf the project is proposed. 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/organization. If relevant, this section may include historical information or discussion of interorganizational relationships.

Literature Review

Place the project in the context of what is already known about the topic by reviewing relevant research. A literature review is a synthesis 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, but 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 set your proposed project in context, provide background on the problem to which you are responding and the approach you are taking, and discuss 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/Conceptual Framework

This section will vary depending on the nature of your proposal, but should generally flow from the literature review. In general, you need to describe the model you are using and why it applies to your project.

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.

Project Schedule

Provide a step-by-step schedule of the activities necessary to carry out your project, indicating when they will begin and end. Identify any “deliverables” and their due dates.

Budget

Provide a narrative description and justification of the resources required for the project, including both personnel and other resources. Construct a simple budget showing the resources by category with expected expenditures; if the project requires more than one year, show the division of expenditures by period.

References

All literature and personal communications cited in the proposal must be listed in the reference section. References should follow a standard format approved by your advisor.

Appendices

Anything not included in the text of the report that is important for understanding the 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.

APPLIED RESEARCH PROJECT

The original design for the MPH/PEP culminating project required that all students prepare a grant proposal, as discussed in the preceding section. In response to student and faculty recommendations, we have expanded the options to permit a more general applied research project as an alternative to a grant proposal. This option for the culminating project is to provide students with an opportunity to pursue an area of interest through their own research.

We expect that most research projects will be of one of two types: (1) investigation of a research question expressed in traditional hypothesis form, or (2) evaluation of a program, service, intervention, etc. Some have described this sort of research project as a “mini-thesis.” It is correct that some research projects approved for this purpose could probably also function as a master’s thesis. However, the time constraints and lack of formal research methods content in the MPH/PEP curriculum suggest that most projects will be somewhat different in approach and technical content from the usual thesis. In that sense, the research project might be conceptualized as closer to the research activities carried out in the field of practice rather than those done in academic settings.

As with the grant proposal option, you will need to discuss potential topics with your advisor and agree on both the topic and the appropriate credit hours. Because the research project need not be a response to a specific sponsor, you are not required to identify an RFP or target funding source; however, if you have any interest in expanding the scope of your research that might be a useful step.

The details of the final report for this type of project are provided below. The sections listed should be included in most cases; however, modification may be appropriate for particular topics. In such cases, the student should provide some rationale for departure from the typical structure and have the adviser’s approval.

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. What is the basic research or evaluation question and why is it of interest?

Literature Review

A literature review is a synthesis 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, but 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 relevant epidemiological, behavioral, and environmental information, information about the target population, critiques of methods, 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”.

Agency/Organization Description

If relevant, describe the agency/organization involved in the project. This should include a graphic presentation of the organizational structure and a discussion of how the project relates to the mission and other programs of the agency/organization.

Research/Evaluation Design

What is the underlying model being used in the research/evaluation? What are the specific questions to be addressed by this research? What design was used to answer the questions? Was that design sufficient? What are the major threats to validity in the 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?

Ethics

What ethical issues were presented by the study and how were they addressed? Please note that if human subjects or their private information are involved in any way in your research, you will need to have your proposal reviewed by the OSU Institutional Review Board before you begin any data collection. ***This is not optional, and failure to follow appropriate procedures could expose you to legal liability and threaten your ability to use your work to meet degree requirements!***

Results

The findings should be presented 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; larger tables and figures may be included in an appendix.

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 a standard citation 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, 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.

THE OHIO STATE UNIVERSITY COLLEGE OF PUBLIC HEALTH
MPH Program for Experienced Professionals

Culminating Project Proposal Approval Form

_____ has my permission to
Name

enroll in Pub Hlth 793 for _____ credit hours for the purpose of the MPH culminating project.

An initial enrollment for up to 4 credit hours may be approved before the culminating project proposal is complete. Students should discuss the distribution of credit hours across quarters with their adviser and the OAP staff before finalizing registration. Approval for increasing enrollment to a total of 8 credit hours can only be done after a project proposal has been completed and judged appropriate for this level of credit.

Signature required for approval:

Faculty Advisor's Signature: _____ Date: _____

=====

Project Type (please circle): Grant Application Research Project

Project Title: _____

Primary Faculty Advisor: _____ (Print Name)

Secondary Faculty Reader: _____ (Print Name)

Project Description:

Attach an additional sheet with a description of your proposed project. If the project is a grant application, indicate the target funding source, and also attach a copy of the Request for Proposals (RFP) or other documentation of the sponsor's requirements.

Signatures required for approval:

Student Signature: _____ Date: _____

Faculty Advisor Signature: _____ Date: _____

Please return the completed form to the Office of Academic Programs, Room M-006 Starling Loving Hall.

Approved
PEP Director: _____ Date: _____