THE OHIO STATE UNIVERSITY
COLLEGE OF PUBLIC HEALTH

Division of Environmental Health Sciences

Integrative Learning Experience Instructions and Guidelines (Academic year 2026-2027)

1. Purpose of the Integrative Learning Experience

The Integrative Learning Experience (ILE) is a culminating requirement of the MPH program. Through the ILE, students demonstrate their ability to integrate and apply knowledge and competencies acquired throughout the program to an environmental health problem or issue.
The ILE is completed under the guidance of a faculty advisor and evaluated through:

- A final written product
- An oral presentation and examination

The ILE is graded Satisfactory/Unsatisfactory (S/U).

2. Types of ILE Projects

In consultation with the faculty advisor, a student may complete one of the following types of projects:

- **Applied research project:** Involves collecting primary data or obtaining and analyzing secondary data to answer an environmental health question. When appropriate, the final paper should be of sufficient quality for submission to a peer-reviewed journal.
- **Critical review:** Provides an in-depth, critical analysis of an environmental health issue using published literature. The review should evaluate the strength and limitations of existing evidence, identify knowledge gaps, and discuss implications for public health practice, policy, or future research.
- **Applied report or technical manual:** Develops a practical document that addresses an environmental health need. The organization and format should be determined in consultation with the faculty advisor and, when applicable, the collaborating organization.
- **Grant proposal or another approved format:** Addresses a clearly defined public health problem and proposes an appropriate strategy for addressing it. A grant proposal should follow the requirements of the relevant funding agency. Other formats may be used with prior approval from the faculty advisor.

Regardless of format, the ILE must demonstrate the student's ability to apply and integrate relevant environmental health principles and MPH competencies.

3. Relationship Between the ILE and the Applied Practice Experience

The Applied Practice Experience (APE) and the ILE serve different purposes. The APE provides practical experience in a professional setting, such as a government agency, private organization, nonprofit organization, or other public health setting. It is generally conducted under the direction of the host organization.

The ILE is a student-directed academic project completed under the guidance of a faculty advisor. It requires the student to investigate an environmental health issue and demonstrate the integration and application of knowledge gained throughout the MPH program.

An ILE may be based on a problem, dataset, or product arising from the APE, but a direct connection between the two experiences is not required.

4. Regulatory Approvals and Required Training

Projects involving human participants, animals, biohazardous materials, or other regulated activities must comply with applicable university requirements, including approval or determination from the:

Institutional Review Board (IRB);
Institutional Animal Care and Use Committee (IACUC); or
Institutional Biosafety Committee (IBC).

Students must complete all required ethics, biosafety, and workplace-safety training before beginning the relevant activities. Students should consult their faculty advisor early because approvals may take considerable time. Data collection or other regulated activities may not begin until all required approvals and training have been completed.

5. Recommended Timeline

The ILE is generally completed during the final two semesters of the MPH program. Students are responsible for planning their work so that the advisor and second reader have sufficient time to review the written product before the oral examination and Graduate School deadlines.

Autumn Semester: Project Planning and Preparation

During the autumn semester, the student should work with the faculty advisor to:

1) Identify the environmental health problem or topic
2) Select the type and format of the ILE
3) Develop the study question, project objectives, or hypothesis, as applicable
4) Conduct a preliminary literature review
5) Identify the data, evidence, or other materials needed for the project
6) Determine the proposed methods or analytical approach
7) Identify whether regulatory approval or required training is needed
8) Establish a project timeline and regular meeting schedule
9) Prepare a brief proposal or detailed outline by the end of the semester

The proposal or outline should clearly describe the project's background, purpose, objectives, proposed methods, anticipated final product, and timeline.

Spring Semester: Project Completion

During the spring semester, the student should:

1) Complete the literature review, data collection, analysis, or other project activities
2) Provide drafts to the advisor throughout the writing process
3) Revise the document in response to the advisor's feedback

4) Submit the complete final draft to the advisor and second reader at least two weeks before the oral presentation
5) Schedule and complete the oral presentation and examination before the Graduate School deadline
6) Make any revisions required by the committee
7) Submit the final approved document to the required recipients (advisor and second reader(s) and to the Office of Academic Programs and Student Services via their Graduation email at CPH-Graduation@osu.edu by the Graduate School deadlines to submit thesis documents.

Students should expect that multiple rounds of revision may be necessary. Faculty should generally be allowed at least one week to review and comment on each draft. Students should remain in regular communication with their advisor and promptly report changes or delays that may affect the timeline.

6. Final Written Product

The final written product is typically approximately 25 double-spaced pages, excluding references and appendices. The appropriate length may vary depending on the type of project and should be determined in consultation with the faculty advisor.

An applied research paper or report may follow the format below or the author guidelines of an appropriate peer-reviewed journal. Technical manuals, grant proposals, and other approved products may follow a different format established by the advisor, collaborating organization, journal, or funding agency.

Abstract

Provide a concise summary of approximately 250 words. For an applied research project, the abstract will generally include the background, methods, principal results, and conclusions. Include only the information needed to communicate the project's purpose, approach, major findings, and significance.

Introduction

The introduction should generally:

- Place the topic within its broader environmental health context
- Explain why the problem is important
- Summarize what is currently known
- Identify the relevant knowledge or practice gap
- Present the rationale for the project
- State the project objectives, study question, and hypothesis, if applicable.

The introduction is typically two to three pages, although the appropriate length may vary by project format.

Methods

Describe the project methods in sufficient detail for the reader to understand how the work was conducted. As applicable, include:

- Study design
- Study population or data source
- Sample or data-collection procedures
- Measurements and key variables
- Laboratory or technical procedures
- Data-management procedures
- Statistical or qualitative analyses
- Regulatory approvals or determinations

If IRB, IACUC, or IBC oversight was required, provide the relevant approval information. If such oversight was not required but might reasonably be expected, briefly explain the applicable determination.

Results

Present the findings in a clear and logical order, emphasizing the results that directly address the project objectives or study questions. Tables and figures should be used when they communicate findings more effectively than text. The text should highlight and interpret the principal information without repeating every value presented in the tables or figures.

All tables and figures must:

- Be numbered
- Be cited in the text
- Include a clear title and sufficient explanatory information
- Identify the original source when adapted or reproduced from another source

The student should consult the advisor about whether tables and figures should appear within the text or at the end of the document. Additional materials may be included in an appendix.

Discussion

The discussion should:

- Explain the importance of the principal findings
- Relate the findings to previous studies or other relevant evidence
- Discuss the public health significance of the work
- Identify the project's strengths and limitations
- Explain how the limitations may affect interpretation of the findings
- Discuss implications for practice, policy, or the collaborating organization, as applicable
- Provide recommendations for applying the findings or conducting future work.

References

All sources cited in the document must appear in the reference list. References should follow a recognized citation style, such as Vancouver, and the selected style must be applied consistently.

The paper should cite appropriate peer-reviewed literature related to both the environmental health topic and the methods used. Approximately 25 or more references may be needed for many projects, although the appropriate number will depend on the topic and type of ILE.

Appendices

Include materials that are important for understanding the project but are not appropriate for the main text, such as:

- Data-collection instruments
- Questionnaires
- Consent documents
- Detailed protocols
- Supplementary tables or figures

Each appendix must be labeled alphabetically, cited in the main text, and listed in the table of contents.

7. General Formatting Requirements

Unless a journal, funding agency, organization, or advisor specifies another format:

- Use a 12-point font for the main text. Tables and footnotes may use a 10- or 11-point font.
- Double-space the main text.
- Number all pages except the title page.
- Apply one citation and reference style consistently throughout the document.
- Include a title page listing the project title, student's name and degrees, committee members, The Ohio State University, and the month and year of completion.
- Include a table of contents and, when applicable, lists of tables, figures, and appendices.

8. Oral Presentation and Master's Examination

All students must complete an oral presentation and examination based on the ILE. The student is responsible for scheduling a one-hour meeting at a time when the advisor and second reader or readers can attend.

The presentation must take place before the applicable Graduate School examination deadline. Students should begin coordinating schedules several weeks in advance.

The advisor and second reader must receive the complete final draft at least two weeks before the oral presentation. A document requiring substantial additional work may not be ready for presentation, so students should obtain the advisor's approval before scheduling or proceeding with the examination.

The student will generally give a 15- to 20-minute presentation supported by an organized set of slides. Faculty, staff, students, and other invited guests may attend this portion. After the presentation, guests will leave, and the student and committee will continue with a closed discussion and examination for the remainder of the scheduled hour.

During the examination, the committee will assess the students:

- Understanding of the project;
- Mastery of relevant environmental health principles and concepts;
- Ability to interpret and communicate the findings; and
- Ability to integrate MPH knowledge and competencies.

The oral presentation constitutes the oral component of the Master's Examination and must follow the requirements in Section 6.2 of the Graduate School Handbook (https://gradsch.osu.edu/handbook/all#6-2)..

9. Final Approval and Submission

After the oral examination, the student must complete any revisions required by the committee. An electronic copy of the final approved document, in Word or PDF format, must be provided to:

- The faculty advisor;
- The second reader or readers; and
- The Office of Academic Programs and Student Services at CPH-Graduation@osu.edu.

The oral examination, committee approval, submission of the Master's Examination Report, and other graduation requirements must be completed by the applicable Graduate School deadlines. These deadlines generally occur three to four weeks before the end of the semester. Students should consult the Graduate School graduation calendar for the exact dates.

Failure to complete the examination or submit the required forms by the published deadlines may delay graduation.