



**DIVISION OF EPIDEMIOLOGY**  
**Culminating Project Proposal Instructions and Guidelines**  
**Academic Year 2020-2021**

**CULMINATING PROJECT PROPOSAL INSTRUCTIONS**

The purpose of the culminating project proposal in Epidemiology is for the student to describe their planned culminating project topic and methods and get feedback from their faculty advisor and other committee members. To allow time for a thorough and thoughtful project to be carried out, this proposal should be completed by 7th week of the term prior to the term of graduation. During this time, students will be enrolled in the Culminating Project Seminar in Epidemiology (PUBHEPI 7998). The instructor of that course will provide more detail about the culminating project in general, and, specifically, the culminating project proposal. The proposal will be one of the Seminar course required assignments.

The culminating project proposal should include the following elements.

**Topic Description**

1. Describe the broad objective or purpose of the project.
2. Describe the source of the data. Describe the agency or organization that will provide the data, or if an existing source of data is used indicate whether the data are publicly available or if you will need to request access to the data. If applicable, request a letter of support from the agency/organization and include a copy with your proposal.
3. State your specific research questions and hypotheses, or the goals and objectives for your study.
4. Describe what need your proposed project addresses.

**Methods**

1. Describe the data that will be analyzed to address the study question or: If you will collect data for the project describe your data collection plans. If you will analyze existing data describe the variables (measures) you will use to address the research questions.
2. Describe how you will analyze the data. What comparisons will you make and/or what statistical tests will you use? Do you have sufficient training in the analytic methods your analyses will require? If not, describe how you will acquire this training.

**Timeline for IRB approval**

1. Provide a plan for IRB approval of the culminating project, as required.

Have your project advisor and second reader sign and date the proposal, and give them each a copy to keep. Keep one copy for your own records.

## **CULMINATING PROJECT GUIDELINES**

Potential topics must be discussed with and approved in advance by your advisor and second reader. All students are required to schedule an oral defense, at which they will present the culminating project. The presentation time and location will be advertised in the Division and other faculty, staff and students will be invited to attend. After the presentation the oral defense will be closed to the public and only the student, advisor and second reader will continue the discussion. This oral defense is the “oral component” of the Master’s Examination and students must therefore follow the rules outlined in the Graduate School Handbook, Section [6.2 \(https://gradsch.osu.edu/handbook/all#6-2\)](https://gradsch.osu.edu/handbook/all#6-2)

The advisor and second reader must receive the document at least two weeks prior to the oral defense. The final document will be due to the advisor and second reader on the date all graduation materials are due in the Graduate School (will vary with each term).

While each student should discuss the precise format of the written document with his/her advisor, two suggested formats for the Culminating Project are below:

### **Option 1:**

#### **Abstract/Executive Summary**

An abstract is a brief summary of approximately 250 words. The major components are: Purpose, Methods, Results, 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 study 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 information about the target population, critiques of methods, and any gaps in the literature that you have identified.

#### **Agency Description**

Only 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.

## **Methods**

### **Overview**

What are the specific questions to be addressed by this research? What design was used to answer the questions?

### **Procedures and Key Variables**

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

### **Human Subjects**

Please note that if human subjects are involved in any way in your research, you will need to have your proposal reviewed and approved by the OSU Institutional Review Board before you begin any data collection or analysis.

### **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, if applicable. Recommendations for use of the findings and for future research should also be presented in this section.

### **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.

### **Option 2:**

Option 2 is similar to Option 1 with the following important difference. In Option 2, the project structure should follow the structure of a publishable manuscript, with Abstract, Introduction (2-4 paragraphs), Methods, Results, and Discussion. This manuscript format is followed by an Appendix with a Literature Review, comparable to that in Option 1. The intention of this format is to provide you with the opportunity to convert the project to a publishable manuscript more easily.

**The Culminating Project Timeline is found on the Culminating Project CPH website.**

1. As noted in the Timeline Checklist, which is found on the CPH website, it is expected that your advisor will be kept fully apprised 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 and second reader must see

a complete draft of your final Culminating Project report a minimum of one month before your expected review meeting date. You must provide both of your committee members with a correctly formatted (refer to page 6), clean and final hardcopy of your manuscript at least two weeks prior to the review meeting date.

2. Graduation applications are required to be submitted the 10<sup>th</sup> Friday prior to the term you intend to graduate. The application is on-line, and available at <https://gradforms.osu.edu>. Please note: the application is valid for that term only.
3. The final date for completing all requirements (including the project presentation) and submitting the Master's Examination Report to the Graduate School is generally about 3-4 *weeks before* the end of the term. A specific calendar of dates is available on the Graduate School website (<https://gradsch.osu.edu/graduation-calendar>). If your committee fails to electronically submit the Master's Examination Report by the Graduate school deadlines, it will result in a delay of your graduation.

### **Written Report Requirements**

1. Report should be approximately 25 double-spaced pages in length not including tables, figures or appendices.
2. Include at least 25 references from the peer-reviewed literature.
3. Report should be single or double-side printed on white paper (8.5 x 11 inches) and bound or stapled.
4. For text, 12 point font should be used; however tables and footnotes may be in 10 point font if necessary.
5. Page numbers should be inserted on each page except the Title Page and the Table of Contents.
6. All Figures and Tables must be numbered and be accompanied by descriptions that allow the reader to understand their content without referring to the text, 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. References should follow a consistent format.
9. An electronic copy (Word or PDF) of the final approved report should be provided to your advisor and second reader, the Division Coordinator, and the Office of Academic Programs and Student Services by the [Graduate School deadlines to submit thesis documents.](#)