



**THE OHIO STATE UNIVERSITY**

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COLLEGE OF PUBLIC HEALTH

**2020-2021 Guidelines for MPH  
Culminating Project**

**Division of Health Behavior and Health Promotion**

Last revised August 2015

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## **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 OAPSS (Office of Academic Programs and Student Services) office (Room 100, 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; (C) Program evaluation; or (D) Secondary data analysis. The criteria for each of these options appear on pages 9-16. 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 (as described on p. 6) which describes your topic; what you will do for the project; and which of the project types (above) best describes your project. E-mail your project advisor and second reader a copy of your proposal simultaneously and ask that they “reply all” with their suggested changes or approval. You need to get approval from both before beginning work on the project.

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 5). If you intend to pursue a research career, discuss the Thesis option with your advisor.
6. This document assumes that most students will be completing their culminating projects for a spring semester graduation. If that does not apply to you, please discuss your projected timeline with your advisor.
7. In the Autumn semester before your intended graduation, register for the 1 credit seminar, PUBHHBP 7899.01.

This seminar will meet a few times as a group, to get you started on a high-quality project. In addition, to earn full credit for this seminar, you are expected to meet with and work with your project adviser to begin working on the culminating project.

8. In the Spring semester in which you will graduate, register again for the 1 credit seminar, PUBHBP 7899.02, and also for 2 credits of Culminating project credit, PUBHLTH 7998, with your advisor. During spring semester, you will present your project to your advisor and second reader at a review meeting for formal approval. At the end of spring semester, all seminar participants will present their projects in a division-wide poster session.

## **HUMAN SUBJECTS REQUIREMENTS AND STUDENT RESEARCH**

Details regarding human subjects requirements and student research are found in the CPH Graduate Student Handbook, Appendix H.

Discuss the specific requirements for your proposed project with your advisor as early as possible; remember to allow enough time for any required submission to the IRB.

## **THESIS OPTION**

*(This page refers only to students who choose to complete a Master's 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 School Student Handbook: <https://gradsch.osu.edu/handbook>. The remainder of this document applies only to the culminating projects. If you think you are interested in completing a Master's Thesis option, discuss that option with your advisor at least two terms before you anticipate graduating.

# **CULMINATING PROJECT PROPOSAL INSTRUCTIONS**

The culminating project proposal should describe your topic, what you will do for the project and whether your project is best described as community assessment, program planning, program evaluation, or secondary data analysis. This proposal should ordinarily be completed at least two terms before you intend to graduate to allow time for a thorough and thoughtful project to be carried out.

The proposal should include the following elements.

## **Topic Description**

1. Describe the broad objective or purpose of the project.
2. Indicate which of the four culminating project options best describes your proposed project.
3. If applicable, describe the agency or organization that you will work with. Request a letter of support from the agency/organization and include a copy with your proposal.
4. Depending on the project option you have chosen, state your specific research questions, evaluation questions, or goals and objectives.
5. If you propose to plan a program, define your theoretical framework.
6. Explain why you want to conduct your proposed project and describe what need your proposed project addresses.

## **Methods**

1. Describe who you will collect data from or what existing data sources you will use.
2. If you propose to plan a program describe where the program will be implemented.
3. If you propose to collect original data, describe how you will collect the data for your proposed project. List the measures you will use and/or the questions you will ask.
4. Describe how you will analyze the data. For example, if you plan to work with quantitative data, what comparisons will you make and/or what statistical tests will you use? If you plan to work with qualitative data, will you conduct a content analysis or perform another type of qualitative data analysis?

Provide your project advisor and second reader with a copy of your proposal (e-mail is fine) and ask them to suggest changes or to reply stating their approval.

## **TIMELINE REQUIREMENTS**

Students and their culminating project advisor must agree upon a timeline for completion of their project. On the CPH website 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 Graduate School deadlines for each term are available at the Graduate School <https://gradsch.osu.edu/graduation-calendar>.

The following requirements are especially important:

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 8), clean and final hardcopy of your manuscript at least two weeks prior to the review meeting date.
2. By the tenth Friday of the term *before* you intend to graduate, complete an online Application for Graduation (found here: <https://gradforms.osu.edu>). Please note: the application is valid for that term 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 about *3-4 weeks before* the end of the term. A specific calendar of dates is available on the Graduate School web site (<https://gradsch.osu.edu/graduation-calendar>).
3. HBHP culminating projects will generally be presented in two formats: a review meeting with your advisor and second reader, and a poster session. The Culminating Project seminar will guide you through the timeline and process of preparing a poster.
4. Upon completion of the review meeting and any final revisions to your approved culminating project paper, your committee will electronically approve your Master's Examination Report. Failure for your committee to do so will result in a delay of graduation.

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 term, you may graduate the following term 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. **Failure to meet these requirements may require you to enroll for an additional term.**

## **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. Discuss with your advisor whether they want an electronic or paper copy of your manuscript. Electronic copies are generally used to deposit the final copy with OAPSS.
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 degree(s), 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 a standard format such as the formats used by journals. One frequently used format is the American Psychological Association format:  
<https://www.library.cornell.edu/research/citation/apa>
10. Check with your advisor to see whether they want the final copy as electronic or paper.

# **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. 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. Be sure to discuss any limitations of the data sets and how these limitations might bias your results.

### **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**

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 must be a “real-life” plan with a partnering organization who are interested in potentially offering the program. 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. Include a letter or statement from the agency indicating their interest in having the proposed program planned. 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.

## **Program Content, Goals and Objectives**

In this section, provide an overview of the specific program content, along with 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. Include a complete description of the program content (i.e., specific messages, slides, lesson plans or other materials) in an appendix.

## **Intervention Methods/ Data collection**

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, training plans, a plan for data analysis and evaluation. Alternatively, a “program planning” project might include focus groups or another data collection method which

are designed to collect information which can be used in planning a program.

### **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. Be sure to discuss any limitations of the data sets and how these limitations might bias your results.

### **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. Be sure to discuss any limitations of the data sets and how these limitations might bias your results.

### **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.

## **SECONDARY DATA ANALYSIS**

This option for the culminating project is to provide students with an opportunity to analyze existing data related to a public health problem. 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 type of project 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 analysis being conducted? Exactly what do you hope to learn? What were your hypotheses before beginning?

What is the public health importance of your proposed analysis? To whom will the results be useful?

### **Literature Review**

Place the analysis in the context of what is already known about the topic by reviewing relevant research in this area. 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, 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 information on what has already been done or what is already known about your topic, 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 the data set(s) you propose to analyze and how they will be obtained. Include information on the strengths and limitations of the data for your proposed analysis (for example, amount of data available, quality of questions on your topic, generalizability of the sample). Describe the proposed analysis methods.

### **Results**

This section presents the results organized around the proposed questions. 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 hypotheses or objectives of the study should be presented in this section. Be sure to discuss any limitations of the data sets and how these limitations might bias your results.

### **Conclusions**

Discuss to what extent the results provide clear answers to the questions posed in the purpose section. Also, provide recommendations for action and implications for the field of public health.

**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 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.