THE OHIO STATE UNIVERSITY
COLLEGE OF PUBLIC HEALTH

Master of Public Health
Program for Experienced Professionals

17-18 Guidelines for the Culminating Project

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GENERAL PROJECT GUIDELINES

The culminating project for the MPH Program for Experienced Professionals (PEP) 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. In many cases this would be the student's assigned academic advisor, however students may choose another faculty member in the College of Public Health. Students are recommended to discuss project ideas with possible faculty members at least two semesters prior to expected graduation. Consent must obtained by the culminating project advisor, if he/she is not the academic advisor.

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 5th week of the term before intended term of graduation. The culminating project advisor and the second reader constitute your Culminating Project Committee. You may add additional readers to your Committee as appropriate, however it is not recommended to have more than three members on a Committee.

3. Your culminating project advisor must approve the topic and format of your project. For MPH-PEP students, acceptable projects include: (A) grant proposal, (B) applied research project or (C) Other project. The criteria for each of these options appear on pages 7-11.

4. You must register for and complete one credit of the Culminating Project Preparation course (PUBHLTH 7998) the semester prior to the semester of beginning your culminating project.

5. You must then register for two credit hours of PUBHLTH 7998 for culminating project. The hours of credit may be taken over more than one term. You and your culminating project advisor need to discuss and agree on when to register for your project. When you are ready to register, complete the online ***Permission to Enroll*** form. A staff member will add the course for you. The culminating projected is graded S/U. Students who need to register for additional credit to complete their culminating projects should talk to their faculty advisors about registering for up to three additional credit hours of independent study. Increasing to a total of six hours of credit for the culminating project requires an approved proposal and a justification and approval from your culminating project advisor.

6. You should establish a clear timeline for progress and check-in meetings with your culminating project advisor. These should include the number and timing of meetings with the advisor, number and content of drafts, and other critical steps.

7. The actual timing of registration for credit for your culminating project should be discussed with your advisor and the OAPSS 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 terms, depending on what other courses are being taken at the same time.

8. Upon completion of the project, students are required to present the project to and respond to questions from the Committee during a culminating project review meeting. With the permission of your committee, others may be invited to this meeting.

PROJECT TIMELINE AND GRADUATION 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. In addition, your advisor may require that you meet other deadlines, such as submitting outlines or drafts of your culminating project paper. Remember, **y*ou are responsible for meeting all of the deadlines*.** The following requirements are especially important:

1. You should discuss possible culminating project ideas with your academic advisor at least two terms prior to when you anticipate graduating.

2. Once you agree on a project idea that meets the program requirements, you should determine whether your academic advisor or another College of Public Health faculty member will be your culminating project advisor. As noted above, additional Committee members may be added for subject matter expertise.

3. Graduation applications are required to be submitted the 7th 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.

4. Upon completion of the Culminating Project, you are required to successfully complete a Committee review. This is a one hour oral exam, with the student giving a 30-minute presentation followed by 30 minutes of questions and answers from the Committee.

5. You must schedule the review with your Committee during the term you expect to graduate. The meeting should be scheduled in a timely fashion and in consideration of Graduate School deadlines for document submission, so that you have sufficient time to make any required revisions *and* to provide your Committee members time to approve your revisions by the due date.

6. You must provide your Committee members with a correctly formatted (refer to page 6), printed draft copy of your project documents, report or grant proposal <u>at least two weeks prior to the review meeting date</u>. To do this, students generally must finish their projects by the 11th or 12th week of the Spring or Autumn term to give their Committee members ample time for review. You must revise your document until the committee finds it satisfactory. It is your responsibility to confirm the deadline to submit your final project to your Committee.

7. If required by your culminating project Committee, you must revise your document(s) until the committee finds it satisfactory. Once approved, your Committee will electronically submit your Master's Examination Report to the Graduate School. Note that the final date for completing all requirements (including the project presentation) and electronically submitting the Master's Examination Report to the Graduate School is generally about *3-4 weeks before* the end of the term. **Failure for your Committee to do so by Graduate School deadlines will result in a delay of your graduation.** A specific calendar of dates is available on the Graduate School website https://gradsch.osu.edu/calendar.

8. 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. Please remember, however, that some faculty members may not be available between terms to schedule a review meeting or approve revisions to your culminating project paper. If you expect to meet these "end of term" 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 term.

MASTERS EXAMINATION DOCUMENT REQUIREMENTS

1. Although each culminating project will vary, most documents 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. All documents 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. Documents must be in 12-point Arial font; however, tables and footnotes may be in 10-point font if necessary.

4. Page numbers should be inserted on each page except the title page.

5. All figures and tables must be numbered, and all appendices must be labeled alphabetically.

6. The cover 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 document 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 OSU 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. Once approved by the Committee, an electronic copy (word or pdf) of your final documents must be submitted to OAPSS by the Graduate School deadline of submitting Master's Thesis documents.

CULMINATING PROJECT TYPES
GRANT PROPOSAL

Public health and health system professionals often rely on grant funding for design and implementation of interventions, evaluation of programs, delivery of services, or research.

If chosen, a grant proposal should not be a simple "boilerplate" request for funds to continue operations of an existing program. At a minimum, the proposal should require the following elements: 1) design of the research study, program or intervention, evaluation, or new service; 2) a justification of the proposed approach based on a literature review and/or other evidence; and 3) a budget with appropriate justification.

While it is expected that the grant proposal be written as if to submit, submission is not required. As part of the proposal, you are required to provide a copy of the Request for Proposals (RFP) or similar call for proposals to which you are responding or other support for 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 address member questions or concerns in a timely manner.

The details of the final grant document 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 advisor'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 should describe 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 and organizational capacity to successfully complete the project.

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 and that will be addressed, at least in part, by your proposal.

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. Models should be drawn from current literature and reflect key principles of population health, including the social determinants of the health.

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

Applied Research Projects provide students with opportunities to pursue an area of interest through original research.

Research projects can be one of the following types: (1) investigation of a research question expressed in traditional hypothesis form; (2) evaluation of a program, service, intervention, etc.; (3) cost-effectiveness analysis or cost-benefit analysis; or (4) comparative effectiveness projects involving large healthcare databases. While sometimes considered a master's thesis, most projects will be somewhat different in approach and technical content from a more comprehensive thesis. Research projects should be tailored as more of a practice-based research project compared to a more rigorous academic study.

As with grant proposals, you will need to discuss potential topics with your culminating project advisor and agree on both 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, both might be helpful steps if you intend on expanding the project outside of the three-credit hour requirement.

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 advisor'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 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, including specific social determinants within the population and across comparative populations, critiques of methods, and any gaps in the literature that you have identified that support your approach.

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? What data set(s) is/are being used?

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.

OTHER PROJECTS

Because of the diversity of MPH PEP students, it may be appropriate to consider additional project types. Those wishing to pursue another type of project should begin discussing ideas with their academic advisors as soon as possible. As with the above project types, the student's academic advisor will typically also serve as the culminating project advisor; however, if another faculty member within the College of Public Health is identified as more appropriate for the project, the student, with the faculty member's consent, may name another culminating project advisor. In this case, the academic advisor will serve as the project's second reader.

Examples of acceptable projects include:
- Creating an online training or education module focusing on the public health, health care or community health practitioner
- Developing a policy white paper and proposal
- An evidence inventory and accompanying policy brief
- Evaluating a community coalition or collaborative process
- Completing a health impact assessment
- Completing a quality improvement project
- Developing a performance management system for an agency or organization

The student and culminating project advisor must agree on the final deliverables for each project. Because projects will vary in format, size and scope, all student will submit a culminating report in addition to other project deliverables. The length of the report will vary based on the project's scope and is to be agreed upon by the advisor. This report should include the following sections (as appropriate):

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 primary problem the project is designed to address, 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 relevant information about the approach; its use in your proposed setting; information about the target population, if appropriate; a review of the use of the approach in the field or in similar fields; critiques of previous uses of the approach; and any gaps in the literature you have identified.

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.

Project Design

What is the underlying model or tool being used in project? What are the specific goals and objectives to be achieved by this project? What design was used to achieve these goals? Was that design sufficient? What resources were anticipated and needed to implement the project? Which partners were involved in the project, and how were these partners involved throughout the process? If appropriate, this section should include a key driver diagram or logic model.

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? What data will be used?

Results

Project outcomes should be presented in this section. The description should present the key metrics for objectives and goals. 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 project outcomes) 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 activity 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.