



THE OHIO STATE UNIVERSITY

COLLEGE OF PUBLIC HEALTH

**Master of Public Health
Program for Experienced Professionals**

19-20 Guidelines for the Culminating Project

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GENERAL INFORMATION

General 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. Students beginning the MPH-PEP program in 2016 or later must begin by completing the one-credit Culminating Project Preparation Seminar course (PUBHLTH 7996) the semester before beginning your culminating project. To request approval to register for the Culminating Project Prep Seminar, complete the [Permission to Enroll form](#). The program director or the faculty advisor will approve this request. Once approved, you will be added to the class by OPASS staff. See the Culminating Project Prep Seminar Section below for more information.
2. Students ready to register for two-credit Culminating Project (PUBHLTH 7998) should follow the same process as for the Culminating Project Prep Seminar and use the same [Permission to Enroll form](#). Students beginning the MPH-PEP before 2016 should Complete the Permission to enroll for PUBHLTH 7998 as a three-credit course.
3. The culminating project prep seminar and culminating project are graded S/U. Students may register for additional independent studies credit to complete their culminating projects. Increasing to a total of five hours of credit for the culminating project requires an approved proposal and a justification and approval from your culminating project advisor. The hours of credit may be taken over more than one term, with advisor approval. If a student takes more than one semester to complete the culminating project, an *Incomplete* will be assigned until the project has been completed.
4. 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 students are required to take three credits during the semester of graduation, students should ensure they will meet this University requirement *before* seeking permission to enroll in the Culminating Project Prep Seminar.
5. Each student will have a culminating project advisor. Students will work with the Program Director to identify a faculty member in the College of Public Health to serve as the culminating project advisor. Faculty serving as a culminating project advisor must have a primary advisor appointment in the College of Public Health, defined as receiving over 50% of salary from the College of Public Health. Students are recommended to discuss project ideas with the Program Director and appropriate faculty members at least two semesters prior to expected graduation.
6. Students must also choose another OSU faculty member as a second reader. The second reader must have M or P graduate faculty status at OSU. The second committee member is chosen with the agreement of the student and the faculty advisor. The second reader should be chosen as early as possible and 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.

7. 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.
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.

Culminating Project Prep Seminar

MPH-PEP students beginning the program in 2016 or later are required to complete the Culminating Project Preparation course the semester before you begin the Culminating Project.

The purpose of the Prep course is to give students and advisors more time to complete the required project planning components, including:

1. Culminating Project Proposal
2. Culminating Project Advisor Form
3. CITI Training Completion Certification
4. IRB or other review board application (if applicable)
5. Culminating Project Topic Description and Methods Sections
6. Project Management Plan

The Prep course is an online, asynchronous course, but must be satisfactorily completed prior to beginning the project. It is the student's responsibility to complete all required assignments within the course's Carmen site to satisfactorily complete the project.

The MPH-PEP program director will assign the S/U grading based on assignment completion. However, any questions related to the culminating project must be addressed to the student's faculty or culminating project advisor. Any questions about the course requirements can be addressed through the course's Carmen site.

Culminating Project Timeline and Graduation Requirements

Students and project advisors must agree upon a timeline for completion of the project, subject to the constraints of Graduate School deadlines. In addition, students may be required meet other deadlines, such as submitting outlines or drafts of project paper, etc. **Students are responsible for meeting all deadlines**, some of which are:

1. Graduation applications are required to be submitted the 10th 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.
2. As noted above, students must register for a minimum of three credit hours during the term of graduation. Two of these three hours typically will be credit for the culminating project (PUBHLTH 7998), but it is the student's responsibility to work with their advisor and the MPH-PEP program director to ensure this requirement is met.
3. Upon completion of the culminating project, students 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.

4. The review should be scheduled during the term you expect to graduate and in consideration of Graduate School deadlines for document submission. It is critical to work the project advisor to establish a timeline that leaves enough time to allow the Committee to review the document and the student enough time to revise before submitting to the college.
5. Students must provide the Committee members with a correctly formatted (refer to page 6), near-final draft of your project documents at least two weeks prior to the review meeting date. 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. Students completing their culminating project in the summer will be required to complete their project in the eighth or ninth week.
6. If required by the culminating project Committee, students will revise the document(s) until the committee finds it satisfactory. Once approved, the student will email the final Culminating Project to CPH-Graduation@osu.edu. Note that the final date for completing all requirements (including the project presentation) and electronically submitting the project 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>.
7. 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.

Culminating Project Documentation General Requirements

All students are required to complete a final document for their project. This document will look different based on the type of project, but the following are general rules to follow for all documents.

- 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.
- 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.
- Documents must be in 12-point Arial font; however, tables and footnotes may be in 10-point font, if necessary.
- Page numbers should be inserted on each page except the title page.
- All figures and tables must be numbered, and all appendices must be labeled alphabetically.

- 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.
- 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.
- Citation of references should follow a standard format, such as that used for biomedical journals or the American Psychological Association. References should be from high-quality and respected sources. You should be ready to justify the use of all resources. Helpful references for citations and references include:
 - a. <http://www.apastyle.org/about-apa-style.aspx> (Preferred)
 - b. OSU Libraries *Choosing and Using Sources: A Guide to Academic Research*, [Section 8](#). (Preferred)
 - c. <http://writecite.com/>
 - d. <http://www.calvin.edu/library/knightcite/>
 - e. https://scholar.google.com/citations?view_op=new_profile&hl=en

Additionally, staff of the OSU Prior Health Sciences Library can help if you have questions about citation styles.

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](#).

Report Format

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 students will submit a culminating report in addition to other project deliverables. Generally, the final report contents may include the following sections; **however, the contents of the report will vary based on the project, its scope, and other factors to be agreed upon by the committee:**

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.

CULMINATING PROJECTS

Project Types

Students should work with their advisors at the beginning of their second year to plan a culminating project. One of the first decisions will be the type of project to complete. In the past, many students completed either an applied research project or wrote a grant proposal. However,

because of the diversity of MPH PEP students, it may be appropriate to consider additional 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 both faculty members' consent, may name another faculty member culminating project advisor. In this case, the academic advisor will serve as the project's second reader.

Examples of potential projects include:

- Designing and completing a quality improvement project
- Writing a grant proposal
- Developing an applied research proposal or completing a research project
- 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
- A comprehensive evidence review and accompanying policy brief or development of guidelines
- Evaluating a community coalition or collaborative process
- Completing a health impact assessment
- Developing a performance management system for an agency or organization

Three projects types are discussed listed below.

Quality Improvement Process

Students wishing to design and complete a quality improvement project should work closely with their committee member to ensure the scope of the project satisfies culminating project requirements. While the appropriate scope of the project will ultimately be determined by the committee, students should at a minimum be involved with the design and planning of the project, and they should lead its implementation, data collection and reporting. Students must have approval from their supervisor or the organizations quality improvement lead, and they are encouraged to work with their organization's quality improvement team, if present. Projects can use any quality improvement process; however, students must fully describe and justify the use of the process. Project can be completed in a number of settings, including governmental public health and health care.

The final report for a quality improvement project may be adapted as necessary to fit the project and with approval from the Committee. Resources to guide students in writing a quality improvement project report include:

- [*Standards for Quality Improvement Reporting Excellence \(SQUIRE\) 2.0 Guidelines*](#).
- Institute for Healthcare Improvement's [Publications page](#); and
- Brian M. Wong and Gail M. Sullivan (2016) How to Write Up Your Quality Improvement Initiatives for Publication. *Journal of Graduate Medical Education*: May 2016, Vol. 8, No. 2, pp. 128-133. <http://www.igme.org/doi/full/10.4300/JGME-D-16-00086.1?code=gmed-site>.

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.

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.