

### Course Directors

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### Course Description

MPH students are required to demonstrate proficiency in the application of the skills they acquire during their academic program through the **Practicum** (PubH 214) and the **Culminating Experience** (PubH 215). The two courses can be taken simultaneously or sequentially, in which case the Practicum would come first.

The **Culminating Experience (CE)** is a graded course which consists of four elements that focus on a practice activity: (a) Concept Paper, (b) Proposal/ IRB Application, (c) Final Report, and (d) Oral Presentation. These elements are described in the Appendix—Guidelines for Culminating Experience Elements.

The **Culminating Experience** is a planned experience that requires a student to synthesize and integrate knowledge acquired in coursework and to apply theory and principles in an experience that approximates some aspect of professional practice. The Culminating Experience will demonstrate the student's mastery of the body of knowledge and proficiency in the program competencies. The CE in PCH will include a major written paper such as a thesis or applied research project, which presents the results of: a needs assessment, development and pilot testing of an intervention program or components of a program, development and implementation of community advocacy programs, evaluation of programs or policies, or development and evaluation of case studies. *(please see your advisor for specific examples)*

### Course Prerequisites:

- PubH 202 Biostatistical Applications for Public Health
- PubH 203 Principles and Practice of Epidemiology
- PubH 205 Policy Approaches to Public Health
- PubH 207 Social and Behavioral Approaches to Public Health

- PubH 382 Planning and Administration of Health Promotion, Disease Prevention Programs

*Please see PCH Academic Advisor for program specific course prerequisites.*

### **Course Co-Requisites**

- PubH 214 Practicum
- PubH 383 Evaluation of Health Promotion, Disease Prevention Programs

### **Other Prerequisites**

- Students must take the online training courses relating to research with human subjects (CITI) and personal health information (HIPAA). *See Practicum Handbook for details:* <http://www.gwumc.edu/sphhs/studentres/practicum/download/Student%20Practicum%20Guidebook.pdf>.
- Students must have participated in the SPHHS professional skills seminar, designed to assist students with preparing for their professional endeavors. *See Practicum Handbook for details.*
- Students must have attended a Culminating Experience Information Session or met with their advisor to review the CE policies and procedures.
- If applicable, students must have submitted IRB paperwork before participating in the Culminating Experience.

### **Course Objectives: Upon completion of the culminating experience, students will be able to:**

1. Identify and assess an issue that affects the public's health and well-being. This information will be synthesized and used to postulate hypotheses and/or to identify appropriate strategies in order to evaluate the potential or actual impact of health problems/ programs or policies.
2. Apply principles and methods of the ecological approach to design, plan, and conduct research or applications that may include observational and experimental designs, screening programs, public health surveillance, program design, implementation or evaluation.
3. Synthesize and analyze data and relevant literature to interpret findings in a theoretical framework, write a final report, and make an oral presentation.

### **Method of Instruction**

Students are actively involved in the integration of knowledge and skills gained in their MPH program under the supervision of the Culminating Experience Advisor. The student's progress in accomplishing the four basic elements of the course is tracked with the use of the Culminating Experience Tracking Form, which identifies the student, the activity, the preceptor (if applicable), and the CE Advisor and serves as a form of certification that each activity has been completed and certified by the GW Academic Advisor.

## **Methods of Evaluation**

Students will be assessed on how well they accomplish the objectives for the Culminating Experience through the evaluation of their: (a) Concept Paper, (b) Proposal/IRB Application, (c) Final Report, and (d) Oral Presentation. The Culminating Experience Advisor will complete evaluations of the student's performance.

## **Grading Scale**

The Culminating Experience will be graded as follows:

- Concept Paper — Required (Pass/Fail)
- Proposal — Required (Pass/Fail)
- Final Report — 75%
- Oral Presentation — 25%

## **Class Policy: Attendance/Participation**

This is not a classroom experience, but one where students work semi-independently under the supervision of their preceptor (if applicable) and CE Advisor.

## **Academic Integrity**

Please review the University's policy on academic integrity, located at [www.gwu.edu/~ntegrity/code.html](http://www.gwu.edu/~ntegrity/code.html). All graded work must be completed in accordance with The George Washington University Code of Academic Integrity.

Academic dishonesty is defined as cheating of any kind, including misrepresenting one's own work, taking credit for the work of others without crediting them and without appropriate authorization, and the fabrication of information. Common examples of academically dishonest behavior include, but are not limited to, the following: cheating; fabrication; plagiarism; falsification and forgery of University academic documents, submitting the same work in more than one course without prior permission of both instructors, and facilitating academic dishonesty.

## **Students with Disabilities**

If you feel you may need an accommodation based on the impact of a disability, please contact me privately to discuss specific needs. Please contact the Disability Support Services Office at 202.994.8250, Suite 242 Marvin Center, <http://gwired.gwu.edu/dss>, to establish eligibility and to coordinate reasonable accommodations.

## **Student Responsibilities**

- 1) The Practicum and the CE can be completed in tandem. If the student wishes to combine these two activities, it is the responsibility of the student to meet with the Practicum Director and the Academic Advisor to formulate how the two experiences will be combined BEFORE the start of the Practicum.
- 2) The student may choose to have separate activities for the practicum and CE. If the practicum and CE activities are unconnected, it is the responsibility of the student to work with the CE Advisor to develop a plan of completion.

- 3) Before beginning the CE, students must fulfill certain requirements. The student **must** attend a Culminating Experience Information Session in a semester preceding the semester in which s/he plans to complete the CE.
- 4) The student should register for the CE during her/his last planned semester at GWU SPHHS.
- 5) The student will develop a concept paper in which the student plans to complete the CE. This paper should describe the work that will be done for the CE as well as how the work will be carried out. *See Appendix for Concept Paper template.*
- 6) The Concept Paper will be reviewed by your GW academic advisor to assess the appropriateness of its scope, its feasibility, and any appropriate departmental faculty that may serve as advisors to the student. Once the Concept Paper is approved the student will expand the Concept Paper into a Proposal and IRB submission which requires the approval of the GW Advisor and Practicum Site Preceptor (if applicable). *See Appendix for Proposal guidelines.*
- 7) It is the responsibility of the student to assemble the IRB submission to be reviewed and approved by the GW academic advisor and Practicum Site Preceptor (if applicable).
- 8) It is the responsibility of the student to produce a Culminating Experience Final Report. The CE Final Report represents the final written deliverable for completion of the CE in the MPH program. The GW Advisor must receive an advanced draft of the report **four weeks** before the student intends to make the Oral Presentation.
- 9) Once the GW Advisor gives authorization, the student will work with her/his GW Advisor and/or CE Director to schedule the Oral Presentation. Students are encouraged to invite their Site Preceptors to their Oral Presentations.
- 10) The student has the option to provide the GW Advisor with a copy of the PowerPoint presentation **two weeks** before the scheduled date of the Oral Presentation. *See Appendix.*

## Appendix: Guidelines for Culminating Experience Elements

### 1. Title Page

A Title Page must be included with each of the written documents (Concept Paper, Proposal, and Final Report) and submitted to your GW Academic Advisor. The proper format of the Title Page should be:

Culminating Experience TITLE of Project

DATE

Protocol Approved by  
The George Washington University  
Institutional Review Board IRB #  
(if applicable)

Submitted by:  
Student Name  
Contact Information

in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements  
for the Master of Public Health Degree  
[INSERT MPH Program]  
Department of Prevention and Community Health  
School of Public Health and Health Services  
The George Washington University

### 2. Concept Paper: 1-2 pages double-spaced (including references)

Please follow this template by maintaining the headings of each section. The concept paper should emphasize the public health issue, objectives, and methods to be implemented in the CE.

#### a. Background

Presentation of the public health issue that is proposed to be the focus of the CE. A brief review of the public health significance and justification of need for the activity to be carried out (e.g., gaps in service, research area)

#### b. Specific Aims

Clear statement of the specific aims of your project/practice activity

#### c. Objectives

Clear statements of the principle health objective(s) and behavioral objective(s) your program/project will be assessing

#### d. Methods

Outline of the proposed program activity methods, the project design, types and sources of the data, and human subjects protections

#### e. Timeline for the CE project or activity.

f. Public Health Courses

Courses completed thus far that have served as preparation for completion of the CE methods.

g. References

**3. Proposal: 5 — 10 double-spaced pages and Institutional Review Board Submission**

The proposal represents an expansion of the approved Concept Paper, including a literature review. In addition to the above elements, which should be described in greater detail, a scientific abstract using standard *American Journal of Public Health* format should be included after the Title Page.

**Institutional Review Board (IRB) Review**

Students must work with their GW Advisor, the Office of Human Research (OHR), the Practicum Director (if the CE is combined with the Practicum) to determine the type and process of IRB review that will be needed for completion of the Culminating Experience. OHR has a Blackboard course which has forms and worksheets to assist students. Once an IRB submission has been prepared, the student will submit the paperwork to the GW Academic Advisor for review and approval signature (with departmental chair signature if necessary), and the package should then be submitted to the Office of Human Research for review and signature.

The IRB is a committee mandated by federal law to protect the rights and welfare of human subjects participating in research activities. The IRB achieves its primary function, protecting the rights and welfare of subjects participating in research, by educating researchers.

For Human Subject Research course requirements, please consult the SPHHS Practicum Handbook:

<http://www.gwumc.edu/sphhs/studentres/practicum/download/Student%20Practicum%20Guidebook.pdf>

Other institutions with their own IRBs: Students will sometimes work with institutions other than GWU that have their own IRB. The general rule is that students still have to complete an IRB submission for GW once the IRB used by the site has approved the project. Students should include the other IRB's documentation of project approval.

For students conducting research at Children's National Medical Center (CNMC), submissions are made directly to the CNMC IRB. There is no need for a submission to the GW IRB because there is an agreement between the two institutions and the CNMC IRB will notify the GW IRB of any submissions.

**4. Culminating Experience Final Report Guidelines—approximately 25-50 double-spaced pages**

The Final Report follows the outline of a published research paper, and represents the final written deliverable for completion of the CE in the MPH program. It should include the following elements:

- 1) Title Page

## 2) Abstract

Summary of the project which includes a brief statement of purpose, the methods, results and conclusions. Most abstracts are 300 words or less.

## 3) Background

This section provides a discussion of background of the research topic, synthesis of previous research, significant findings and gaps in previous research methods and/or findings. Sections include:

- a. Literature Review
- b. Public Health Significance
- c. Specific Aims
- d. Health and Behavioral Objectives
- e. Theoretical or Conceptual Framework

## 4) Methods

This section describes the project design, the study sample, how the sample was recruited, sample selection criteria, data collection tools and methods, and procedures for implementing the study. This section also describes the plan for the data analysis. Sections include:

- a. including project design/methods used to collect, analyze and evaluate the data
- b. description of the data sources,
- c. variables to be measured,
- d. statistical analysis methods employed,
- e. human subjects protection issues (IRB approval number)

## 5) Results

This section provides a description of the data and the principal findings of your project. The description, analysis and evaluation of the data should include tables/figures presenting the data, statistical results and significance (if quantitative).

## 6) Discussion

This section is critical. The goal here is to interpret your results or findings. What do your results mean? How are the results similar or different from what other researchers have found previously? What accounts for why your findings are similar or different from previous findings? What were the limitations of your study (problems or obstacles encountered) that may have influenced the findings?

## 7) Conclusions and recommendations

Describe the important findings of the research. Describe the implications for public health practice or research if appropriate. Discuss further directions for research, future public health practice or education for clients, consumers, or communities.

## 8) References

A list of all references cited in the text of the paper. Use either APA or AJP/AMA formats.

HINT: Review any APHA or JAMA journal research reports for further examples of writing style and format.

- 9) Appendices: e.g., data collection instruments, curriculum developed, communication materials

At least **four weeks** prior to the scheduled presentation date, the student must provide an advanced draft of the CE final report to her/his GW Academic Advisor.

### **5. Oral Presentation Guidelines**

Students are expected to prepare a concise, **10 minute** oral presentation using PowerPoint slides. The basic outline of the talk should include a Title Slide, Background, Hypotheses or Objectives, Methods, Results, Summary, and/or Conclusions, Recommendations, and Acknowledgements. The number of slides presented should be limited to about 10 to 15, as each slide takes about one minute to present. Each presentation will be followed by a 10-15 minute question and answer session with Department faculty and other students.

The student has the option to provide the GW Advisor with a copy of the PowerPoint presentation **two weeks** before the scheduled date of the Oral Presentation. *See Appendix.*