

The MPH CULMINATING EXPERIENCE

Fall 2008 PHS 650 Section 046

2 credits

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Overview

The Culminating Experience is a 2 credit course in which students will work independently to produce two products:

- A paper (e.g., 20-30 page report, or manuscript for submission to a journal)
- An oral presentation (e.g., 10 minute presentation at the Public Health Symposium).

MPH students either must have completed or are concurrently completing the Public Health Field Experience in order to enroll in the MPH Culminating Experience Course.

Each component of the course comprises 50% of the final grade. Students are evaluated by the MPH Program Director and the student's UW Mentor.

Students are free to collaborate during the preparation of their work and can seek peer input/critique, but each individual must independently prepare a product with a unique focus.

Prior to registering for the Culminating Experience students must document the originality of their paper and research and receive approval by the MPH Program Office. The approval for the Culminating Experience can be done at the same time as the Field Experience through submission of the Field Learning Agreement Form.

Learning Objectives

Goal: Students will demonstrate their ability to communicate orally and in writing, the lessons learned during their experience working in a community or public health setting.

Objectives: Through the culminating experience, MPH students will be able to:

- Integrate the public health theory, knowledge and skills gained in a community or public health practice setting during the field experience;
- Report about a defined project in an area of public health practice including but not limited to core public health functions such as needs assessment, program planning, program evaluation, policy development, educational campaign, applied research project;
- Discuss the skills and knowledge gained/expanded/enhanced in an area of interest not covered in depth elsewhere in the student's educational plan;
- Demonstrate proficiency in mastering at least three of the cross-cutting MPH competencies.

MPH Cross-Cutting Competencies

Students will self-report the cross-cutting competencies they were able to master during the Field Experience. In the culminating experience paper, the student will be required to report about how these competencies were mastered during the MPH Program. The cross-cutting competencies include:

- **Communication and Informatics** – the ability to collect, manage, and organize data to produce information and meaning that is exchanged by use of signs and symbols; to gather, process, and present information to different audiences in-person, through information technologies, or through the media channels; and to strategically design the information and knowledge exchange process to achieve specific objectives.
- **Diversity and Culture** - the ability to interact with both diverse individuals and communities to produce or impact an intended public health outcome.
- **Leadership** – the ability to create and communicate a shared vision for a changing future; champion solutions to organizational and community challenges; and energize commitment to goals.
- **Professionalism** – the ability to demonstrate ethical choices, values and professional practices implicit in public health decisions; consider the effect of choices on community stewardship, equity, social justice and accountability; and to commit to personal and institutional development.
- **Program Planning** - the ability to plan for the design, development, implementation, and evaluation strategies to improve individual and community health.

- **Public Health Biology** - the biological and molecular context of public health.
- **Systems Thinking** - the ability to recognize system level properties that result from dynamic interactions among human and social systems and how they affect the relationships among individuals, groups, organizations, communities, and environments.

The full document for the MPH competencies can be found at <http://www.asph.org/userfiles/Version2.3.pdf>

The Culminating Experience Paper

The culminating experience paper may be submitted in one of two formats – either as a 20-30 page paper summarizing a student's investigation into a public health problem from the description of the problem during their coursework, to their field work experience or a manuscript of comparable length submitted to a public health peer-reviewed journal.

A detailed outline is provided below for the student who wishes to submit a scholarly paper to the MPH Program Office to meet the culminating paper criteria. Students may negotiate the final form of their paper with the MPH Program Office, to appropriately match their project objectives.

The final paper may be an extension or further development of work previously submitted for other courses at UW-Madison or for professional practice, but it must have been prepared since matriculating as an MPH student.

Guidelines for the Culminating Experience Paper

The Culminating Experience paper should reflect the overall goals and objectives (stated in Field Learning Agreement) of the field work experience and provide details of the project completed. Specific guidelines for the paper include:

- The paper must be typed, double-spaced, and 20-30 pages in length (not including references), with one-inch margins and 12 point font.
- The final paper must be completed and a hard copy turned into the MPH Program Office no later than the last day of final exams for the semester in which the course is taken.

- As with all assignments, students are held to UW-Madison's integrity standards.
- Students should use the AMA or APA format in writing the paper.

The following are components to include in the final paper. This format will vary depending on the nature of the field work, and can be negotiated with the MPH Program Office depending on the nature of the student's project.

Abstract (1 page)

Prepare a 250 word summary of the paper in a structured abstract (Objective, Problem, Methods, Results, Conclusion).

Introduction (1-2 paragraphs)

Provide an introduction of the topic and/or public health problem. This section should prepare the reader for the purpose of the paper.

Background (~4-6 pages)

This section of the paper should provide the evidence of the problem as well as the evidence to justify the project and/or the intervention. Include relevant and current public health literature as it relates to the topic and project. A minimum of 10 references from peer-reviewed journals should be cited. Sources may vary, depending on the topic and agency.

The following questions may be considered:

- 1) What is the prevalence/incidence of the problem?
- 2) Are certain groups disproportionately affected?
- 3) What are the economic, social and physical consequences?
- 4) What has already been done about this problem and what are the gaps?
- 5) How is the agency you worked with trying to address those gaps?
- 6) What has been learned from previous interventions/work and how is this information used to inform current or future action?

Agency/Organization Background (~2-3 pages)

As applicable, include related history, involvement in the public health problem, mission, relevant partners and stakeholders, and current activities as they relate to the project/topic.

Project Description/Methods (~4-5 pages)

Describe the project, including goals and objectives relevant to the public health problem. Include the methods/process of the intervention/project

and the outcomes. Depending on the nature of the project, this may include any or all of the following:

- Research and/or evaluation methods
- Program planning methods
- Survey design and implementation methods
- Community outreach procedures and activities
- Needs assessment methodology
- Advocacy efforts and activities
- Health education development (materials, etc.)

Results/Findings (~4-5 pages)

This section should include the results or findings of the project.

The following questions may be considered:

- 1) What were the findings/outcomes (qualitative or quantitative) of the project?
- 2) By what criteria was the project successful? Effective? Were the outcomes expected?
- 3) What about sustainability (to invest in transformational population health programs and initiatives which have the potential to evolve and become self-sustaining)?
- 4) What partnerships were utilized or are needed?
- 5) Did the organizational structure affect the outcomes?

Competencies (~2-3 pages)

This section should include a discussion about the MPH Cross-cutting competencies and how they were mastered during the MPH Program and the field experience. Identify the cross-cutting competencies that you chose to address and provide documentation regarding the skills and knowledge that you gained in each of these areas as a result of a culmination of your didactic learning and experiences in the field.

Discussion (~ 4-5pages)

This section should reflect upon the project and discuss overall strengths and limitations.

The following questions may be considered:

- 1) How do these results compare to the literature?
- 2) Were the results different for subgroups?
- 3) Could anything have been improved?
- 4) What were lessons learned?
- 5) What happens next?
- 6) What is the public health impact?

Conclusion (1-2 paragraphs)

References

Critical use of references is required. Students are advised to consider the quality of their cited resources and recognize the distinction between advocacy documents (now easily accessible on the web) and peer-reviewed literature. For assistance with citations and writing, contact the UW Writing Center and the Writing Center Handbook:

<http://www.wisc.edu/writing/>.

A guide to the AMA citation style can be found online at:

<http://www.liunet.edu/cwis/cwp/library/workshop/citama.htm>.

A guide to the APA citation style can be found online at:

<http://www.apastyle.org/elecref.html>

Appendices

- Include a timeline of the project (required)
- Any supporting data (tables, charts, graphs, surveys, evaluation forms, etc.)

Guidelines for the Culminating Manuscript

Students may submit a manuscript to a public health journal rather than the previously described paper. Students should follow the "Instructions to Author" provided by the journal for the format of the paper. The completed manuscript will be graded regardless of whether it is published or not. In order for the manuscript to be accepted as the Culminating Experience paper it must meet the following criteria:

- The paper must be a comparable length to the culminating paper previously described (at least 15 – 20 pages).
- The student must be the first or second author of the paper.
- The student must be able to document the originality of the research.
- If applicable, the student must be able to document IRB approval of the project.
- The journal to which the student will be submitting the manuscript must be pre-approved by the MPH Program Office
- The student must also provide written evidence of competencies met during the field experience under separate cover to the MPH Program office by the end of the semester in which the culminating experience is taken.

Evaluation

Papers will be graded on a 100 point scale based on the following criteria:

- The background, rationale, and purpose for the project are clearly stated (20 points)
- The methods are clearly described and appropriate for the purpose of the project (20 points)
- The results are presented clearly, using tables and figures if appropriate (20 points)
- The discussion relates the findings to the existing literature, identifies strengths and limitations, and describes implications for public health (20 points)
- The paper is well written (e.g., following the guidelines above) (20 points)
- Assignments that are turned in late will be reduced by one grade level for each day that the project is late (10 points) unless arrangements to take an incomplete are made with the MPH Program Office.

Method of assessment:

- 20 points = outstanding
- 19 points = excellent
- 18 points = very good
- 17 points = good
- 16 points = fair
- <15 points = poor

Grades will be based on 100 points:

- A = 93+
- AB = 88-92
- B = 83-88
- BC = 78-82
- C = <78

Culminating Experience Oral Presentation

In addition to producing a Culminating Experience paper, each student will be expected to prepare a brief presentation of his/her project to fellow classmates, preceptors, UW Mentors and other interested parties. This presentation will occur after the conclusion of the field experience at one of the three Public Health Symposia sponsored by the MPH Program. Dates for the 2008 Public Health Symposia are as follows:

- May 9, 2008
- August 8, 2008

- Fall 2008, TBD

Specific guidelines for the oral presentation include the following (see additional information attached at the end of this document):

- 1) Presentations must not exceed 10 minutes-- with an additional 10 minutes of time for questions.
- 2) The format for the oral presentation must include the following:
 - Title
 - Acknowledgments
 - Overview/Outline
 - Introduction/background
 - Project Methods
 - Results/Findings
 - Discussion
 - Conclusion

Evaluation

Presentations will be graded (100 points) on the following criteria:

- The purpose for the project is clearly stated (20 points)
- The methods are clearly described and appropriate for the purpose of the project (20 points)
- The results are presented clearly, using tables and figures if appropriate (20 points)
- The discussion relates the findings to the existing literature, identifies strengths and limitations, and describes implications for public health (20 points)
- The presentation is well organized and presented within the time allotted (20 points)

Method of assessment:

- 20 points = outstanding
- 19 points = excellent
- 18 points = very good
- 17 points = good
- 16 points = fair
- <15 points = poor

Grades will be based on 100 points:

- A = 93+
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