

University of Arkansas for Medical Sciences
Fay W. Boozman College of Public Health
MPH Culminating Experience

The MPH Culminating Experience requires the student to integrate the knowledge gained and demonstrate the skills acquired through their course work and practical experience into a capstone project. Through this project the student will apply public health theories and principles to a specific aspect of public health practice. The result of the culminating experience varies, but may include the preparation of a manuscript for publication, a health policy proposal, a research proposal for submission, or the equivalent. Each student's culminating experience is overseen by a Culminating Experience Project Advisory Committee (CEPAC) composed of COPH faculty members.

MPH Culminating Experience General Policies

The Culminating Experience is a college-wide course required of all MPH candidates and is meant to be taken at the end of the student's program. The Culminating Experience consists of a final project and a required seminar to be completed concurrently.

Culminating Experience Policies

- Students must complete all core courses (18 hours) and a minimum of nine hours of specialty coursework prior to beginning the Culminating Experience.¹
- No student who has earned less than a 3.00 GPA in COPH courses may enroll in the Culminating Experience.
- Students should begin planning and preparing for the Culminating Experience project well in advance of registering for the course. Two months' advance preparation is recommended.
 - Students are encouraged to be creative in proposing a Culminating Experience, especially if the proposed product would meet a need in the community or the setting in which the student has completed his/her Preceptorship.
- Students are required to attend a Culminating Experience Information Session provided by the Public Health Practice Coordinator (PHPC) in the COPH Office of Student Affairs (OSA).
- It is *strongly* recommended that the student attend the required information session one semester before initiating the Culminating Experience. The information sessions are offered in the fall, spring, and summer semesters (contact the OSA for scheduled dates and times of the meetings, 526-6747).
- Requirements of the Culminating Experience Project Plan
 - The plan must address at least two public health sciences in project activities, learning objectives and related core and specialty competencies.
 - The plan must clearly describe the process to be used to integrate the public health sciences into the project activities. Statements that the student "will use their knowledge of [*names of public health sciences*] to complete the project" are not adequate.
 - The plan must include documentation that (a) the CEPAC and student had at least one full-group meeting prior to the approval of the plan and (b) the CEPAC and student will have at least one full-group meeting again during the Culminating Experience.

¹ Refer to the Early Initiation of Culminating Experience Policy for information regarding beginning the Culminating Experience prior to fulfilling course requirements.

- Students will have a maximum of three (3) consecutive semesters to complete their Culminating Experience project beginning with the first semester in which they register for it. Students who require more than one semester to complete their project must register and pay tuition for CPH 5992 Culminating Experience Project each subsequent semester necessary and allowed.
- All Culminating Experience Project plans and papers will be made publicly available (unblinded) in the OSA.
- Students are required to register for CPH 5991 Culminating Experience Seminar and CPH 5992 Culminating Experience Project during the first semester of their culminating experience.
- Students may be granted credit for the CPH 5991 Culminating Experience Seminar by providing proof of passing the National Board of Public Health Examiners' Certification in Public Health (CPH) exam, thus demonstrating competence in MPH core and cross-cutting competencies.
- Culminating Experiences are graded on pass/fail basis.

Checklist for CPH 5992 Culminating Experience Project

Before the Culminating Experience

- Attend a Culminating Experience Information Session (required).
- Select two CPH faculty members (one of whom must be a primary faculty member) to serve as your CEPAC. It is required that at least two departments are represented on the CEPAC. Each member of the CEPAC must sign your Culminating Experience registration form. (See description of CEPAC below for further details.)
- Create a Culminating Experience Plan with your CEPAC members. Participation by the CEPAC in the creation of the plan is required.
- If you have not completed all core courses (18 hours) or a minimum of nine hours of specialty coursework, refer to the Early Initiation of Culminating Experience Policy below for additional materials to be included in the plan.
- Prior to submitting an application for review to the Institutional Review Board (IRB) you must complete the Human Subjects Protection Training required by the IRB. Your CEPAC Chair will help you determine whether the Biomedical training or Social Behavioral Research training is appropriate for your project. (<http://irb.uams.edu/new-studies-staff/human-subject-protection-training/>)
- Work with your CEPAC Chair to obtain *Institutional Review Board (IRB)* review of the Culminating Experience. **Submit IRB applications AT LEAST TWO MONTHS prior to the start of the project. To determine if you are IRB exempt, please complete the human subject research determination form in CLARA to the IRB and attach a copy of the determination letter to your plan.** Your CEPAC Chair will assist you in completing the IRB forms and must approve the forms prior to submission. On the IRB application you will be listed as the primary contact and Principal Investigator (PI). Your CEPAC Chair as key personnel (Sub-investigator or support staff).
- Review your plan with your **entire CEPAC**, make necessary edits, and obtain all necessary signatures **well in advance of** the semester in which you plan to register for the Culminating Experience Project & Seminar. In-person meetings with all parties are strongly recommended.
- Once your plan has been approved by the appropriate persons, turn in your MPH Culminating Experience Project Registration Form and packet to the CPH Registrar and PHPC. The packet must include completed documents in this order:
 - Registration form (obtain from OSA)
 - Unofficial transcript
 - Culminating Experience Project plan

- Human Subjects Research Determination letter
- IRB certificate
- If applicable, written approval for early initiation of the Culminating Experience by the CEPAC Chair and committee, Departmental Chair, and Associate Dean for Professional Programs
- The registration form and packet must be submitted by:
 - The end of the business day on or before 5:00 PM December 10th for spring registration
 - The end of the business day on or before 5:00 PM July 10th for fall registration
- Register online for COPH 5992 Culminating Experience Project and COPH 5991 Culminating Experience Seminar.

You are **not** registered for COPH 5992 Culminating Experience Project until your complete registration packet is on file with the COPH Registrar and PHPC. It is the student's responsibility to submit the completed registration packet to the COPH Registrar and PHPC.

Incomplete portions of the required documentation will **NOT** be accepted by the Registrar and PHPC.

Culminating Experience Project Plan Requirements

- **Title**
- **Description of Culminating Experience Project.** Inclusion of at least two public health sciences in project activities, learning objectives and selected competencies is required. The process by which the student will integrate these public health perspectives into their project activities must be clearly described. Statements that the student “will use their knowledge of [*names of public health sciences*] to complete the project” are not adequate.
- **Learning objectives.** Describe how the project activities will provide the student with an opportunity to integrate the knowledge gained and skills acquired through coursework in an interdisciplinary manner.
- **Core and specialty competencies.** Describe how the selected core and specialty competencies will be addressed through learning objectives and project activities.
- **Project activities.** Describe how the activities to be completed demonstrate the relationship to the learning objectives and selected competencies, and the integrative nature of the project.
- **Timeline.** Include a timeline of all project activities.
- **Agreement.** Include a statement of agreement to participate in all required meetings of the Culminating Experience Seminar or a statement that participation in the Culminating Experience Seminar is waived due to passage of the CPH exam.
- **Meetings with CEPAC.** Include the frequency of meetings with the CEPAC Chair and/or full committee.
- **COPH transcript.** Include a current unofficial COPH transcript, obtained from the COPH Registrar, for review of coursework by the CEPAC.
- **COPH Honor Code.** Include a statement of agreement with the COPH Honor Code.
- **Statement of IRB status.** Include a statement of IRB review and status showing how submission to the IRB is part of the plan or showing IRB dispensation; include copies of Human Subjects Protection Training certification and the Human Subject Determination letter.
- **Final product.** Include a full detailed description of the final product to be provided to CEPAC and presented at seminar. Submission and approval of an appropriate “product” reflecting the ability to integrate public health knowledge and skills as they apply to a specific aspect of public health is required for successful completion of the Culminating Experience.

- **Justification for early initiation of project.** If needed, justification for beginning the culminating experience prior to completing required coursework and written approval for doing so from CEPAC Chair, CEPAC, departmental chair and the Associate Dean for Professional Programs. See Early Initiation of Culminating Experience Policy below for additional information.

During the Culminating Experience

- Attend the Culminating Experience Seminar sessions, as required, and participate fully. There will be at least three sessions, at the beginning, mid-point, and end of the semester. It is the student's responsibility to ensure attendance to these meetings.
- Complete project activities according to the timeline as outlined in your plan and agreed upon by you and your CEPAC.
- Meet with your CEPAC and/or the CEPAC Chair, according to the schedule agreed upon in your Culminating Experience Plan. This should include at least three meetings during the semester. One of these meetings must be with all CEPAC members.
- Notify your CEPAC immediately if you realize that you will be unable to complete the project activities according to the planned timeline.
- Write the Culminating Experience product as described in your plan. The product must be turned in to your CEPAC Chair by the end of the semester.
- Prepare a professional poster presentation of your Culminating Experience product at the final Culminating Experience Seminar session, which will be open to the public. Refer to MPH Guidelines for Culminating Experience Poster Presentations below for requirements.
- Prior to the end of the semester request that your CEPAC members provide the CEPAC Chair with a review of your performance; the Chair and Seminar instructor assign a pass/fail grade to your project and poster presentation.

At the End of the Culminating Experience

- Please provide your CEPAC and specialty department chair with feedback about your Culminating Experience Project and Seminar. What would improve it? What did you like best?
- Provide a copy of your approved Culminating Experience product to the PHPC. The product must be signed by your CEPAC Chair indicating that it is acceptable in meeting the expectations of the Culminating Experience Project plan.

Examples of Appropriate Culminating Experience Project Products

- Manuscript appropriate for submission to a peer-reviewed journal
- Technical report (narrative appropriate for submission by a grantee agency to the funding or oversight agency)
- Research proposal (narrative appropriate for submission to a granting agency)
- Public policy proposal (e.g., proposal and rationale for a new law or regulatory program to address a public health problem)
- Educational materials that include substantial original content and address a public health problem and/or need in the community

MPH Culminating Experience Project Poster Presentation Guidelines

Effective for Culminating Experiences beginning on or after June 1, 2006

The guidelines for MPH Culminating Experience Project Poster Presentations were developed and approved by the COPH Academic Standards Committee, and subsequently endorsed by the COPH Dean's Executive Committee. The guidelines provide a set of expected minimum standards required for all Culminating Experience Poster Project presentations.

During the poster presentation students will be expected to, at a minimum, do the following:

1. Orient the audience to the goals, objectives and competencies of the project;
2. Provide the context of the public health problem being addressed, by describing the relationship of the project to public health services or principles, and/or by describing the relationship of the project to existing scientific literature;
3. Describe the activities that took place during the project period and the final product of the project;
4. Explain the significant results or findings of the project and the **implications** of these findings;
5. Indicate how the product could (or will) be disseminated to the public health practice community, including how the product may contribute **to** public health practice;
6. Clarify how the project integrated two or more public health sciences, such that the audience understands how the student utilized and applied the selected sciences;
7. Acknowledge those who assisted or collaborated in the project.

The Culminating Experience poster session will be a one day event, conducted in person in a public form. The Culminating Experience Project product is a public document and will be available UNBLINDED in the OSA.

Helpful Information about the Culminating Experience Project

The Preceptorship and Culminating Experience courses may NOT be taken in the same semester. Ideally, the two courses would be linked in content, however, it is not required (e.g., a student might want to undertake a Preceptorship that would give him/her exposure to an area of public health that is not familiar but would not be the focus of his/her Culminating Experience). The Culminating Experience is the capstone of the MPH program, thus circumstances under which it would be reasonable to complete the Culminating Experience before initiating the Preceptorship will be rare. Enrolling in the Culminating Experience courses before the Preceptorship requires the approval of the student's academic advisor and department chair.

Relationship of Course Activities to Student's Employment

- Consistent with Culminating Experience Project Policy: "While the learning objectives of a Culminating Experience may closely align with a student's area of career direction, it is expected that work performed for credit should exceed those duties normally performed during the course of regular employment. For this reason, as a general rule, no credit will be provided for projects contained within the scope of the student's current work assignments."
- It is important that the requirements of these courses not be construed to directly or indirectly require a student to quit or take leave from his/her job.
- Students should be encouraged (but not required) to get a broad range of experience through their MPH program and to choose topics outside the usual focus of their employment when selecting Culminating Experiences.

Culminating Experience Advisor/Advisory Committee

Each student will have a Culminating Experience Advisory Committee (CEPAC) comprised of at least two individuals. The Advisory Committee chair (course advisor) does not have to be the student's academic advisor; selection of this individual should be based on the chair's interest or expertise in the area of the student's project. The other member(s) of the Advisory Committee will collaborate with the Advisory Committee chair and the student to guide the Culminating Experience. At least two departments must be represented on the CEPAC. One member must be primary faculty. The student is expected to meet with the CEPAC Chair and/or full Committee at regular intervals throughout the project-period. The frequency of meetings will be determined by the chair and committee (e.g., bi-weekly); however, a minimum of 3 in-person meetings is required during the project-period.

Procedures

The student will prepare a Culminating Experience course plan that must be approved by the student's course advisor (CEPAC chair) and committee member. The plan must be approved prior to initiating Culminating Experience activities.

The Culminating Experience product will be evaluated by the student's CEPAC; the CEPAC chair has final responsibility for assigning a grade.

Early Initiation of Culminating Experience Project Policy

If a student wants to begin a Culminating Experience Project with less than 27 hours of course work completed (including the core courses) a student must document that *unique and compelling circumstances* exist and/or that the student has obtained the necessary public health experience in other ways. The CEPAC Chair and Committee, Departmental Chair, and Associate Dean for Professional Programs will determine approval of this request.

Unique and Compelling Circumstances:

- The potential Culminating Experience is a unique one-time opportunity aligned with both the academic/professional interest of the student and is combined with the completion of at least one course in the "Specialty Required Courses" of the student's selected discipline/track.

And/or

- Student has had a substantive professional career in public health (5 + years) and is enhancing their professional expertise through academic studies complementary to their "everyday" professional career.

Therefore students who wish to appeal the 27 hour requirement, in addition to writing a justification as to why early registration for the Culminating Experience is required, must also obtain written approval from the CEPAC Chair and committee, and the Public Health Practice Coordinator.

Culminating Experience Project Plan Template
(Project Semester, Project Year)

Student Name:
Department:
CEPAC Chair:
CEPAC Committee Member(s):
Title of Culminating Experience:

Culminating Experience Project Plan

Course Description: The Culminating Experience Project requires the students to synthesize and integrate knowledge and apply theory and principles learned to an area of public health practice. The result of the culminating experience varies, but may include the preparation of a manuscript for publication, a health policy proposal, a research proposal for submission, or the equivalent. The Culminating Experience Project must be undertaken concurrently with the Culminating Experience Seminar. Attendance is required at all Culminating Experience Seminar sessions and at the poster presentations at the end of the semester.

Culminating Experience Overview/Overarching Goal(s):
 (Recommended but not limited to 3-6 paragraphs; should incorporate the learning objectives and related core and specialty competencies from the two or more specialty tracks included in the project)

Learning Objectives:
 (Recommended but not limited to 3 or more)

Core and Specialty Competencies to be addressed:

Culminating Experience Activities:
 (Recommended but not limited to one activity for each learning objective)

Timeline of Activities:
 (Recommend but not limited to a Gantt Chart or List of Dates/Activities; refer to the sample of a Gantt Chart below):

Activity	Weeks of Semester (Including Holiday Days(s)/Weeks)																			
	0 1	0 2	0 3	0 4	0 5	0 6	0 7	0 8	0 9	1 0	1 1	1 2	1 3	1 4	1 5	1 6	1 7	1 8	1 9	
Initiate Project	X																			
Secure IRB Approval	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X												
Conduct Literature Review	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X									
Attend Seminars								X			X						X			
Interview Key Programs Staff									X	X	X	X	X	X						

Analyze qualitative data										X	X	X	X	X	X	X			
Present findings to "site"																	X		
Meet with CEPAC	X									X							X		
Present Poster Presentation to COPH																	X	X	X
Submit Final Product to COPH																	X	X	X

Description of how the Learning Objectives, Activities, and related Core and Specialty Competencies Provide an Opportunity to Integrate Public Health Coursework in an Interdisciplinary Manner:

(A discussion/narrative of 1-2 paragraphs that clearly describes how you will incorporate/align your learning objectives, activities, and selected competencies with two public health sciences identified as a part of your Culminating Experience Project plan)

Frequency of Committee Meetings:

You must have a minimum of three in-person meetings with your CEPAC Committee (Recommend but not limited to 2-3 sentences)

Description of the Culminating Experience End Product:

(Refer to examples listed in Culminating Experience Manual)

COPH Honor Code Statement: *(Adapted from College of Public Health Honor Code Agreement)*

(Read and insert name as designated in the statement below)
 Contributing to a spirit of moral and intellectual development; affirming that honor, integrity and compassion are my highest ideals; and endeavoring to create sensitivity and commitment from the community; I, ***Student's Name***, pledge to the public, colleagues, and my mentors the following: I shall be sensitive, compassionate, and committed to maintaining and improving the health of all people. I will conduct myself with unquestionable integrity in all of my professional relations. I will endeavor to abide by the Principles of the Ethical Practice of Public Health. I, ***Student's Name***, agree to abide by and maintain the guidelines and principles set forth in the UAMS College of Public Health Honor Code of Academic Integrity in order to preserve and embody high standards of personal and professional honesty.

Statement of IRB Review: (Read and insert name as designated in the statement below)

I, ***Student's Name***, have completed the Human Subject Protection Training required by IRB. A copy of my certificate indicating completion of the training is attached to this plan. I have also attached a copy of the human subject research determination letter. In addition, I have received my CLARA password and, if applicable, will submit my plan under the direction of my CEPAC Committee Chair. I understand that failure to comply with this mandate could result in my withdrawal from COPH 5992 Culminating Experience Project and/or a non-passing grade, which could inherently delay my graduation from the program.
(If you have any problems in securing your CLARA password or need personal assistance as to the protocol for submitting your plan to IRB 686-5667 and ask for assistance.)

Statement of Agreement to Participate: (Read and insert name as designated in the statement below)

I agree to participate in all required meetings of the Culminating Experience Seminar. I understand that there will be at least three sessions. I understand that non-attendance at the required meetings could result in my

withdrawal from CPH 5991 Culminating Experience Seminar and a non-passing grade. I, ***Student's Name***, understand the consequences for failure to comply.

Policy Related to Non-completion of the Culminating Experience within the first semester enrolled:

Students may request to have up to 12 months (3 consecutive semesters including the summer semester) to complete their Culminating Experience Project from the time they first register for the course. In this circumstance, the student will be required to register **AND PAY TUITION FOR** the Culminating Experience Project EACH SEMESTER until it is completed. Each semester, the Culminating Experience Project course would be (2) credit hours, all of which would be indicated as a "place-holder" grade on the transcript until the final grade of pass or fail is awarded in the semester the project is completed.

I, ***Student's Name***, understand the policy related to non-completion of the Culminating Experience within the first semester registered and its requirements.

I, ***Student's Name***, understand the policy related to the assignment of an incomplete and its inherent consequences.

Student's Signature: _____ Date: _____