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What is the Culminating Experience?

- The Culminating Experience (CE) is a graded course performed outside of a classroom setting. It is essentially a mini-thesis, where you work with your CE faculty mentor to develop an applied research project that requires you to do things like:
  - Perform a needs assessment
  - Conduct a feasibility study
  - Develop and pilot test an intervention program or components of a program,
  - Develop and implement a community advocacy program,
  - Evaluate a program or policy,
  - Or develop and evaluate a case study.
Objectives of the CE
Upon Completion of the CE you should be able to:

1. Identify and assess an issue that affects the public’s health and well-being. You will synthesize this information and use it 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 to design, plan, and/or 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.
How is the CE graded/evaluated?

- Each student in the PCH department has a faculty advisor. That person may be your CE faculty mentor or you may ask another PCH faculty member to serve in that role. If your faculty mentor is from another program, then that person will submit your grade to the CE course director in your program. Component grades are:
  - Concept Paper – Pass/Fail
  - Proposal/IRB application – Pass/Fail
  - Final Report – 75%
  - Oral Presentation – 25%

**Final Grade** – Credit/No Credit
Can I do my practicum and CE at the same time?

- Yes! You can do it one of two ways:
  - Practicum one semester, followed by CE in a later semester.
  - Practicum + CE in the **same** semester.
- Can the CE and Practicum be related?
  - Yes, you can conduct your CE using data gathered during your Practicum but DO NOT collect data until your CE proposal has been approved by your faculty mentor and the GW IRB. You may not use data collected as part of your employment.
How do I begin?

• First, make sure you have taken the following courses:
  – PubH 6002 Biostatistical Applications for Public Health
  – PubH 6003 Principles and Practice of Epidemiology
  – PubH 6007 Social and Behavioral Approaches to Public Health
  – PubH 6500 Planning and Administration of Health Promotion Programs
    – You may take PubH 6501 Evaluation at the same time you are completing your CE work.
• If you have not yet completed your CITI and HIPAA training do so!
  – Go to the Practicum handbook for details:
Next Steps…

• Think about the topics in which you are interested and a research question you want to answer.
  – Start this process at the beginning of the semester BEFORE you plan to complete your CE.
    • i.e. if you plan to do your CE during Spring semester, start the planning process in the beginning of Fall semester.
• Schedule a meeting with your Faculty Advisor (or CE Faculty Mentor, if different) to discuss your CE ideas.
  – Your CE faculty mentor can be your faculty advisor or you may ask another faculty member in your program or in a different program in the department to serve as your CE mentor but make sure to meet notify your program’s CE course director.
• Most importantly, make sure to register for your CE during your last planned semester in your MPH program.
Some Examples of Topics…

- **MCH**
  - Formative Research to Develop A Social Media Component for the TPP Program, Be Yourself/Se tu Mismo.
  - Evaluation of the Centering Pregnancy Program for Latino Moms in Washington DC.

- **HP**
  - Bridging the Gap: Food Desert Prevention in Washington D.C.
  - An Evaluation of the Girls on the Run Project.

- **PHCM**
  - Analyzing user engagement in the Text2Quit messages.
  - Influence of the *Twilight* Series on Sunscreen Use of Adolescent Girls.

- **COPC**
  - Defining the Community of Prevention Works
  - Evaluation of a diabetes program at Upper Cardozo clinic
The specific deadlines for the 2018-2019 academic year are posted here. It is your responsibility to know these deadlines. If you miss a deadline for submitting a concept paper, a full proposal, or your final CE report, you may be delayed for a semester.

If you conduct research prior to your gaining approval from your CE mentor, you will have to start over.
# PCH Culminating Experience (CE) Dates for 2018-2019

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<th>Culminating Experience Deliverables</th>
<th>Fall 2018 Graduation</th>
<th>Spring 2019 Graduation</th>
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<tr>
<td>Concept Paper</td>
<td>August 3, 2018</td>
<td>November 9, 2018</td>
<td>March 29, 2019</td>
<td>August 2, 2019</td>
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<td>Full Proposal</td>
<td>August 24, 2018</td>
<td>December 7, 2018</td>
<td>April 19, 2019</td>
<td>August 23, 2019</td>
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<td>Final Paper</td>
<td>November 2, 2018</td>
<td>April 5, 2019</td>
<td>July 19, 2019</td>
<td>November 1, 2019</td>
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<td>Final Presentation*</td>
<td>November 30, 2018</td>
<td>May 2 and 3, 2019</td>
<td>August 22/23, 2018</td>
<td>November 29, 2019</td>
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* Final Presentations in the spring and summer will occur over one or two days, depending on the number of students presenting.
The Concept Paper

• A 2-3 page abstract of your proposal
• Is reviewed by your CE faculty mentor to assess whether the project is *appropriate*, *feasible*, and needed
  – Essentially he or she just wants to make sure you are on track with your CE idea before you write the full proposal.
• The concept paper should emphasize the public health *issue, objectives, and methods* you will use in the CE.
• Once the Concept Paper is approved, you will expand the Concept Paper into a Proposal and IRB submission.
IRB Submission

Only the Internal Review Board (IRB) of the university can exempt a study from human subjects approval. Only faculty may serve as PI's so you must complete the form in your CE faculty mentor’s name and have him or her review and sign it.

In 2013, the School of Public Health created a form for students to use to determine whether or not IRB approval is necessary. Access that form at: https://sphhs.gwu.edu/downloads/research/policy_student_research_human_subjects.pdf.

Be aware that all that the IRB will do if you submit this form, is rule that your project is or is not research. If it rules that it is not research, you do not have to submit the IRB protocol forms. However, if the IRB rules that it IS research, then you must prepare the full IRB protocol beginning with its formal synopsis in the name of the faculty PI. If for any reason you or your faculty mentor anticipate that the IRB will rule that your project IS research, you may save time by just preparing the formal IRB protocol (available on line at the Office of the Vice President for Research (OVPR) and getting a review. Students may not serve as Principal Investigators. Your CE faculty mentor must be listed as the P.I. with you listed as research or study coordinators.
Proposal

Should be 5-7 pages, double spaced (including references). Please use the following Template for the Concept Paper and the Proposal.

Background
Presentation of the public health issue that is proposed to be the focus of the CE. Brief review of the public health significance and justification of need for the activity to be carried out (i.e. gaps in service, research areas)

Objectives
A statement of the long range health issue that your CE addresses, no matter how distal. For example, even if your CE activities will not achieve a health goal, you must be clear what health issue you are addressing. This is easily achieved by stating a measurable health objective. Stating a measurable health objective and a behavioral objective is a requirement if you are in the health promotion program.

Specific Aims
Clear statement of the specific aims of your project/practice activity. Each track may have guidelines for the kind of project you may develop so consult your CE course director. For example, some programs in PCH may be more interested in community level projects while others may be more likely to accept secondary data analysis, the development or evaluation of a program intervention, a needs assessment, or a test of an instrument or a curriculum.

Methods
The project design, subjects, types and sources of the data and instruments, procedures for data collection (including human subjects protections) data analysis plan and plan for dissemination of results (to whom and in what form).

Timeline
Timeline for the CE project or activity.

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

References: Use AJPH or APA style.
The Final Paper

• Represents the final written deliverable for completion of the CE.
• Due to your advisor **4 weeks** before you are to make the Oral Presentation.
• Follows the outline of a published research paper.
  – An outline is provided on the next slide.
  – For more details please see the Culminating Experience Guidelines/Syllabus posted on the website.
The Final Paper Outline

Title Page
Abstract
Summary of project which includes a brief statement of purpose, specific aims, the methods, results, and conclusions. Should be 300 words or less.

Introduction/Background
Discussion of background of research topic, synthesis of previous research, significant findings and gaps in previous research methods and/or findings.

Methods
Project design, study sample, how the sample was recruited, sample selection criteria, subjects, types of data and instruments used, procedures for data collection, data analyses, dissemination plan.

Results
Description of the data and principal findings of your project. Description, analysis, and evaluation of data should include tables/figures presenting the data, statistical results and significance (if quantitative).

Discussion
Interpretation of your results/findings. What do they mean? How are they similar or different from what other researchers have found, and why? Discuss limitations that may have influenced findings.

Conclusions and Recommendations
Describe important findings of the research, implications for public health practice, and further directions for research, future public health practice or education for clients, consumers or communities.

References
Use either APA or AJPH/AMA format.

Appendices
Data collection instruments, curriculum developed, communication materials.
Oral Presentation

• Prepare a concise, **10 minute** PowerPoint presentation.
  – About 10 to 14 slides (one minute per slide)

• Presentation is followed by 10 minute Q&A with Department faculty and other students.

• Do not waste a slide showing your list of references.
Oral Presentation Outline

• Basic outline for the slides
  – Title Slide and acknowledgements (1)
  – Background (2)
  – Hypotheses or Objectives (1)
    • (make sure they’re SMART!)
  – Methods (2)
  – Results (4)
    • (Be sure to include tables/graphs if you have them)
  – Discussion of Results and Limitation of your study (2)
  – Summary, and/or Conclusions, and Recommendations (2)
And you’re done!!!

- Please see the [Culminating Experience Syllabus](#) for more information.
  - If you have any additional questions please contact your CE faculty mentor or the CE course director for your program. For logistical and programmatic support, please contact the DPCH Coordinator at preveccommhltth@gwu.edu.