Course Description

MPH students are required to demonstrate proficiency in the application of the skills they acquire during their academic program through the Culminating Experience (PubH 6015).

The Culminating Experience (CE) is a credit/no credit 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 6002 Biostatistical Applications for Public Health
- PubH 6003 Principles and Practice of Epidemiology
- PubH 6006 Policy Approaches to Public Health
- PubH 6007 Social and Behavioral Approaches to Public Health
- PubH 6500 Planning and Administration of Health Promotion, Disease Prevention Programs
- PubH 6014 Practicum

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

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://publichealth.gwu.edu/practicum/download/CITI%20Training%20Instructions.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.

The competencies of the departmental core academic program are to:

1. Identify the causes of social and behavioral factors that affect health of individuals and populations.
2. Apply appropriate theories towards the development, implementation and evaluation of health promoting programs, interventions and policies.
3. Develop interventions, programs and policies to affect change at the individual, interpersonal, community and population level.
4. In collaboration with others, prioritize individual, organizational, and community concerns and resources for public health programs.
5. Apply theory and strategy-based communication principles across different settings and audiences.
6. Apply ethical principles to public health program planning, implementation, evaluation, communication, and dissemination.

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<tr>
<th>Course Learning Objectives – Upon completion of the course, students will be able to:</th>
<th>Meets Competency Number</th>
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<td>• 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.</td>
<td># 1-6</td>
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<td>• 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.</td>
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<td>• Synthesize and analyze data and relevant literature to interpret findings in a theoretical framework, write a final report, and make an oral presentation.</td>
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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 student will also be graded on the level of effort they put into the culminating experience and the level of independence they demonstrate in completing each part of the culminating experience. A student must have an evaluation of “pass” for each following: concept paper, proposal, final report and oral presentation. The Culminating Experience Advisor will complete evaluations of the student’s performance.

Grading Scale
The Culminating Experience will be graded as follows:

<table>
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<th>Module</th>
<th>Grade</th>
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<tr>
<td>Concept Paper</td>
<td>Required (Pass/Fail)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Proposal</td>
<td>Required (Pass/Fail)</td>
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Final Report. Must adequately cover each of the following sections:

1) **Background**
2) **Methods**
3) **Results**
4) **Discussion**

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<th>Effort/Independence</th>
<th>Required (Pass/Fail); 75% of grade</th>
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<tr>
<td>Oral Presentation</td>
<td>Required (Pass/Fail); 10% of grade</td>
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<td>Required (Pass/Fail); 15% of grade</td>
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**Student Responsibilities**

1) 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 or meet with their CE advisor.

2) The student should register for the CE during her/his last planned semester at the Milken Institute School of Public Health.
   - Registration for the CE is only by completing and submitting this RTF to “add” the course.
   - **Steps to fill out RTF:**
     - CRN numbers are found on the Registrar site by browsing (will not result from a course search) the Public Health course offerings for the semester you are registering.
     - Subject is PubH.
     - Register for the CE, PubH 6015 section for your PCH program:
       - 11 (COPC)
       - 17 (Health Promotion)
       - 18 (Maternal & Child Health)
       - 19 (Public Health Communication & Marketing).
     - Enter R (credit/no credit) for Grade Mode.
     - Consult with your CE advisor as to when in your process to register.
     - Registration for the CE can take place at any time during the semester without late fee. Once an accurate and signed RTF is received by GWSPH Records (email to GWSPHrecords@gwu.edu), you will be registered and billed for the course within 10 business days.

3) 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.

4) The Concept Paper will be reviewed by your GW CE faculty mentor/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.

5) **Once your Concept Paper is approved, you must complete and submit this form**. Your CE advisor will verify this has been done before accepting your Proposal.

6) 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).

7) 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.

8) If a student has IRB approval and the IRB is not exempt, the student must turn in the study closure form with their Final Report. The form is on the GW IRB website.
   http://humanresearch.gwu.edu/IRBforms
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.

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.

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.¹

Blackboard
Blackboard will be used for posting course files and assignments and for communicating with the class. You are already enrolled for this course on Blackboard if you have completed registration for the course. It is your responsibility to periodically check the course site (log in at http://blackboard.gwu.edu/ using your gwu.edu address) for updates to the syllabus/readings.

Academic Integrity
All Milken Institute School of Public Health Students are required to complete two (separate) online activities regarding academic integrity -- the GW Academic Integrity Activity and the Identifying and Avoiding Plagiarism Activity. Both activities must be completed within 2 weeks of starting your coursework at Milken Institute School of Public Health. - See more at: https://publichealth.gwu.edu/integrity#sthash.FlIRdO5H.dpuf

Please review the University’s policy on academic integrity, located at www.gwu.edu/~ntegrity/code.html and complete the online training for all GWSPH students; 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; facilitating academic dishonesty.

Students with Disabilities
If you feel you may need an accommodation based on the impact of a disability, please contact your instructor privately to discuss specific needs. Please contact the Disability Support Services Office at 202.994.8250, http://gwired.gwu.edu/dss, to establish eligibility and to coordinate reasonable accommodations.

Adverse Weather/Class Cancellation
In the advent of inclement weather or any other emergency, the Milken Institute School of Public Health will follow the decision of the University. Call the University hotline at 202.994.5050 or check the Human Resources status button at http://hr.gwu.edu/adverse-weather-conditions-and-emergency-situations. In the event of class cancellation, we will email you about rescheduling, assignments due, etc.

Emergency Preparedness and Response Procedures
The University has asked all faculty to inform students of these procedures, prepared by the GW Office of Public Safety and Emergency Management in collaboration with the Office of the Executive Vice President for Academic Affairs.

To Report an Emergency or Suspicious Activity
Call the University Police Department at 202-994-6111 (Foggy Bottom) or 202-242-6111 (Mount Vernon).

Shelter in Place – General Guidance
Although it is unlikely that we will ever need to shelter in place, it is helpful to know what to do just in case. No matter where you are, the basic steps of shelter in place will generally remain the same.

* Implemented Spring 2018
• If you are inside, stay where you are unless the building you are in is affected. If it is affected, you should evacuate. If you are outdoors, proceed into the closest building or follow instructions from emergency personnel on the scene.
• Locate an interior room to shelter inside. If possible, it should be above ground level and have the fewest number of windows. If sheltering in a room with windows, move away from the windows. If there is a large group of people inside a particular building, several rooms maybe necessary.
• Shut and lock all windows (for a tighter seal) and close exterior doors.
• Turn off air conditioners, heaters, and fans. Close vents to ventilation systems as you are able. (University staff will turn off ventilation systems as quickly as possible).
• Make a list of the people with you and ask someone to call the list in to UPD so they know where you are sheltering and who is with you. If only students are present, one of the students should call in the list.
• Await further instructions. If possible, visit GW Campus Advisories for incident updates (http://CampusAdvisories.gwu.edu) or call the GW Information Line 202-994-5050.
• Make yourself comfortable and look after one other. You will get word as soon as it is safe to come out.

Evacuation
An evacuation will be considered if the building we are in is affected or we must move to a location of greater safety. We will always evacuate if the fire alarm sounds. In the event of an evacuation, please gather your personal belongings quickly (purse, keys, GWWorld card, etc.) and proceed to the nearest exit. Every classroom has a map at the door designating both the shortest egress and an alternate egress. Anyone who is physically unable to walk down the stairs should wait in the stairwell, behind the closed doors. Firemen will check the stairwells upon entering the building.

• Once you have evacuated the building, proceed to our primary rendezvous location: the court yard area between the GW Hospital and Ross Hall. In the event that this location is unavailable, we will meet on the ground level of the Visitors Parking Garage (I Street entrance, at 22nd Street). From our rendezvous location, we will await instructions to re-enter the School.

Alert DC
Alert DC provides free notification by e-mail or text message during an emergency. Visit GW Campus Advisories for a link and instructions on how to sign up for alerts pertaining to GW. If you receive an Alert DC notification during class, you are encouraged to share the information immediately.

GW Alert
GW Alert provides popup notification to desktop and laptop computers during an emergency. In the event that we receive an alert to the computer in our classroom, we will follow the instructions given. You are also encouraged to download this application to your personal computer. Visit GW Campus Advisories to learn how.

Additional Information
Additional information about emergency preparedness and response at GW or the University’s operating status can be found on GW Campus Advisories (http://CampusAdvisories.gwu.edu) or by calling the GW Information Line at 202-994-5050.

Personal Support
Counseling Center: The GW University Counseling Center offers a wide variety of counseling services to students including individual counseling, group counseling, academic support, career counseling, referral information, and alcohol/drug services. The Counseling Center is available to both undergraduate and graduate students. For more information: 2033 K Street, NW, #330, 202-994-5330, http://gwired.gwu.edu/counsel/. Information on other available resources is available on the GW website and in the SPH Student Handbook http://publichealth.gwu.edu/services/students.
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

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
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: https://publichealth.gwu.edu/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.

If a student has IRB approval and the IRB is not exempt, the student must turn in the Study Closure Form to their professor with their Final Report. The form is on the GW IRB website. The Form must also be submitted to the IRB before a student’s graduation.

http://humanresearch.gwu.edu/IRBforms


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:

5) **Title Page** (see above)

6) **Abstract**

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

7) **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. Suggested sections include:
   a. Literature Review
   b. Public Health Significance
   c. Specific Aims
   d. Health and Behavioral Objectives
   e. Theoretical or Conceptual Framework
8) **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. 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)

9) **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).

10) **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?

11) **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.

12) **References**
A list of all references cited in the text of the paper. Use either APA or AJPH/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 CE Advisor with a copy of the PowerPoint presentation **two weeks** before the scheduled date of the Oral Presentation. **See Appendix.**