

Criterion 2

Instructional Programs

2.5 Culminating Experience

CEPH Criterion

All professional degree programs identified in the instructional matrix shall assure that each student demonstrates skills and integration of knowledge through a culminating experience.

CEPH Required Documentation

- a. Identification of the culminating experience required for each degree program. If this is common across the school's professional degree programs, it need be described only once. If it varies by degree or program area, sufficient information must be provided to assess compliance by each program.
- b. Assessment of the extent to which this criterion is met.

2.5.a. Culminating Experience Requirement

Required Documentation: *Identification of the culminating experience required for each degree program. If this is common across the school's professional degree programs, it need be described only once. If it varies by degree or program area, sufficient information must be provided to assess compliance by each program.*

BSPH culminating experiences vary by department and may include practicum, honors paper, and/or capstone course. The Graduate School requires all master's students to complete a thesis or approved substitute, as well as to pass a comprehensive examination or approved substitute "whose thoroughness in all ways conforms to the best accepted practices within the discipline." These two requirements, in practice, comprise the culminating experience required of all School of Public Health master's students. Each department/program determines specific requirements for the master's paper and comprehensive exam (or an approved substitution) for each of its degree programs (MPH and equivalent master's degrees) which must be approved by the Graduate School. The practicum is also a culminating experience required of master's and bachelor's professional degree students. (See table 2.5.a. for culminating experience requirements, by department.)

Parallel requirements are in place for doctoral students and apply to the DrPH degree. The school's DrPH programs require written comprehensive exams, an oral dissertation proposal defense, and an oral dissertation defense following successful completion of coursework. (In addition, the DrPH program in NUTR requires oral comprehensive exams.) Each department determines the structure of its own examinations (written, oral, or both).

Depending on the discipline, availability and length of financial support varies. Such support is critical, however, at the doctoral level, where many dissertations require access to, or generation of, original data, as well as significant time for analysis and writing. Students who have to support themselves at the same time they are immersed in the research process invariably make slower progress.

Table 2.5.a. Culminating Experience – Professional Degree Programs						
Department	Written Comprehensive Exam	Oral Comprehensive Exam and/or Dissertation Proposal Oral Defense	Optional Honors Paper (BSPH) or Master's Paper or Dissertation	Master's Paper, Thesis, or Dissertation Oral Presentation/ Defense	Capstone Course	Practicum/Field Experience
<i>Biostatistics</i>						
BSPH			X			X
MPH		X	X			X
DrPH	X	X	X	X		X
<i>Environmental Sciences and Engineering</i>						
BSPH			X		X	X
MPH, MSPH		X	X	X		X
<i>Epidemiology</i>						
MPH, MSPH		X	X	X		X
<i>Health Behavior and Health Education</i>						
MPH	X		X			X
<i>Health Policy and Management</i>						
BSPH			X		X ¹	X
MPH		X	X ²		X ²	X
MSPH		X	X	X		X
MHA		X			X	X
DrPH	X	X	X	X		X ³
<i>Maternal and Child Health</i>						
MPH, MSPH		X	X			X
DrPH	X	X	X	X		X
<i>Nutrition</i>						
BSPH			X		X	X
MPH, MSPH	X		X			X
DrPH	X	X	X	X		X ⁴
<i>Public Health Leadership</i>						
MPH	X		X			X

¹Optional until 2009-2010, then required

²Choice of master's paper or capstone course

³Format for practicum is under development

⁴Program to be discontinued effective fall 2010

2.5.b. Assessment of Culminating Experience

Required Documentation: <i>Assessment of the extent to which this criterion is met.</i>
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Strengths

- Variety of culminating experiences designed for students to demonstrate synthesis and application of the skills and knowledge they acquired pursuing their public health degrees
- Completed culminating experience products often are used by practica organizations and/or adopted in the field
- Departments that did not previously require practica have adapted well to the new requirements

Challenges

- Securing adequate support for all students, especially during practica, and for doctoral students during the dissertation research and writing stage

Future Directions

- Strengthen mechanisms to adapt products of culminating experiences and facilitate their dissemination to the field
- Identify more paying practicum experiences
- Identify additional funding sources for research projects and facilitate students' securing this support

This Criterion is met.
