1. What is the Applied Project?

The Applied Project is a culminating activity in the MSHE planned program of study and serves as an alternative to the thesis. It is a research and development project in which you are required to apply your general public health and specialized health education knowledge and skills (conceptual, human and technical) in identifying and addressing a health issue, problem, or gap in service in a “real-world” setting. The Applied Project has five (5) sections. The Applied Project proposal consists of the first three sections. The last two sections are the results and discussion of findings. A final product such as a communications product, an intervention for addressing the health problem, an evaluation report, or some form of needs assessment is also required. All students completing the Applied Project must have a final product for completion of the Applied Project requirement.

2. What are the main differences between the Applied Project and the Thesis?

While the Thesis requires all elements of research design and implementation and the ability to draw conclusions in a thesis format, the Applied Project requires students to address an issue in the “real world” and does not require a research question and the methodology is not limited to research methodologies usually required in theses. The project and its implementation will depend on the nature of the project.

Another important difference is that for the thesis option, the final product is the thesis. For the Applied Project, there are two products: the final paper and a final product representing the application to a real world issue or problem.

3. Is an Applied Project less demanding than a Thesis?

No. Although the term “Thesis” might seem ominous, it is actually no more or less demanding than the Applied Project. Both culminating experiences involve substantial research and the ability to apply acquired knowledge and skills to a public health problem. Although both experiences require the development of a written document, selection of the Applied Project also requires you to create a distinct end product that attests to your ability to problem-solve and develop health education solutions.

4. How is the Applied Project conceptualized or approached by the Department?

The culminating activities are viewed as an assessment of your competency, an activity as described in item 3 that requires you to apply your knowledge and skills in conducting a research and development project. The department is assessing the
Applied Project for creativity, innovation and fresh approaches to addressing the health problem.

5. Does the Department have to approve my Applied Project Proposal?

Yes. During the first session of HED 594, you will be provided with an Applied Project Approval Form. It requires you to provide information about your proposed Applied Project topic, host agency and preceptor, health problem or gap to be addressed, and its impact on the quality of life of the study population. The host agency preceptor or contact person with whom you will work to conduct the project must sign the approval form which states that they support your work with their agency on this project. Also, you must complete a concept paper about your Applied Project providing information about the purpose of the Applied Project, methodologies and procedures for conducting an analysis of the problem, theoretical framework, resource support and your knowledge and skills for successful completion of your Applied Project. The concept paper must have both agency and departmental approval. Your Applied Project approval form and concept paper must be completed and in to the department by completion of HED 594.

6. When is the Applied Project initiated?

All students enroll for 1 semester hour of Applied Project Preparation (HED 594 – Applied Project/Thesis Preparation Seminar) after completing program core requirements (18 credit hours). In 594, you will develop a concept paper and obtain department approval before going to the next step. Once the concept paper is approved, work begins on developing the proposal with your 1st and 2nd Reader. Upon receiving department approval for the proposal, you may begin to implement the Applied Project. Please note, however, it is never too early to begin thinking about a topic or area of interest for your Applied Project. The Department’s Applied Project Guidelines and Requirements list possible types of ideas for Applied Projects (see page 3).

7. Do I develop the topic for the Applied Project on my own?

No. One of the unique features of the Applied Project is that it must be conducted in cooperation with a community or state agency addressing public health issues.

8. What is a Preceptor and what are the qualifications to serve as one?

A Preceptor is an appropriately credentialed and experienced health practitioner, who is employed full-time by a health agency and who serves as your on-site Applied Project supervisor and mentor. Ideally, your Preceptor should possess a graduate degree with specialized training and experience in his/her chosen field. Other individuals who possess extensive experience, but without advanced degrees may also be approved as a Preceptor.
9. How do I make contact with an agency?

If you presently work at a community or state agency, you can pursue the feasibility of conducting your project there. If you do not work at such an agency or choose not to conduct your research at the agency you work for, you can contact an agency that shares a particular interest you have. PHHS faculty will be available to assist you.

10. Can I do my Applied Project at my place of employment?

Permission may be granted to allow you to use your place of employment to conduct your Applied Project if you can document that (1) the internship assignment is distinct from your employment responsibilities and is completed in a department or division distinct from your regular position, (2) the hours devoted to the Applied Project are distinct from your hours of employment, (3) there is a qualified Preceptor, excluding your immediate supervisor, who can supervise your work and (4) criteria 1-3 were reviewed by your employer and your supervisor is willing to submit a written statement that the criteria are acceptable and that each will be met. To date, the reviews of using one's place of employment as an Applied Project site are mixed. Two of the major disadvantages reported are role confusion and job-related interruptions. The major advantage consistently reported is convenience.

11. Does the Applied Project have to be related to health education?

Yes.

12. When am I required to have a final topic?

Your topic and agency must be approved PRIOR to your enrollment into HED 596 which is Applied Project Research. A STUDENT WHO DOES NOT HAVE AN APPROVED TOPIC WILL NOT BE PERMITTED TO REGISTER FOR HED 596 - -APPLIED PROJECT RESEARCH IN THAT FOLLOWING SEMESTER.

13. Does my academic advisor serve as my 1st Reader?

Not necessarily. That decision is up to you. You select your 1st and 2nd Readers. Your Applied Project 1st Reader must be a member of the MSHE core faculty. The 2nd Reader should be selected for their specific expertise in the content area of your Applied Project and requires the approval of your 1st Reader. If you choose a non PHHS faculty member, you will need to demonstrate that your choice for a 2nd Reader brings expertise not currently available within the PHHS Department. Knowledge of research design is desirable, but not essential. You should talk with faculty members that you would like to serve as your readers. Once you have chosen your Readers, please indicate your choices 1st Reader/Supervisor and 2nd Reader with the submission of the “Applied Project Approval Form.”

14. Can I conduct my Applied Project with another student?
Maybe. The Department does make provisions for collaboration on Applied Projects under certain conditions and with prior approval from the department. Interested parties would have to demonstrate that the proposed Project would be of sufficient scope to justify collaboration. What this collaboration entails is that students may work on the same project for a specific agency; however the Applied Project topics must be separate and individual. For example, you may work on the same project but at completion of the Applied Project, there are two original products.

15. Who are the other individuals involved in the Applied Project final approval process?

In addition to you (author), and your Readers, there is the Agency Preceptor/Contact Person. Their respective roles are described in Questions 16 and 17 below.

16. What role do my 1st Reader and 2nd Reader play?

The role of the 1st and 2nd Readers is discussed in the Department’s Applied Project Guidelines and Requirements on page 7.

You can conceive of your 1st and 2nd reader as the “gate-keepers” who are responsible to ensure that the Applied Project conforms to the Department’s Applied Project Guidelines and Requirements and whether it is acceptable and ready for submission to the Department. Since it is your project, you will be expected to comply with the standards for scholarly writing, including spelling, punctuation and grammar. Your 1st Reader is not your personal editor, nor is he or she responsible for correcting deficiencies in structure, format, and style or content that are part of your responsibility as author.

17. Can I expect my 1st and 2nd Readers to tutor me in content, concepts or methodology that I did not master in my other courses?

Remember, that this is a test of your abilities. Your 1st and 2nd Readers will expect you to review or learn the knowledge or skills required to successfully complete your Applied Project. New learning involved in completing the Applied Project is key to the process. You can expect your Readers to offer you guidance, consultation, and support as you demonstrate your ability to complete this culminating activity.

18. Can I change to a thesis after I have initiated my Applied Project?

This depends on when you wish to make such a change. If your Applied Project proposal (your first three sections), has not been approved you may change to a thesis. Once the plan is approved, you must complete the Applied Project. If you do decide to change to a thesis, be aware that the process for completing the culminating activity will probably be lengthened. You will have to start the process over, developing a concept paper and receiving departmental approval. With careful pre-planning, changing culminating experiences is not likely.
19. What if I already know that I want to develop a pamphlet or manual as my Applied Project?

Having a predetermined product may impede effective planning for the design of health education interventions. Before you can decide on an appropriate communications product, you will have to conduct a series of analyses. Only after the research phase of the process is complete, can the development phase be initiated. During this latter phase you should decide on the appropriate format for the communications product. Therefore, it is essential that you select an agency that is willing to allow you to develop a solution to a problem that is based on sound planning principles, rather than to simply complete a predetermined task. So it is important to discuss how you can be of assistance to the agency before you decide on what the focus of your Applied Project may be.

20. What if my Agency Preceptor already has decided on a specific form for the product?

As a trained graduate-level health educator, you should be able to convince your Preceptor of the efficacy of using a research and development approach for the development of an appropriate and target-sensitive communications product. This allows for the format of the communications product to be justifiable from a scholarly standpoint.

21. Is it advisable to follow the format of a previously completed Applied Project?

No, since requirements may change. The only approved format is contained in the most recent edition of the Department’s Applied Project Guidelines and Requirements document. Also Applied Projects are unique and there may not be a guide that is appropriate for the type of project that you may conduct.

22. What if I cannot finish my plan or final Applied Project within the prescribed time period?

If you are unable to meet the end-of-semester deadline, your Applied Project 1st Reader will assign a “Y” grade in HED 596. Although this grade will not impact on your grade-point average, you will be required to register again for HED 596 - Applied Project Research (for 1 credit), during each successive semester until the Applied Project is complete.

23. Can I fail the Applied Project?

Yes, as is the case for any test or course. You will be permitted a maximum of three drafts of the completed product from the Applied Project. A minimum of two drafts is to be expected. If you are unable to complete the final product within three drafts, that indicates you were not able to demonstrate the proficiency required to complete
the Applied Project. Failure to successfully complete the Applied Project will result in dismissal from the Program.

24. What if my Readers and Agency Preceptor disagree about some aspect of my Applied Project?

In most instances your Readers and Preceptor will resolve their differences with a minimum of effort. In the final analysis, it is your Readers who will make the ultimate decision regarding your grade.

25. When can I expect drafts of my work submitted to my Readers to be returned to me?

Response time will vary according to the Readers. Therefore, you should consult with your Readers at the beginning of your relationship to determine his or her policy.

26. How often is it recommended that I consult with my Readers and Agency Preceptor?

In addition to the schedule prescribed in the course outline for HED 594, you should establish a schedule of consultations with your Readers and Preceptor.

27. Can I register for HED 596 if I have not completed HED 594 Applied Project Preparation?

Maybe. To be eligible for HED 596, you have to complete the Applied Project Approval Form; have an approved Applied Project Concept Paper and an approved Applied Project Proposal. If you are able to complete those on your own before taking the HED 594 class, you are eligible to register for HED 596. The key is to have all of the requirements for the Applied Project completed and approved by the department in order to begin your Applied Project work.

28. Should I retain the services of an experienced editor to review my Applied Project?

If you are not confident that you can meet the grammatical and style requirements for the Applied Project, you should consider outside editorial assistance. In most cases, students who spend the time, including online tutorials and written guides, usually can meet the expected standards.

29. Is there a requirement that my Applied Project be microfilmed?

No. This is not a requirement for the Applied Project.

30. Is there a requirement that my Applied Project be copyrighted?

No.
31. How many copies of my Applied Project Product and Final Paper am I required to prepare?

Only 1 copy of your final paper is retained by the Department, along with your final product as an appendix. You may want to present your host agency and Preceptor with a copy. The host agency will, of course, want to have a copy of your final product.

32. When can I expect to receive a grade for HED 594 - Applied Project Preparation?

A grade will be assigned after your Applied Project Approval Form has been completed and Concept paper has been approved by your Readers, Agency Preceptor and Department Chairperson.

33. When can I expect to receive a grade for HED 596 - Applied Project Research?

A final grade will be assigned only after you have submitted a bound copy of your approved Applied Project (including communications product) to the Department of Public Health & Health Sciences.

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