

Criterion V.B

Each professional degree program identified in V.A, as a minimum, shall assure that each student a) develops an understanding of the areas of knowledge which are basic to public health, b) acquires skills and experience in the application of basic public health concepts and of specialty knowledge to the solution of community health problems, and c) demonstrates integration of knowledge through a culminating experience.

Expected Documentation

1. Identification of the means by which the school assures that all professional degree students have a broad understanding of the areas of knowledge basic to public health. If this means is common across the school, 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.
2. Description of the school's policies and procedures regarding practice placements, including criteria for selection of sites, methods for approving preceptors, approaches for faculty supervision and methods of assessment of students.
3. Identification of agencies and preceptors used for formal practice placement experiences for students, by program area, over the last three years.
4. 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.
5. Assessment of the extent to which this criterion is met.

Criterion V.B – Professional Degree Programs

1. Broad Understanding of Public Health

The school provides several means for assuring that the MPH student attains a broad understanding of the areas of knowledge basic to public health. Except where waived on the basis of prior course work (or in the case of EPID400, taking a proficiency exam), all MPH students are required to take six core public health courses in the areas required by CEPH: Biostatistics I (BSTT400), Principles of Epidemiology (EPID400), Public Health Concepts and Practice (CHSC400), Principles of Environmental Health Sciences (EOHS400), Principles of Management in Public Health (HPA400), and Behavioral Sciences in Public Health (IPHS401). In addition, students admitted into the MPH program beginning with the class entering fall 1998 are required to complete a capstone project intended to represent a culminating, integrative experience. The school's Committee on Educational Programs (CEP) undertook a two-year study of the MPH program to assure that our graduates were attaining agreed upon learning objectives/competencies. (See response to Criterion V.C.1.) Many of the learning objectives/competencies address the need for our students to attain a broad understanding of the areas of knowledge basic to public health. We have completed our analysis and the results are now under discussion within the school. Our curriculum

appears to fall short in meeting computer-related learning objectives. A schoolwide computer ad hoc committee is reviewing the document and will recommend policy changes to CEP and the Executive Committee. The Executive Committee voted to repeat a survey in 2001 to evaluate achievement of the learning objectives/competencies in each class offering, and to annually conduct a graduate survey designed to assess from which courses and components of the MPH program graduates have attained the MPH learning objectives/competencies. Based on the first analysis, objectives relating to policy development and analysis and management skills have been added to the list as recommended by the health policy and administration division.

Students admitted into the professional doctoral program ordinarily have an MPH degree or another master's degree with a major relevant to public health, hence, it is expected that all DrPH students will have satisfied the basic core requirements (or their equivalent) of the MPH degree. DrPH students must take required advanced-level courses in the five core public health disciplines. These courses include: Biostatistics II (BSTT401), Quantitative Methods in Epidemiology (EPID401), Proseminar in Community Health Sciences (CHSC500), Community Health and Consumer Protection (EOHS461), Organization Theory Applied to Health Programs (HPA511) **or** Health Evaluation Methods (HPA522), and an Integrative Seminar (IPHS660). The latter course was developed in 1994 to strengthen the DrPH students' understanding of the application of two core public health sciences (epidemiology and biostatistics) to environmental and occupational health sciences, community health sciences, and health management and policy. DrPH students must pass a rigorous written and oral preliminary examination given by a faculty committee questioning them in each of the core public health areas. The DrPH preliminary examination committee must be comprised of faculty from across the school's four divisions.

2. Practice Policy and Procedures

A field experience/practicum (IPHS650) is required of all MPH students in the School of Public Health. The field practicum provides students with a practical experience in a public health setting requiring them to apply and integrate the skills and knowledge learned during their graduate study.

In addition, practice courses (IPHS440, CHSC405, AND IPHS540) are available for students who want to explore key issues in public health practice.

Overall Objective

Students will acquire experience and develop skills in the application of basic public health concepts and of specialty knowledge to the solution of public health problems.

Specific Learning Objectives

Through the field experience, MPH students will be able to:

- Apply public health theory, knowledge and skills in a practice setting.

- Complete a defined project(s) in an area of public health practice including core public health functions such as needs assessment, program plan, program evaluation, policy development, educational campaign or applied research.
- Relate the "realities" of public health practice -- organizational structure, local and organizational politics, program administration, community relationships, program coordination -- to their defined project(s).
- Demonstrate skills and knowledge in an area of interest not covered in depth elsewhere in their educational plan.
- Demonstrate competence in a public health practice area(s).
- Demonstrate leadership, teamwork, communication skills and creativity in the development of a public health practice activity.

Field Experience Process

Students may begin the field experience following completion of all MPH course requirements or with consent of the advisor and the division director. Students must have permission of his/her faculty advisor prior to registration for IPHS650. The field experience may be taken in a single semester or over several semesters for a total of 3-5 sh. The number of hours will be decided by the student and his/her advisor. One semester hour of credit is awarded for every 64 contact hours. The field experience may be waived at the time of admission (decided by the divisional admissions committee) or by petition at the time the student's program proposal is presented for approval.

Planning begins with the student developing his/her own educational objectives with the approval of the faculty advisor. Placement recommendations are discussed with advisors. The student and faculty advisor are responsible for selecting field practica sites. In addition to the student's own contacts and efforts, and those of his/her advisor, lists of potential practica sites are available in the division.

Once the field practice location has been selected, a field preceptor is identified. The Field Learning Agreement (Appendix V.B.2) is mutually developed by the student, preceptor and advisor. This plan identifies the specific objectives and activities of the field practicum. It also outlines the interactions the student will have with other members of the organization and provides deadlines for completion of projects.

Field practice sites are approved at the same time as the proposed Field Learning Agreement. Any field practice site may be approved if the Field Learning Agreement is acceptable and the organization completes the University of Illinois at Chicago School of Public Health Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) (Appendix V.B.2). The MOU is required for all field placement locations that are not part of the University of Illinois at Chicago.

The faculty advisor has responsibility for assessing the student's performance with input from the preceptor. The assessment includes reviewing the Student's Evaluation of Field

Experience, the Preceptor's Evaluation of Student's Performance, and the student's Summary Report. The Summary Report is required of all students and should include:

1. Description of activities performed during placement, noting any deviations from the Field Learning Agreement.
2. Extent to which the field experience met the objectives for the practice experience (e.g., application of public health theory, knowledge and skills in a practice setting; completion of a defined project(s) in an area of public health practice, including core public health functions; relation of the "realities" of public health practice to their defined project(s); demonstration of skills and knowledge in an area of interest not covered in depth elsewhere in the student's educational plan; demonstration of competence in a public health practice area(s); and demonstration of leadership, teamwork, communication skills and creativity in the development of a public health practice activity).
3. Extent to which the student's individual educational objectives, identified in the Field Learning Agreement, were met.
4. What the student gained from the experience and identification of any problems if they occurred.

For those students using the field practicum as their culminating experience, the school and division requirements for the culminating experience also must be met.

Student's Responsibilities

- Formulates educational goals for the field experience.
- Contacts sites, visits selected sites if possible, and makes final choice, with assistance from the faculty advisor.
- Develops the Field Learning Agreement with assistance and input from the preceptor and advisor.
- Returns completed Field Learning Agreement to the divisional student coordinator or faculty advisor and the director of student academic services within the dean's office.
- Performs assignments and activities identified in the agreement, seeking assistance from the preceptor and faculty advisor when needed.
- Assesses the extent to which the field experience met his/her needs by preparing a written Summary Report and completing other assignments required by the field experience. The MPH essay, where required, may be built around the field experience. For those students using the field practicum as their culminating experience, the Summary Report must meet the requirements of the culminating experience.

- Completes the Student Evaluation of Field Experience form and returns the completed form to the advisor.

Faculty Advisor's Responsibilities

- Assists the student in clarifying his/her educational goals for the field experience.
- Interprets the purpose and requirements of the field experience; approves requests for its registration or waiver.
- Assists the student in selecting potential practicum sites.
- Approves the Field Learning Agreement, which describes the mutual expectations of the student and preceptor.
- Ensures the Memorandum of Understanding is completed and a copy forwarded to the director of student academic services within the dean's office.
- Is responsive to the student's needs during placement and provides consultation periodically.
- Reviews the student's Summary Report.
- Determines the final grade (Pass/Fail) for the student's performance with input from the preceptor.

Preceptor's Responsibilities

- Assists the student in developing the Field Learning Agreement.
- Provides the student with general guidance and training during the field experience as identified in the agreement.
- Evaluates the student's performance during the field experience by completing the Preceptor's Evaluation of Student Performance which is returned to the faculty advisor.

Conditions for Waiver of the Field Experience/Practicum

The field experience requirement may be waived for students who have had three or more years of relevant professional experience in a similar field of public health for which they are currently pursuing a career (in practice, the field experience is infrequently waived). The field experience may be waived with a petition at the time the student's program proposal is presented for approval. Waiver approval is by the division director and the dean's office.

3. Formal Practice Placements

A copy of the formal agreement relating to field practica is included in Appendix V.B.2. As can be seen, this describes the expectations for the field experience and must be

signed by both the agency and officials from the university. Appendix IV.8 is the list identifying agencies and preceptors used for the field practica over the last three years.

4. Culminating Experience

Capstone/Culminating Experience for the MPH Degree at UIC SPH

Through the capstone/culminating experience, MPH students will demonstrate mastery of the following learning objectives:

- The ability to apply key public health concepts (e.g., prevention, risk assessment) to a specific public health area (e.g., infectious disease epidemiology, gerontology).
- The ability to apply their knowledge of the core areas of public health to a specific health problem.
- The ability to integrate skills and knowledge gained through both core courses and division requirements toward the resolution of a public health problem either through practice in a public health setting or through investigation and analysis.

Capstone requirements:

- The capstone can be based on a variety of activities (e.g., field practicum, independent study, research project) as deemed appropriate by the divisions.
- Whatever the activity, the capstone product can be satisfied by a paper (approximately 15 pages in length), oral presentation or poster presentation, which would in essence be a report of the capstone experience/activity.
- More than one faculty member will be required to evaluate a capstone product; this evaluation should be based on whether the student has met the objectives above and should be the same for all students within a division.

Culminating Experience in Community Health Sciences

- The basis for the CHS capstone will be both a practicum and an MPH essay. For some students, the essay will be related directly to the practicum.
- Students will be required to document how their practicum and MPH essay together meet the three objectives of the UIC SPH capstone experience.
- The capstone products will be the completion of the practicum, as well as an MPH essay.
- Students are required to give an oral presentation of their MPH essay.
- The capstone will be evaluated in four ways:
 1. Evaluation of the practicum experience by both the student and his/her practicum preceptor;
 2. Evaluation of the MPH essay by the advisor and second faculty member;
 3. Evaluation of the oral presentation by the faculty and students in attendance; and
 4. Review by the advisor and a second faculty member to assure that the practicum and essay together meet the capstone goals as established.

Culminating Experience in Environmental and Occupational Health Sciences

A culminating experience is required of all students in EOHS. For MPH students with limited practical experience, the culminating experience is the field practicum (IPHS650). Students are required to complete the practicum after completion of all, or nearly all, of their course work. Students may register for IPHS650 for 3-5 sh with 1 sh credit awarded for each 64 hours of contact time.

For students with appropriate prior work experience, the culminating experience can be a project (3-5 sh) selected with the student's advisor.

For occupational medicine residents in the MPH program and for joint degree students, the culminating experience is the field practicum for 3 sh (IPHS650).

MPH students are required to summarize their experience in the form of a poster presentation. The division will schedule a poster session near the end of each semester at a time when at least two divisional faculty members will attend. Evaluation of each poster will be the responsibility of the faculty in attendance. Presenting students will be required to attend. Each poster will be evaluated by at least two faculty members from the division.

Culminating Experience in Epidemiology and Biostatistics

The culminating experience for students in the MPH in epidemiology program consists of the following:

- Students should enroll in IPHS698 (MPH Essay Research), for which they will receive one credit hour.
- Students are required to give a formal oral presentation to division students and faculty on a subject or issue requiring integration of public health theory and practice. The presentation will conform to the format and time length of a paper delivered at the annual meetings of the APHA. The topic is to be approved by the student's advisor, and an abstract of the presentation is to be submitted at least one week prior to the presentation. The topic should not be the same as one already addressed in a paper submitted for a previous course. Where appropriate, students are encouraged to present a report of their field experience (IPHS650). If the report is not based upon the field practicum, it may take an alternative form, such as a comprehensive review of the literature on a public health issue from an epidemiologic perspective, a report on another research project in which the student has taken part, a proposal for a study to address an important public health issue, or another format acceptable to the student and his/her academic advisor or faculty mentor.
- The quality of the presentation will be evaluated by a committee of three faculty. Each faculty member will assess the experience based on three criteria: content (60%), organization (20%) and oral presentation (20%). A combined score of over 70% is required to obtain a passing grade. A presentation should consist of an introduction to the problem or issue, an explanation of the methods used to research the topic, a summary of the results or findings, conclusions as to the public health implications of the results, and recommendations for practical applications or further research.
- If the presentation is evaluated as unsatisfactory by two of the three committee members, the student will be required to submit a written paper, including citations, covering the same material as the oral presentation. The written paper will be evaluated on the content and organization of the material by the student's advisor in conjunction with one of the three committee members.

The capstone experience will provide epidemiology students with the opportunity to demonstrate their ability to apply core disciplines of public health to a problem or program by integrating skills and knowledge gained through both core courses and division requirements.

The planned culminating experience for students in the MPH program in biostatistics (to be implemented in Fall 2000) consist of a written and oral presentation of work done during the field experience. The details are currently under development.

Culminating Experience in Health Policy and Administration

Within the framework of the larger set of SPH policies established for the capstone/culminating experience for all MPH students, HPA requires the following for its MPH candidates:

- Capstone activities - The student, in consultation with her/his advisor, will plan and complete a practicum, self-study, research project or other experience, designed to achieve the learning objectives established by the school for the capstone.
- Capstone product - Each student will write an approximately 15-page paper that reports on the capstone experience and demonstrates effective achievement of the learning objectives, notably the integration of public health concepts beyond those related to HPA content.
- Evaluation methodology - The paper will be reviewed, evaluated and graded by the student's advisor (or capstone "mentor," if this is a faculty member other than the advisor), and by one other faculty member "recruited" by the advisor (or mentor), or, if necessary, designated by the division director; the two faculty readers must reach consensus on a pass/fail grade for the capstone.

Culminating Experience for DrPH Degree at UIC SPH

All DrPH students are required to complete a research thesis (dissertation). The student is required to demonstrate competence in conducting original research and in evaluating the investigations of others. The topic should be in an applied area, directed to problem solving in a specific public health activity or interdisciplinary program.

For those DrPH students with less than three years of relevant and significant public health experience, either prior to matriculation or during their academic career, an internship is required in addition to the thesis (dissertation). For the internship the student is assigned 6 to 10 semester hours of structured, supervised activity to provide in-depth middle to upper level public health experience. The internship is a specific undertaking such as would be assigned to a practicing public health professional, differing only in that it is designed to provide broad, practical and new experiences in an area relevant to the student's future career.

5. Assessment

Students in professional degree programs in the school develop an understanding of the areas of knowledge basic to public health through formal course work, the field experience and the culminating experience. This criterion is met.

