

Criterion V.E

If the school also offers curricula for academic degrees, then students pursuing them shall have the opportunity and be encouraged to acquire an understanding of public health problems and a generic public health education. These curricula shall cover as much basic public health knowledge as is essential for meeting their stated learning objectives.

Expected Documentation

1. Identification of all academic degree programs, by degree and area of specialization. The matrix in V.A may be referenced for this purpose.
2. Identification of the means by which the school assures that students in research curricula have the opportunities and are encouraged to acquire a public health orientation. 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.
3. Identification of the culminating experience required for each degree program. If this is common across the school's academic 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.
4. Assessment of the extent to which this criterion is met.

Criterion V.E – Academic Degrees

1. Identification of Academic Degree Programs

As indicated in the matrix in V.A, all five disciplines (within the four academic divisions) offer academic degrees (Master of Science and Doctor of Philosophy).

2. Public Health Orientation

Schoolwide Requirements

All students pursuing an MS degree at the School of Public Health are required to take EPID400 and BSTT400. All students pursuing a PhD at the school are required, in addition to these two courses, to take BSTT401.

Community Health Sciences

In addition to the school's requirements, CHS also requires students in both the PhD and the MS degree programs to take CHSC400: Public Health Concepts and Practice (3 sh credit) and one of the following: HPA400: Basic Principles of Management in Public Health (3 sh credit), EOHS400: Principles of Environmental Health Sciences (3 sh credit) or IPHS401: Behavioral Sciences in Public Health (2 sh credit). CHSC400 covers the concepts, principles and case studies that provide an overview of the philosophy, purpose, history, organization, functions, tools, activities and results of public health practice. Other CHS courses selected by students and included in their program proposals as electives provide additional orientation to public health.

Environmental and Occupational Health Sciences

Starting with matriculating students in the fall of 1998, all PhD students in the division also are required to take IPHS660 DrPH Integrative Seminar. This seminar requires students to apply broad public health skills to the evaluation of a series of case studies.

There are many other ways EOHS students acquire a public health orientation.

- Beginning with the 1998 fall semester, all EOHS students are required to complete the new divisional core. This core is designed to expose all environmental health students to the broad range of disciplines within the field and includes course work in exposure assessment, health assessment and the design of intervention strategies.
- The culminating experience for research students in the division is a thesis. Thesis research in the division is tied very closely to current public health problems. Recent examples are listed in Appendix VI.5.2.
- Research students are strongly encouraged to present their findings at meetings of national professional associations, including the American Public Health Association, the American Industrial Hygiene Association, and the Air and Waste Management Association.

- Trainees in occupational health and industrial hygiene participate in a weekly occupational health seminar, attend occupational medicine clinics, and are encouraged to assist with health hazard evaluations in the community.
- Our MPH and MS students have a similar curriculum and have many opportunities to interact together in class.

Epidemiology and Biostatistics

The MS and PhD degrees in epidemiology require two or three courses in biostatistics but currently have no specific course requirements in other public health disciplines; however, one criterion for an acceptable thesis or dissertation topic is that it be relevant to current public health issues. Beginning with fall 1999, all MS students in epidemiology will be required to take one core course outside of the division (CHSC400 will be highly recommended but students might opt to take HPA400, EOHS400 or IPHS401). Students pursuing the PhD degree in epidemiology are required to have a collateral area of study (requiring 6 semester hours of 500 level courses); they are strongly urged to have this collateral area be one of the other core disciplines in public health.

The MS in biostatistics degree requires that students take two core classes in other public health disciplines. One of the two courses must be in epidemiology, while the other may be chosen by the student.

The PhD degree in biostatistics has no formal course work requirement in public health; however, as in epidemiology, one of many criteria for an acceptable thesis topic is that it be relevant to current public health issues.

In addition, both the epidemiology and biostatistics sections now provide a weekly research seminar for MS and PhD students. Once a month, a seminar is held jointly between sections to allow cross-fertilization of ideas and to bring in outstanding speakers with an epidemiology/biostatistics focus on public health problems.

Health Policy and Administration

Students in health policy and administration pursuing MS (rare in HPA) and PhD degrees have requirements in epidemiology and biostatistics common to all SPH research degree candidates. In addition, HPA course requirements for such students - although varying from student to student - will always, de facto, include public health and/or health services-oriented courses in policy and management. It is not possible to complete these degrees with (HPA) course work that is “pure methodology.” Students also are encouraged to consider courses in other SPH divisions, beyond the required epidemiology and biostatistics courses. It is the process of establishing a program proposal plan that provides the means by which student and faculty advisor collaborate in addressing the public health orientation of the particular program.

3. Culminating Experience

The culminating experience for our academic degrees, except the MS in biostatistics, is a research thesis or dissertation that focuses on a topic of public health relevance. Through this effort the student demonstrates ability to conduct independent research and present the results

in writing. Both the thesis and the dissertation are activities that prepare students for careers in public health education and research. For the MS in biostatistics, the culminating experience is a comprehensive examination, including an in-class portion, a take-home examination, and an oral question-and-answer session between the student and the MS faculty examining committee.

4. Assessment

As was noted during the preparation of this self-study, MS students pursuing a degree in epidemiology have no specific requirements in other public health disciplines. This weakness was identified and faculty in epidemiology have voted to alter the curriculum (effective fall 1999) as indicated above. Thus, this criterion is met with commentary