

# The Master of Public Health

[LEARNING OBJECTIVES FOR THE MPH](#) • [PROGRAM REQUIREMENTS BY DEGREE AND DIVISION](#) • [PROGRAM OF STUDY](#) • [GUIDELINES AND PROCEDURES FOR THE FIELD EXPERIENCE](#)

## **Learning objectives for the MPH (Master of Public Health degree)**

The MPH program is designed so that an MPH student will achieve the 47 learning objectives listed below by the time he or she graduates. These objectives cover ten different domains: basic health science skills, analytic skills, cultural skills, information and technology, communication skills, policy development, leadership and systems thinking, financial planning and management, community dimensions of practice, and ethics. These objectives are limited in their focus to learning that is expected to occur as a result of completing core courses, field and capstone experiences, and other activities that are required of all MPH students. Learning objectives for the MPH degree within each academic division provide further objectives appropriate to students in each division.

### Basic health science skills

Graduates should be able to:

- Define, assess and understand the health status of populations, determinants of health and illness, factors contributing to health promotion and disease prevention, and factors influencing the use of health services.
- Identify the research methods used in all basic public health sciences.
- Apply the basic public health sciences, including epidemiology, health and policy administration, behavioral and social sciences, biostatistics, and environmental and occupational public health, to the prevention of illness and injury.
- Describe the potential linkages and interactions among multiple determinants of health at intrapersonal, interpersonal, organizational, community, and societal levels (i.e., ecological model).
- Communicate an understanding of theoretical explanations of racial and ethnic disparities in forces influencing health.
- Describe the role of molecular determinants in health and illness within an ecological model of public health.

### Analytic skills

Graduates should be able to:

- Define a problem in public health.
- Use appropriate data and statistical methods for problem identification and resolutions and for program planning, implementation and evaluation.

- Select and define variables relevant to defined public health problems.
- Use data to illuminate ethical, political, scientific, economic and overall public health issues.
- Synthesize core public health knowledge using analytic tools.
- Integrate theory into public health practice.
- Apply empirical knowledge to public health practice.
- Apply rigorous critical thinking to the analysis of public health problems.

#### Cultural skills

Graduates should be able to:

- Demonstrate an in-depth understanding of the dynamic forces of cultural diversity and their implications for public health both within the United States and internationally.
- Interact sensitively, effectively and professionally with people from diverse ethnic, socioeconomic, educational and professional backgrounds, and with persons of all ages and lifestyle preferences.
- Identify the role of cultural factors in determining disease, disease prevention, health promoting behavior, and health care services organization and delivery.
- Develop and adapt approaches to public health that take into account cultural differences.

#### Information and technology

Graduates should be able to:

- Define a public health problem for purposes of literature research process.
- Demonstrate library skills, including the ability to conduct computerized literature searches, for researching problems in public health.
- Use one of several statistical packages (e.g., EPI Info, SAS) to analyze data to address public health problems.
- Use basic data management software in public health.
- Use one of several graphics software packages (e.g., POWERPOINT) to develop presentations for public health problems.
- Describe the role of information systems in improving the effectiveness of public health activities.

#### Communication skills

Graduates should be able to:

- Communicate effectively both in writing and orally to diverse professional and lay audiences regarding public health issues.
- Present accurately and effectively demographic, statistical, programmatic and scientific public health information for professionals and lay audiences.

- Lead and participate in groups to address specific public health issues.
- Use the media to communicate important public health information.

### Policy development

Graduates should be able to:

- Understand the historical development and structure of state, local and federal public health-related agencies.
- Describe the U.S. institutions and processes of policy-making in public health and recognize that these differ in different societies.
- Communicate an understanding of the impact of public policies and policy-making on one's work in public health.
- Recognize relevant theories of social policy and how they explain policy-making in public health.
- Describe the use of evidence-based decision-making in policy-making in public health.
- Describe processes and strategies used to inform and influence policy makers as they develop policies, laws, and regulations that impact on the public's health.

### Leadership and systems thinking

Graduates should be able to:

- Know what is required to assess a public health organization's structure and performance.
- Participate in and contribute to strategic planning in public health.
- Describe public health and health care delivery systems.
- Describe the elements of organizational leadership including strategies for knowing how to coordinating teams, managing conflicts, motivating staff and continuous quality improvement.

### Financial planning and management

Graduates should be able to:

- Develop and justify a budget.
- Manage public health programs within budget constraints.
- Monitor performance of public health programs.
- Understand the role of cost-effectiveness, cost-benefit, and cost utility analyses in the management of public health resources.

### Community dimensions of practice

Graduates should be able to:

- Establish and maintain linkages with key stakeholders in community-based initiatives to address public health issues.
- Describe the process for developing, implementing, and evaluating a community public health assessment.
- Describe the scientific, ethical, and practice dimensions of community-based participatory research.

## Ethics

Graduates should be able to:

- Use and apply ethical analysis to inform decision-making in public health.
- Apply ethical principles to the collection, maintenance, use, and dissemination of data and information.

## **Program Requirements by Degree and Division**

### Master of Public Health

The Master of Public Health (MPH) is the basic professional degree offered by the School of Public Health (SPH). It is designed to ensure that upon graduation the student has a general understanding of the broad field of public health and a specific competence in a particular public health area. It is intended to prepare students for public health practice or to continue specialized education through matriculation for a doctoral degree.

Programs of study leading to the MPH degree are offered by each of the following four SPH Divisions:

- Community Health Sciences
- Environmental and Occupational Health Sciences
- Epidemiology and Biostatistics
- Health Policy and Administration

### Change in Division

If a student's interests change after admission or the student determines that professional goals would be better achieved in a division different from the one originally assigned, the student should submit a Request for Change of Degree form with consenting signatures of the current and the proposed Division Directors to the Office of Student Affairs.

## Requirements for Admission

Please see the [Admissions](#) section of the SPH website for information.

## Conditional Admission Policy Statement

Under special circumstances, an applicant may be recommended by a Division for admission on a conditional basis (e.g., completion of preparatory course work). The conditions under which a student is admitted to the School are to be stipulated in writing by the director of the Division recommending admission of the student. Conditionally admitted students must satisfy the conditions prior to graduation (or earlier if so specified by the Division).

## Deadline for Completing Degree Requirements

MPH students must complete all degree requirements within five calendar years after their initial registration as a degree student within the SPH. In extraordinary circumstances an extension of time may be granted if the petition for an extension is filed before meeting the 5-year deadline. Time spent on an approved leave of absence is not counted toward the degree time limit (see Leave of Absence).

## **Program of Study**

Upon admission to the program, the MPH student is assigned an advisor with interests and expertise compatible with the student's experience and goals. Together, the student and the advisor develop a program of study.

The program of study leading to the MPH degree is flexible to permit an interface with the individual student's past experience and future career goals. Thus, a student with a previous public health background may matriculate in a 34-39 semester hour Professional Enhancement Program whereas the student with limited or no health background will matriculate in an extended Comprehensive Program. Both programs comprise five components: (a) required courses, (b) a field practicum (usually during the summer semester), waivable on the basis of professional public health experience, (c) electives, (d) a capstone experience, and (e) where required by the Division, an essay. In some Divisions, the field practicum and/or essay may satisfy the capstone requirement.

## Professional Enhancement Program (PEP) Curriculum

The Professional Enhancement Program (PEP) Curriculum consists of course work and a capstone experience related to general public health knowledge. This curriculum is

oriented to students with three or more years of previous experience in a public health-related field who intend to pursue a public health career in the same professional area. While divisional requirements vary, full-time students whose program is limited to this curriculum will likely complete it during one calendar year.

Eligibility for this program includes students with pre-matriculation professional education (at a master's, or doctoral level, as appropriate to the professional field) or equivalent professional experience of at least three years' duration who intend to pursue a public health career in the same professional area. Examples of degrees which may be acceptable are the following: DDS, DO, DVM, JD, MD, PhD (e.g., microbiology, psychology, sociology), DEng, MBA, MSW, MS (e.g., entomology, nutrition, physical therapy). Others may be acceptable as individually justified.

### Comprehensive Curriculum

The Comprehensive Curriculum is oriented to the student with limited or no background in a health-related field. Students with a health background who are changing careers may also opt for this program. This curriculum consists of all the requirements of the professional enhancement program curriculum plus extended course work in a Division specialty. The Division may have an extensive core of required courses or may permit highly individualized programs based on student interests. The specific content of this curriculum is determined by the Division Director with the student and his/her advisor and will involve between 39-60 sh of course work.

Semester hour requirements for the Master of Public Health Program are:

	Professional Enhancement	Comprehensive
SPH Core Courses	19 sh	19 sh
Electives and Division Requirements	15-17 sh*	Variable up to 40 sh
IPHS 650 Field Experience (Practicum)	0-3 sh	3-5 sh
Total Required for Graduation	34-39 sh	Variable up to 60 sh

\*Certain divisions may require more semester hours.

### Core Courses:

- EPID 400\* Principles of Epidemiology (3 sh) or EPID 403 Introduction to Epidemiology: Principles and Methods (3 sh) (depending on division)
- BSTT 400\* Biostatistics I (3 sh)
- HPA 400 Principles of Management in Public Health (3 sh)

- CHSC 400 Public Health Concepts and Practice (3 sh)
- EOHS 400 Principles of Environmental Health Sciences (3 sh)
- CHSC 401 Behavioral Sciences in Public Health (3 sh)
- IPHS 698\*\* MPH Capstone Experience (1 sh)

Total 19 sh

\*Students are encouraged to take EPID 400 or EPID 403 and BSTT 400 by the end of the second semester of residence. EPID 400, EPID 403 and BSTT 400 are prerequisites for many other 400-level and 500-level courses.

\*\*The capstone experience can be both based on and satisfied by a variety of activities that culminate into one public health experience. The requirements for the capstone experience differ by SPH Division and are described in this handbook under each division.

### Electives

Division requirements for electives vary based on track and program.

### Independent Study Hours (IPHS 596)

Students may use Independent Study (IPHS 596) to satisfy elective hours. Up to 4 sh of Independent Study may be credited for graduation for programs of study requiring 32-35 sh. For degree programs requiring greater than 35 sh, 1 sh of independent study may be credited toward graduation for each additional 5 sh of formal course work taken, to a maximum of 9 sh.

### Field Experience (IPHS 650)

Except where explicitly waived, a field experience/practicum (IPHS650) is required of all MPH students in the School of Public Health.

### Capstone Experience (IPHS 698)

Every student must sign up for this course in his or her last semester. The capstone can be based on a variety of activities (e.g. field practicum, independent study, research project) that culminate into a public health experience. The requirement for the capstone experience differs by division, but whatever the activity, all students are required to produce a capstone product which is a report of the capstone experience or activity. The culminating capstone experience enables MPH students to achieve the following learning objectives:

- Apply key public health concepts (e.g., prevention, risk assessment) to a specific public health area (e.g., gerontology, infectious disease epidemiology).
- Apply knowledge of the core areas of public health to a specific health problem.

- Integrate skills and knowledge gained through core and division-required courses toward resolving a public health problem either through practice in a public health setting or through investigation and analysis.

More than one faculty member will evaluate each student's capstone product. The evaluation should be based on whether the student has met the above objectives.

**For capstone experience and capstone product requirements by division, please refer to specific division sections under the MPH degree program in this handbook.**

Effective Fall 2004, all new students are required to complete initial training in human research subjects protections (Investigator Training 101) and the protection of health information (HIPAA Research 101) by the end of their first academic year.

## **Field Practicum Guidelines and Procedures**

### 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.

## **Field Practicum 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 planning, 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 Practicum Process

Students may begin the field practicum following completion of all MPH course requirements or with consent of the advisor and the division director. Students must have permission of their 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 practicum 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.

(CHS Students should refer to their divisional Student Handbook for the field practicum protocol.)

## **Identify Potential Field Sites**

Make a list of potential sites that you would like to consider for a field practicum. At the same time, it is important that you consider and identify your reasons for wanting to work for each organization you select.

## **Make an appointment with Faculty Advisor**

If you have a clear idea of the type of field practicum you desire and can identify organizations which provide the experience, please schedule an appointment with your faculty advisor to discuss your area of interest and your desire to obtain an appropriate field practicum. If your advisor is in agreement, you may contact the organizations of interest directly.

If you would like to discuss and clarify your area of interest with a SPH career advisor, contact Adela Peña at 312-996-3447 to schedule an appointment.

## **Make Initial Contact with Chosen Organization(s)**

The initial inquiry will determine whether there is a position available and what the organization's protocol would be. At this time, the four forms necessary to initiate and complete a field practicum can be obtained from the divisional student handbook if you are a CHS student or downloaded from the SPH website at [http://www.uic.edu/sph/students\\_forms.htm](http://www.uic.edu/sph/students_forms.htm) if you are a BSTT, EOHS, EPID or HPA student.

## **Have a Follow-up Discussion with Faculty Advisor/Field Practicum Learning Agreement**

Once a contact has been made with an organization, the student should discuss the opportunity with his/her advisor to ensure the field practicum will fulfill the requirements agreed upon in their initial meeting.

## **Submit the Field Practicum Learning Agreement Form**

At least three months prior to beginning the field practicum, complete the Field Practicum Learning Agreement form and submit to the divisional academic coordinator. A copy of the Field Practicum Learning Agreement form must be submitted to Adela Peña, Coordinator, Graduate Career Placement, 178 AA SPHPI, along with the IPHS 650 Course Registration form. If you have any questions Adela Peña can be reached at 312 996-3447 or [adela@uic.edu](mailto:adela@uic.edu).

## **Submit the Agreement for Student Placement in a Practice Setting Forms**

At least three months prior to your practicum, check with Adela Pena, Coordinator, Graduate Career Placement, 178 AA, SPHPI, 312 996-3447, [adela@uic.edu](mailto:adela@uic.edu) to verify if your practicum is a pre-approved site. You may also check the SPH website for a list of pre-approved sites. Pre-approved sites do not require the Agreement for Student Placement in a Practice Setting form.

If your practicum is not a pre-approved site you will need to complete the Agreement for Student Placement in a Practice Setting form. This form must be completed in quadruplicate. Return all four original completed forms to the Academic Coordinator.

Students may NOT register for IPHS 650 unless these forms have been filled out completely, and submitted with approval of the preceptor and faculty advisor.

## **Register for IPHS 650**

Registration for IPHS 650 occurs during the semester you are beginning your field practicum. Acquire a registration form from SPH website at: [http://www.uic.edu/sph/students\\_forms.htm](http://www.uic.edu/sph/students_forms.htm) . Please complete the form and acquire your faculty advisor's signature. Return the completed form and a copy of the completed Field Learning Agreement form to Adela Pena, 178 AA APHPI for registration processing. A student may register for three to five semester hours of credit. Each semester hour requires 64 hours of experience in the field. Five semester hours of credit would require a total of 320 hours in the field.

## **Submit Preceptor Evaluation Form**

Approximately two weeks prior to the completion of the field practicum, the student should download the [Preceptor Evaluation Form](#) and ask the preceptor to complete it.

The completed evaluation form may be returned to the division's academic coordinator by the student, or at the preceptor's discretion, submitted directly by the preceptor to Adela Peña, Office of Student Affairs, UIC School of Public Health, 1603 W. Taylor street, Suite 191, Chicago, IL 60612, Fax: 312.413.4300.

## **Submit Student Evaluation Form**

Approximately two weeks prior to the completion of the field practicum, the student must download and complete the [Student Evaluation Form](#). The completed form must be returned to the student's Academic Coordinator.

## **Complete Institutional Review Board Requirements, if required**

Effective Fall 2004, all new students are required to complete initial training in human subjects research protections (Investigator Training 101) and the protection of health information (HIPAA Research 101). Training must occur by the end of the student's first academic year, or prior to beginning the field practicum (IPHS 650) and/or the Capstone project (IPHS 698) if human subject data is used; whichever event occurs first. If IRB review is required, students must submit for IRB review as early as possible, to allow sufficient time for the lengthy review process. Students should consult the SPH Student Reference Guide and their academic advisors to determine the proper IRB procedure to follow. Please note: If required, the field practicum and Capstone cannot be undertaken without IRB review or exemption.

## **International Students**

In addition to the previous steps outlined under Field Practicum Process, International Students must receive authorization from the Office of International Services to begin their practicum.

The first step is to attend the mandatory workshop "Employment Options for F-1 Students." During the workshop students will receive information on eligibility factors, application procedures and receive the appropriate application materials. Visit the OIS webpage at [www.ois.uic.edu](http://www.ois.uic.edu) for workshop dates, times and location.

When you have secured a practicum placement, you must submit the completed "Request for Departmental Approval" form to your academic advisor to verify that your practicum is related to your course of study. Return the completed "Request for Departmental Approval" form and the OIS Request for Curricular Practical Training Form to the Office of International Services after you have registered for IPHS 650. OIS will verify your student status and registration for the IPHS 650. OIS will process your request for authorization within 10 business days.

## Field Practicum Forms Checklist

The following forms must be used when setting up an agreement with an organization:

- Field Practicum Learning Agreement
- Agreement for Student Placement in a Practice Setting (if site not previously approved)
- Preceptor's Evaluation Form
- Student Evaluation Form
- IPHS 650 Registration Form
- IRB Approval, if relevant. (hyperlink: [http://www.uic.edu/sph/research\\_guides.htm](http://www.uic.edu/sph/research_guides.htm))

Acquire all Field Practicum forms from the SPH website at:

[http://www.uic.edu/sph/students\\_forms.htm](http://www.uic.edu/sph/students_forms.htm)

Responsibilities of the student, faculty advisor and preceptor

### 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 Practicum Learning Agreement with assistance and input from the preceptor and advisor.
- Returns completed Field Learning Agreement form to the divisional academic coordinator.
- Returns completed IPHS form and a copy of the Field Practicum Learning Agreement form to Adela Pena, Coordinator, Graduate Career Placement, 179 AA SPHPI.
- If needed, completes the Student Placement in a Practice Setting Form and returns four original completed forms to the Academic Coordinator.
- Files for IRB review if human subjects research is involved.
- Performs assignments and activities identified in the agreement, seeking assistance from the preceptor and faculty advisor when needed.
- Completes the Student Evaluation of Field Practicum form and returns the completed form to the Academic Coordinator, The evaluation must include a Summary Report that includes:
  - A description of activities performed during placement, noting any deviations from the field learning agreement.
  - How well did the field practicum integrate what the student learned in their formal MPH course work.
  - What the student gained from the experience. identifying problems if they occurred.
  - Extent to which the student's educational objectives were achieved. (These are identified in the student's field learning agreement)

- Extent to which MPH Field Practicum [learning objectives](#) were achieved.

#### 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 practicum; approves requests for its registration or waiver.
- Assists the student in selecting potential practicum sites.
- Approves the Field Practicum Learning Agreement, which describes the mutual expectations of the student and preceptor.
- Ensures the Agreement for Student Placement in a Practice Setting Form is completed, in quadruplicate, if needed.
- Assists students with IRB forms, where required.
- Is responsive to the student's needs during placement and provides consultation periodically.
- Reviews the student's Summary Report.
- Assesses the student's performance with input from the preceptor, and determines the final grade (Pass/Fail).

#### Preceptor's Responsibilities

- Assists the student in developing the Field Practicum 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 practicum by completing the Preceptor's Evaluation of Student Performance and returning the form to the Academic Coordinator via the student or to Adela Peña, Coordinator Graduate Career Placement.

#### Conditions for Waiver of the Field Practicum

The field practicum 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. The field practicum may be waived with a petition at the time the student's program proposal is presented for approval. Waiver approval is by the student's advisor and the division director.