



COLLEGE OF  
POPULATION HEALTH

# MASTER OF PUBLIC HEALTH

## Student Handbook

MSC09 5070  
1 University of New Mexico  
Albuquerque, NM 87131-0001  
Phone: (505) 272-4173  
Fax: (505) 272-4494

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## **Introduction to the MPH Program**

*Welcome to the Master of Public Health (MPH) Program in the College of Population Health (COPH) at the University of New Mexico Health Sciences Center (UNM HSC).*

The purpose of this handbook is to provide you with the information you will need during your degree process. While many of your questions will be answered in this handbook, each student is unique and we realize many questions and issues could arise that are not covered here. Please feel free to contact the education support coordinator, your faculty advisor or the COPH Director of Graduate Programs (Director) for additional assistance.

## **Program Background**

The MPH Program began in the Fall Semester of 1994 within the School of Medicine. In July of 2017, the MPH Program moved to the College of Population Health. The MPH Program currently accepts a new class of students that are admitted each fall semester.

## **Office Location**

### **Administrative Office**

University of New Mexico  
Health Sciences Center  
College of Population Health  
Family Medicine Center  
2400 Tucker NE Room 165  
MSC09 5070  
Albuquerque, NM 87131-5267  
Phone: (505) 272-4173  
FAX: (505) 272-4494

## **MPH Program Mission**

### **Mission**

The mission of the MPH Program in the COPH at the UNM HSC is to provide leadership in graduate and community-based education and research grounded in social justice to improve the health of the diverse populations in New Mexico and the Southwest.

The MPH Program is committed to the idea that diversity and inclusion benefit everyone by offering a rich variety of experiences, backgrounds, perspectives, and ideas that improve and reflect the wonderful diversity of our population.

## General Information

### What is Public Health?

Public Health is the science of protecting and improving the health of communities through education, promotion of healthy lifestyles, and research for disease and injury prevention. Public health professionals analyze the effect on health of genetics, personal choice and the environment in order to develop programs that protect the health of your family and community.

Overall, public health is concerned with protecting the health of entire populations. These populations can be as small as a local neighborhood, or as big as an entire country.

Public health professionals try to prevent problems from happening or re-occurring through implementing educational programs, developing policies, administering services, *regulating health systems and some health professions*, and conducting research, in contrast to clinical professionals, such as doctors and nurses, who focus primarily on treating individuals after they become sick or injured. It is also a field that is concerned with limiting health disparities and a large part of public health is the fight for health care equity, quality, and accessibility.

The field of public health is highly varied and encompasses many academic disciplines. However, public health is mainly composed of the following core areas:

- Behavioral Science/Health Education
- Biostatistics
- Emergency Medical Services
- Environmental Health
- Epidemiology
- Health Services Administration/Management
- International/Global Health
- Maternal and Child Health
- Nutrition
- Public Health Laboratory Practice
- Public Health Policy
- Public Health Practice

### Classroom Locations

The majority of classes are held in the Domenici Center on the Health Sciences Center campus.

### COPH Student Lounge

All admitted MPH students are given access to the Student Lounge located in Room 171 of the Family Medicine Building. The lounge provides a space where students can study, have meetings, or just have a quiet place of their own. Access to the lounge is during normal business hours, 8:00am -5:00pm Monday-Friday.

The student lounge contains computer and office equipment and all students are urged to safeguard that equipment by ensuring that the doors are locked when they leave the premises. There are two computers available in the student lounge. The computers are equipped with current software such as Windows, Microsoft Office and STATA. Students also have access to the internet and e-mail using the computers.

## **E-mail**

Students must have an active e-mail account, through either UNM or another e-mail system, and ensure that the correct preferred e-mail address is updated in LoboWeb. Pertinent information regarding the COPH and MPH Program is sent to students using their e-mail addresses including upcoming events, information on jobs, your status, requests for additional information, assistantships, financial aid and other items. Please make sure you share your preferred e-mail address with the MPH education support coordinator. All students are urged to check their emails regularly.

## **Financial Aid Information**

### **Assistantships**

During the course of the year, assistantship contracts are available to qualified MPH students through faculty research and educational assistantships. Notices regarding assistantship opportunities are forwarded to students through email and posted on the MPH bulletin boards.

### **Scholarships**

Scholarship opportunities are forwarded to students via e-mail. It is important to check the Graduate Studies website for additional scholarship opportunities.

## **Completion of the Degree**

Now that you have been admitted to the program, please take a moment to familiarize yourself with the following information.

### **MPH Core Competencies**

The MPH Program requires all graduates to demonstrate specific knowledge and skills related to public health practice. The program is guided by a set of core competencies, in addition to concentration-specific competencies (see specific concentration for the additional competencies). The core competencies address a unique set of applied knowledge, skills and other attributes across the broad disciplines within the program, including biostatistics, epidemiology, environmental health sciences, health services administration and social and behavioral sciences. The core competencies for the MPH degree are outlined below.

After completion of the degree, the graduate should be able to:

- apply ethical principles to professional practice when acting in any capacity as a public health professional;
- identify the importance of working collaboratively with diverse communities and constituencies (e.g. researchers, practitioners, agencies, health care service providers and community organizations);
- apply the socioecological framework to identify health problem at the population level and develop interventions;
- apply critical thinking to analyze and develop interventions based on public health sciences, including behavioral, environmental and social sciences, biostatistics and epidemiology;
- access, evaluate and communicate accurate demographic, statistical, programmatic, policy and other scientific information in relevant modalities with professionals, community members and policy makers;

- interact sensitively, effectively and professionally with persons from diverse demographic, cultural, socioeconomic, educational and professional backgrounds and lifestyles preferences;
- demonstrate leadership skills to promote public health initiatives for improving the health status of populations when acting at the local, state, national and international levels; and
- describe the basic principles of participatory approaches to public health research and practice.

### **Credits Required**

The Master of Public Health degree is a 42-credit hour program that includes three concentrations, Community Health, Epidemiology, or Health Systems, Services and Policy. If you are unsure of your credit status, please contact the education support coordinator, your faculty advisor or the director.

### **Transfer Credits**

Students can transfer up to 17 approved credits into the MPH program. To request transfer credit, the following is required:

Students requesting course transfer from another educational institution, must request a review of the course to see if it is applicable to the MPH degree at UNM. The request is made to the director, accompanied by a syllabus for the course taken at the other educational institution. The director will provide a written decision explaining the action taken and a copy is placed in your student file. The decision will not be made unless the course syllabus is provided.

There is no immediate transfer of courses done at the time of admission. All approved transfer credits must be included on the student's Program of Study (POS) at the time it is submitted. Once the POS is approved by the adviser and director, it is forwarded to Graduate Studies for review and final approval.

An official transcript from the educational institution showing the credits being transferred must be sent to the MPH education support coordinator.

NOTE: Students may not transfer any course that has been used to meet the requirements of another degree program. The same course *may not be used* to meet the requirements of two separate degrees.

### **Time Frame for Degree Completion**

Students have a seven-year period to complete all requirements of the MPH degree. If a student is attending on a full-time basis, it is possible to complete the degree in a 2-year period of time (including two summer semesters). Those students who are attending part-time should be prepared to accelerate their studies at some point in time in order to meet the seven-year requirement.

All incoming students are required to take a sequence of courses in their first fall and spring semesters. At a minimum, students must enroll in four credit hours during their first fall semester. For a full-time student, the required courses include: PH 501 Principles of Public Health (4 credits), PH502 Epidemiology and Biostatistics I, and PH 560 Epidemiology and Biostatistics Lab. If you have already completed Principles of Public Health, you must enroll in another course in addition to PH 511 during the fall semester in order to have the four required credits. During the following spring semester, you are required to take at least five credit hours. You must enroll in Theory and Practice Seminar (PH 508) for two-credits and one other three-credit course. If you are unable to fulfill this requirement, please contact your faculty advisor as soon as possible in the fall semester.

Please note that the student's seven-year period begins the semester in which they take their first graduate level course applicable to the degree, *whether they are an admitted student or not*. If you have taken courses prior to being admitted, please keep this in mind when determining the seven-year period.

## **Time Off from the Program**

It may be necessary for students to take time from the program due to personal, financial, or other reasons. A student who is unable to continue his/her graduate studies due to extenuating circumstances, must request a leave of absence in advance. The written request, together with a memo of support from the chairperson or designee of the graduate unit is forwarded to the Dean in the Graduate Studies office who will make the final decision. A leave of absence is determined on a semester-by-semester basis and is generally limited to a maximum of one calendar year. The time approved for a Leave of Absence is not counted in the time limit to complete the degree, as long as the student is not enrolled in any course at UNM. To request a leave of absence, follow the Instructions below:

### **Formal Leave of Absence**

- Meet with your MPH faculty advisor or the director to explain your situation.
- Write a formal letter addressed to the Dean of Graduate Studies (GS) requesting the leave of absence, include when you plan to resume your studies. The letter is forwarded to the director for review. If the director agrees to the student request, a memo of support will be submitted to GS along with your written request. Both the request and the support memo will be placed in your student file.

### **Informal Leave of Absence**

- Students are allowed to take a leave of absence without submitting a formal leave of absence request. A student who is admitted and completes at least one semester of graduate studies in the program is allowed three consecutive semesters, including summer, without taking classes and without submitting a formal request. **Please keep in mind the seven-year rule for completing the program.** Taking time off requires that you submit a request for extension. An absence of more than three semesters, including summer sessions, will result in you being automatically dropped from the program. In this case, you must reapply to UNM.

### **Reapplication**

If a student has not been enrolled for three consecutive semesters, they are automatically dis-enrolled from the UNM. In order to register for courses, you must reapply to the UNM and the MPH Program.

- You must submit your reapplication in the normal time frame allowed for new registration. Please refer to the latest UNM schedule for the filing deadlines.
- If you do not meet the time requirements for reapplication, your application will not be approved until the following semester. You may be readmitted to the program during any semester.
- If you do not meet the time requirements and your admission is delayed for a semester, you may continue to take courses under the non-degree process.
- If you meet all requirements above, approval is automatic at the program level.

### **Request for Extension**

If a student is unable to complete their degree in the required period of time, he/she may petition Graduate Studies for an extension of time. To do so, the student must do the following:

Submit a program of study to the MPH education support coordinator two semesters prior to the seven-year period. This must be on file and show your course work and anticipated graduation.

Write a memorandum addressed to Graduate Studies stating the reason for not being able to complete the program within the seven-year requirement. Please be specific and brief.

Submit the memorandum to the MPH education support coordinator. The director will approve this request and submit it to GS along with a memorandum of support for the student.

A decision from GS is returned to the student and the MPH Program. A copy is also retained in the student folder.

### **Schedules and CRNs**

Students will receive a MPH Program course schedule prior to the beginning of each semester via email. A semester schedule is also posted on the CPH website under courses and on LoboWeb. Some courses are restricted, and permission of the instructor is required. After you have received approval to register for restricted courses from the instructor, the education support coordinator will do an override which will allow you to register for the course. You will be notified via email when this has been done.

### **Grading System**

All graduate students in the MPH Program will be expected to maintain a 3.0 GPA. The following grading system is used:

A+ = 4.33

A = 4.00

A- = 3.67

B+ = 3.33

B = 3.00

B- = 2.67

C+ = 2.33

C = 2.00

Graduate Students cannot be assigned a grade of D

F = 0.00

Students may include a total of 11 credits of C, C+ or CR on their program of studies whether those courses are in or out of their major course of study. If the student plans to use the courses toward their degree requirement, then they must keep the 11-hour restriction in mind.

### **Incompletes**

A faculty member may choose to give a student an incomplete for a course. The student has 1 year to resolve the Incomplete, or it will default to an "F." It is highly recommended that all incompletes are cleared the following semester. It is the student's responsibility to keep track of their incompletes and complete the work. Exceptions may be considered for extenuating circumstances with approval of the instructor, director and the UNM faculty senate. Students are not allowed to graduate with an "I" on their student record.

### **Academic Probation**

Students will be placed on academic probation if their cumulative GPA falls below 3.0. If the student's GPA falls below 3.0, Graduate Studies will notify the student that they have been placed on probation. The student is then given the opportunity to improve their grades during the next 12 credits taken. If the student does not improve their GPA, they will be dis-enrolled from UNM.

Students in a probationary status are not allowed to hold an assistantship or graduate while on probation.

## **Academic Integrity Policy**

The University *Pathfinder* Policy on Academic Dishonesty can be found at the link below. One purpose of this policy is to clearly delineate mutual expectations of faculty and students and to more clearly define academic dishonesty. <http://pathfinder.unm.edu/>

### **The *Pathfinder* states:**

*Each student is expected to maintain the highest standards of honesty and integrity in academic and professional matters. The University reserves the right to take disciplinary action, up to and including dismissal, against any student who is found guilty of academic dishonesty or otherwise fails to meet the standards. Any student judged to have engaged in academic dishonesty in course work may receive a reduced or failing grade for the work in question and/or for the course.*

*Academic dishonesty includes, but is not limited to, dishonesty in quizzes, tests, or assignments; claiming credit for work not done or done by others; hindering the academic work of other students; misrepresenting academic or professional qualifications within or without the University; and nondisclosure or misrepresentation in filling out applications or other University records.*

### **The *Faculty Handbook* states:**

*When a violation of the regulation occurs in connection with a course, seminar, or any other academic activity under the direction of a faculty member, that faculty member is authorized to take whatever action is deemed appropriate, but no penalty in excess of an "F" in the course and the involuntary withdrawal of the student from the class may be imposed. Whenever this penalty is imposed; the instructor may report the case in full detail in writing to the Dean of Students, who may impose additional sanctions or refer the matter to the Student Conduct Committee for a determination of whether additional sanctions are warranted.*

## **MPH Expectations for Academic Integrity**

As a community of scholars:

- it is expected that the course work a student conducts and submits (or presents) will be that of the individual student, unless a student receives prior permission from the instructor to do otherwise. Submitting work as if it is an individual product when it is not is academic dishonesty.
- it is expected that students will cite and enclose in quotes any product copied, or materially taken, from others. It is expected that written submissions are those of the student unless otherwise clearly quoted and appropriately cited. Duplicating, in whole or in part, another's work product and submitting that work as if a student had produced it independently is academic dishonesty. Examples include, but are not limited to, duplicating in whole or in part: exams produced by others; paper(s) produced by others (on behalf of the student or not) and whether or not the paper(s) were previously submitted; non-original material obtained from web sites; and/or publications.
- it is expected that faculty and staff will not hinder the academic progress of students in other classes by assisting one or more students in producing and/or submitting group and/or duplicated work as if it were produced independently (by the students when the faculty member can reasonably construe that the work will be evaluated as an individual product). Such behavior violates provisions of the *Faculty Handbook* and will be sanctioned as outlined in the handbook.
- it is expected that students will complete examinations without duplicating the exam answers of other students, using course materials or notes or otherwise gaining an unfair advantage

over other students who are also taking the exam. Such behavior hinders the academic work of fellow students, claims credit for work done by the student, and is academically dishonest. However, if the exam is expressly designated as open book or take home exam, the use of course materials or notes is allowed.

- it is expected that a student will be responsible and discuss re-submissions or research/project continuations with the faculty prior to submitting any potentially redundant work.
- it is expected that faculty will clearly state course and exam objectives. If the student believes clarity is lacking, it is the responsibility of the student to request clarification in a timely manner. Faculty should provide clarification in writing whenever possible to avoid misunderstanding(s).
- it is expected that students maintain the highest standards of honesty and integrity in academic and professional matters. If a student fulfills university expectations of maintaining the highest standards of honesty and integrity in academic and professional matters, yet is having difficulty in a class, the student may expect faculty to consider available options that may assist the student, which may include, but are not limited to: deadline extensions, auditing, incomplete grades, or withdrawals.
- , it is expected that if a faculty or staff member witnesses or learns of an instance of possible academic dishonesty, he/she should promptly report the incident to the instructor in charge of the class where the alleged academic dishonesty occurred.
- it is required that an incident of academic dishonesty will be dealt with as outlined in the *Pathfinder* and the *Faculty Handbook*.
- it is expected that Academic Freedom will be upheld as defined in the *Faculty Handbook*.  
<http://handbook.unm.edu/>

In the absence of a contrary directive from the instructor, students may collaborate, assist, and help each other. Unless a faculty member specifically assigns a group project, all final class projects must be each student's own work and the assistance must be cited (e.g., as personal communication.) All students who knowingly participate in misrepresentation of a student's work will be academically dishonest.

Faculty expect that students will be responsible and discuss re-submissions or research/project continuations with the faculty prior to submitting any potentially redundant work.

The MPH Program will utilize the following procedure when an instructor believes that a violation of academic dishonesty has occurred:

- The instructor shall discuss the alleged violation with the student as soon as possible and provide the student an opportunity to explain.
  - After this discussion, the instructor may impose an appropriate sanction within the scope of the academic activity, such as grade reduction and/or involuntary withdrawal from the course.
  - The instructor shall notify the student of the academic sanction.
  - The instructor should contact the COPH director of graduate programs and review the alleged violation, appropriate sanctions and any need to refer the case to the COPH Dean for disciplinary action beyond the faculty-imposed sanction.

### **Graduate Student Grievance Procedures**

Graduate students are expected to abide by the university values and guidelines for professional practice, academic integrity, and responsible conduct of research; they are also protected by those same values and guidelines. Academic grievances include, but are not limited to, issues related to

progress toward the degree, improper implementation of academic procedures, and unfair treatment. When at all possible, graduate students should attempt to resolve their complaints directly with the parties involved. If the complaint cannot be resolved at that level, the student may meet with department or college/school administrators (chair, dean, or dean's designate) or the Dean of Graduate Studies to discuss the concerns, clarify the rules and procedures that should be followed, and explore constructive means to resolve the problem. If a formal grievance is necessary, the graduate student should follow the procedures stipulated in the *UNM Pathfinder and the UNM Faculty Handbook*. If a grievance or complaint involves alleged discrimination or sexual harassment, it must be directed to the Office of Equal Opportunity (OEO).

**The *Pathfinder* states:**

*The UNM Student Grievance Procedure is intended to provide Procedures for the resolution of disputes of an academic nature between students and University faculty, as well as Procedures for handling student disciplinary matters. The following categories of disputes or disciplinary matters are provided for in the articles indicated. Any question about these Procedures should be directed to the Office of the Dean of Students.*

*This article sets forth the procedures which should be followed by a student who believes that he or she has been unfairly or improperly treated by a faculty member or academic program/department in connection with the academic process. For example, it applies to disputes over assignment of grades, decisions about program or degree requirements or eligibility, or claims that course requirements are unfair.*

*Any student grievances concerning decisions made by University personnel, outside the academic process, for which specific procedures are not established, shall be resolved between the student and the office or department involved. If no resolution is reached, the parties may appeal to the appropriate Dean or Director and then to the appropriate Vice President. Appeals should be filed in writing within one week of the decision.*

**The *Faculty Handbook* states:**

*The University of New Mexico promotes a working, learning, and social environment where all members of the UNM community, including but not limited to the Board of Regents, administrators, faculty, staff, students, and volunteers work together in a mutually respectful, psychologically-healthy environment. UNM strives to foster an environment that reflects courtesy, civility, and respectful communication because such an environment promotes learning, research, and productivity through relationships. Because a respectful campus environment is a necessary condition for success in teaching and learning, in research and scholarship, in patient care and public service, and in all other aspects of the University's mission and values, the University is committed to providing a respectful campus, free of bullying in all of its forms.*

The MPH Program will utilize the following procedure for student grievances:

- The students should first try to resolve the grievance informally by discussing the grievance with the instructor as soon as possible.
- If the student and faculty member cannot reach an agreement, the student should discuss the grievance with the COPH director of graduate programs.
- If the grievance is still not resolved, the student should discuss the grievance with the COPH dean.

## **Responsible Conduct of Research**

Responsible conduct of research (RCR) is the process researchers and scholars follow to ensure that their work is original, honest, and well-intended. The outcomes can be trusted and may contribute to generalizable knowledge. Often RCR coincides with professional practices and regulatory compliance. All professional scientists and scholars are expected to conduct themselves with integrity, honesty, and in accordance with professional expectations. RCR is not just doing research, but doing it well.

The Academic Integrity and Research Ethics (AIRE) program is available to help all researchers develop training plans. For more specific information, contact the office at 505-249-7906 at 400 Cornell Dr. NE, MSC03 2180, University of New Mexico, Albuquerque, NM 87131, or visit the Graduate Studies website at: <http://grad.unm.edu/aire/>. See also the AIRE website for guidelines, news, and events related to research compliance and instruction. Graduate Studies conducts workshops throughout the year on RCR and issues relating to research ethics. Please check their calendars for updated information about these workshops.

## **Students with Special Needs**

In accordance with University Policy 2310 and the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA), academic accommodations may be made for any student who notifies the instructor of the need for an accommodation. It is imperative that you take the initiative to bring such needs to the instructor's attention, as the instructor is not legally permitted to inquire. Students who may require assistance in emergency evacuations should contact the instructor as to the most appropriate procedures to follow. Contact Amanda Butrum at the Accessibility Resource Center at [arcsrvs@unm.edu](mailto:arcsrvs@unm.edu) or by phone at 277-3506 for additional information.

UNM is committed to providing courses that are inclusive and accessible for all participants. As your instructor, it is my objective to facilitate an accessible classroom setting, in which students have full access and opportunity. If you are experiencing physical or academic barriers, or concerns related to mental health, physical health and/or COVID-19, please consult with me after class, via email/phone or during office hours. You are also encouraged to contact Amanda Butrum at the Accessibility Resource Center at [arcsrvs@unm.edu](mailto:arcsrvs@unm.edu) or by phone 277-3506.

## **Graduation Requirements**

It is the student's responsibility to ensure that the general University requirements and due dates have been met for graduation. Students who plan to graduate should consult the UNM Graduate Studies webpage (<http://grad.unm.edu/home/>), meet with the MPH education support coordinator and/or faculty advisor if they have questions.

Students are also responsible for following the Advisement Checklist to ensure the completion of the required MPH core courses and concentration courses.

In order to graduate, the student must do the following:

### **Submit a Program of Study**

The student must complete the Program of Study form which is available on Graduate Study website. The student must complete the form and meet with their faculty advisor to ensure they have/will meet all requirements for graduation before submitting the form. The form must be completely filled out with the following information by the deadlines listed below:

- The student must list all courses applicable to his/her degree including those courses to be taken in future semesters.
- The student must list all approved transfer courses from other institutions, with an official transcript for all transfer courses from the educational institution (if applicable).
- **The student must also notify the Senior Academic Advisor of anticipated graduation date.**
- Deadlines to submit forms are March 1 for Summer graduation, July 1 for Fall graduation, October 1 for Spring graduation. **Failure to submit this form on time will delay your graduation.**

### **Submit an Announcement of Examination**

The Announcement of Examinations is completed online by the student through the Graduate Studies website two weeks prior to the oral examination. The deadline to complete this form is two weeks before the examination. Deadlines for completing all requirements for the MPH degree (including the master's examination) are November 15 for Fall graduation, April 15 for Spring graduation, and July 15 for Summer graduation. Graduation will be delayed if these deadlines are not met.

### **UNM Graduation Courtesy Policy**

University regulations require that the student must be enrolled and complete a minimum of one hour of graduate credit in the term he/she completes degree requirements. Should the student miss the graduation deadline but complete all degree requirements on or before the last day of that term, the student is not required to register for the next (graduation) term. The degree program must submit the student's name on the proposed graduation list for the actual term of graduation.

## **Community Health Concentration**

The mission of the Community Health concentration is to prepare students for leadership roles in population-based disease prevention and health promotion in public and private settings. The philosophical foundation of the concentration relies on a community capacity building, empowerment approach to promote social justice and equity in health. The concentration is designed for students with prior experience, education or interest in community-focused public health practice or research that values diversity, self-reflection and critical analysis of evidence-based practice and practice-based public health approaches. The purpose of this concentration is to provide students with the multi-disciplinary knowledge and skills necessary to plan, implement, and evaluate public health programs at multiple levels of the social-ecologic framework.

### **Community Health Concentration Competencies**

After completion of this concentration, the graduate should be able to:

- Apply appropriate practice-based approaches, theory and planning models and sound research methods for developing, implementing, managing, evaluating, and disseminating community health Interventions.
- Assess community and population needs and assets, and readiness for change at the individual, interpersonal, community, institutional and policy levels in order to develop relevant public health interventions.
- Integrate participatory approaches into research and practice to facilitate community engagement and self-determination.
- Identify and embrace community resources and strengths and act with cultural respect and humility.
- Analyze social and cultural issues associated with health communication and develop audience-appropriate public health communication strategies for different audiences and sectors

**Advising:** Students seeking an MPH degree with a Community Health concentration usually have an advisor from the core faculty in this concentration.

## **Epidemiology Concentration**

The concentration in Epidemiology provides students with the knowledge and skills necessary to collect, analyze, and interpret epidemiologic data for the solution of public health problems. The concentration prepares students for employment as a master's level epidemiologist or research scientist in various settings such as the New Mexico Department of Health, the University of New Mexico School of Medicine, and other public health research and service organizations.

### **Epidemiology Concentration Competencies**

After completion of this concentration, the graduate should be able to:

- describe the strengths, limitations and issues such as bias, confounding and effect modification pertinent to the proper application and execution of various epidemiologic study designs;
- identify and be able to access sources of public health data, such as vital statistics records, disease registries, other surveillance databases, census data, national surveys and medical records;
- analyze and interpret epidemiologic measures of occurrence and association using basic statistical tests and models and summarize and present the findings; and
- integrate epidemiologic and biostatistical knowledge in the critical evaluation of public health literature, including the use of theories of causation and criteria for causal inference and identification of demographic, behavioral, social and environmental factors influencing population health.

**Advising:** Students seeking an MPH degree with an Epidemiology Concentration usually have an advisor from the core faculty in this concentration.

## **Health Systems, Services and Policy Concentration**

The concentration in Health Systems, Services, and Policy provides students with the knowledge and skills necessary to analyze health systems, public health and health care services and programs, and related governmental and non-governmental policies. Students develop the capacity to analyze and develop interventions and health policies at local, national, and global levels. The goal of the concentration is to prepare students to work in health organizations and policy arenas to improve population health and decrease health inequities.

### **Health Systems, Services and Policy Concentration Competencies**

After completion of this concentration, the graduate should be able to:

- apply theoretical and methodological approaches to the analysis of health policies, health systems, and health care services.
- identify, map and analyze key intersectoral stakeholders and their roles in local, state, tribal, national and international health policies, health systems and health care services.
- identify important issues affecting international health policies, health systems, and health care services.

- access, analyze, interpret and translate health systems, population and policy data bases.
- demonstrate the ability to apply qualitative and quantitative methods to critically analyze evidence related to populations, public health systems, services and policies.
- apply principles of leadership, ethics and management to guide decision-making and foster collaboration with inter-disciplinary professionals, healthcare stakeholders, communities and policy makers.

**Advising:** Students seeking an MPH degree with a Health Systems, Services and Policy concentration usually have an advisor from the core faculty in this concentration.

## Dual Degrees

The MPH Program offers dual degrees in collaboration with other UNM departments. See your adviser and director of graduate programs for further information.

- Doctor of Medicine/Master of Public Health (MD/MPH)
- Master of Arts in Public Health and Latin American Studies/Master of Public Health(MALAS/MPH)
- Individual dual degrees may be created by students with any department. Students in dual degree programs must complete both degrees in the same semester. The students must prepare a written rationale for the dual degree and a chart outlining the requirements for both degrees and shared credits. See UNM Catalog for additional information on the process.

## Independent Study

### Requirements

Students in the MPH Program are eligible to sign up for independent study credits, which count toward the completion of their degree. Students must consult with and sign a contract with a faculty member who will provide mentorship during the independent study. If you have a special project you are working on and feel it relates to your degree and would like credit, you must contact the faculty member who will work with you.

### Process

1. The student contacts the faculty member within the normal sign up period for classes in the semester during which the proposed Independent Study will take place. Initiating discussions the semester prior to taking the independent study is **highly recommended**.
2. After the initial meeting with the faculty member, the student uses the contract following the requirements. The Independent Study Contract is a signed, negotiated agreement between the faculty member and the student which identifies the important conditions and terms under which the independent study is to be conducted. This contract includes:
  - the purpose of the independent study
  - the responsibilities of the faculty member and student including the schedule of meetings
  - the reading list and other content of the study
  - the number of credits
  - the criteria for assigning grades
  - the products
  - the dates by which the products will be delivered to the faculty member
3. The faculty member must approve and sign the contract before the student can register for independent study credits.

4. The student sends the signed contract to the education support coordinator of the MPH Program in order to receive the call number for registration.
5. The student completes this process within the sign up period for classes in the semester in which they will begin their independent study. (*The normal sign up period is generally the first two weeks of the semester.*)
6. The final product of the independent study must be delivered to the faculty member *at least one week before the end of the semester in which the independent study takes place.*
7. It is expected that in most cases an independent study will be completed within one semester. As with any other course, if the student anticipates that he will not be able to complete the contracted work, he/she **must negotiate a revised contract with the faculty member prior to the time grades are due** in order to receive an incomplete for the semester.

The contract for Independent Study is available on the MPH Program website. It is the responsibility of the student to make sure this is completed in a timely manner and submitted in time to register for the semester.

## Practicum

All students in the MPH Program must complete their practicum experience prior to graduation. The public health practicum will provide MPH students with the opportunity to experience public health in a real world setting. Students will be able to refine their professional public health skills, as well as test in practice concepts acquired through the academic program. Please see the MPH Practicum Handbook for specific information to complete the practicum.

## Culminating Experience

There are three different culminating experience options for completing the MPH degree: Alternative Culminating Experience, Integrative Experience and Professional Paper. All three require a master's examination which is written for the ACE and oral for the IE and Professional Paper. The program no longer encourages the thesis option.

### Alternative Culminating Experience

The Alternative Culminating Experience consists of a course in the spring semester followed by a written comprehensive master's examination. The course is designed to review the core MPH courses, reinforce MPH core and concentration competencies, and prepare students for the comprehensive MPH exam. MPH faculty from each concentration will facilitate the course. The master's examination is written take-home examination that covers the MPH core competencies plus a more focused analysis of the specific concentration competencies. The ACE is designed for students to complete the culminating experience in one semester.

### Integrative Experience

The Integrative Experience option is currently not available in AY 2020-21. It includes a two-semester course (fall and spring) which culminates in a written paper and an oral master's examination. In the first semester, students evaluate and define the public health status and needs of a community. In the second semester, students conduct a computer-based systematic review of the epidemiologic and health intervention literature, perform epi data analysis and apply other planning and evaluation techniques to develop a prevention plan for a New Mexico population. Students complete an oral master's examination.

## Professional Paper

A professional paper project generally involves an investigation or a critical analysis of a well-defined public health issue or problem. The written product of this effort is a scholarly manuscript. It is professionally written, develops a persuasive argument, and addresses an important public health issue. It may or may not include the collection of original data and may be presented in the form of a case study, intervention development, or policy analysis. The professional paper requires a more detailed and extensive analysis of the issue or problem than that included in a term paper. It is not merely a literature review, a needs assessment, or a chronology of work in the practicum.

Please see the MPH web page for specific information to complete the Professional Paper.

## Oral Master's Examination

The examination is a formal oral presentation of the professional or IE paper, summarizing the public health problem addressed, the research or scholarly questions asked, the methods used, and the findings. Discussion of the findings and implications for the practice of public health is also a major part of the presentation. The student should prepare a 30 to 40 minute (maximum) presentation using PowerPoint slides and be prepared to answer questions from the committee and audience. These questions will be mostly related to the professional or IE paper contents, but the committee can also ask additional questions that are related to other MPH core or specific concentration competencies. (See the list of the core and concentration competencies referred to in this handbook).

### Guidelines

These guidelines apply to students selecting either: **PH 596 Professional Paper or PH 595-597 Public Health Integrative Experience (IE)**.

The MPH oral examination fulfills the requirements of the University of New Mexico's "Master's Examination". It includes an oral presentation of the professional or IE paper followed by questions from the committee members and audience. The oral examination should be scheduled for a time when **all** major work and writing on the professional or IE paper are completed and the chair and committee members have reviewed the final draft of the manuscript.

Working with her/his committee, the student should arrange an appropriate time and place for the oral examination. **Two weeks prior to the oral examination, the student must provide each committee member with a clear, typed and electronic copy of the final draft of the professional or IE paper.** Preparation of the final typed copy of the professional or IE paper should be delayed until after the oral presentation since the committee members may, on the basis of the examination, require additional revisions. If the student does not submit the paper to the committee two weeks before the examination, then, it will be cancelled and rescheduled later in the semester or the following semester (see section on UNM Graduation Courtesy Policy). For the Master's Examination, the student should be prepared to answer questions from the committee and audience. These questions will be mainly related to the professional or IE paper contents, but the committee can also ask additional questions that are related to other MPH core or specific concentration competencies (See Appendix).

The student's Master's Examination Committee must be comprised of at least three (3) faculty, two (2) of whom must hold appointments as MPH primary faculty. Committee chairs must be primary faculty who hold appointments in the MPH Program (consult the MPH Program office). The student's faculty advisor may or may not serve as the chair or be part of the committee. Adjunct faculty, faculty from outside the MPH Program, and emeritus faculty may serve on the committee at the discretion of the

student and in consultation with her/his chair. All members of the committee must be approved for graduate instruction and service on examination committees by UNM Graduate Studies. For students completing the professional paper, the Master's Examination Committee is the same as the Professional Paper Committee.

### **Professional Paper**

Students selecting the Professional Paper (PH 596) culminating experience should follow the "Professional Paper Requirement Guidelines" in selecting their committee and developing the paper.

### **Integrative Experience**

Students selecting the IE culminating experience should complete the requirements for the final paper defined in the PH 595-597 course syllabi in consultation with the faculty member teaching the course. Students should identify a Master's Examination Committee Chair as soon as the paper topic is defined (not later than January 31<sup>st</sup>). The Committee Chair will work with the student to ensure that the paper is consistent with the Guidelines for the IE Final Paper and for the Master's Examination.

### **Announcement of Master's Examination**

When **all** major work and writing on the professional or IE paper manuscript are completed the oral examination should be scheduled. Working with her/his committee, the student should arrange an appropriate time and place for the presentation using the *Announcement of Examination* form. The Announcement of master's examinations is completed online by the student through the Graduate Studies website two weeks prior to the oral examination.

The MPH Program will announce the time and place of the oral presentation so that interested faculty and students may attend. The University requires, at a minimum, the attendance of all committee members. If all of the master's examination committee members cannot attend, then, the oral presentation must be rescheduled.

### **Grading**

At the conclusion of the presentation, the committee will meet in private to discuss the student's presentation and written paper. The chair and all members of the Master's Examination Committee will complete the online *Report of Examination* form which states whether the student "passed," "conditionally passed" or "failed."

### **Pass**

If a student receives a "pass," he/she may still have minor revisions to complete based on questions and recommendations provided during the oral exam. The final typed copy with revisions must be submitted by the end of semester to the Chair of the Committee.

### **Pass with Distinction**

The committee may also award a "passed with distinction" which is based upon the examination. To pass with distinction, the professional or the IE paper **and** the student's oral exam must demonstrate **exemplary**: 1) written and oral presentation skills, 2) coverage of the student's professional paper topic, 3) grasp of the larger public health context of the topic, and 4) knowledge of the MPH core courses and student's concentration competencies.

**Conditional Pass**

If a student receives a “conditional pass,” the committee chair notes the conditions that need to be met by the student on the examination form which is sent to Graduate Studies. These usually involve major revisions to the paper. There are two options for resolving the conditional pass: 1) a student who plans to graduate in the same semester as the exam must resolve the conditional pass by the posted deadline for submission of examination results (Nov. 15, April 15, July 15<sup>th</sup>), or 2) a student who delays graduation to the following semester must resolve the conditional pass by the examination deadlines for the following semester. In this second option, if a student completes the conditions noted by the committee and these are approved after the deadline for submission of examination results for the semester of the examination and before the last day of the semester, he/she will not need to pay for an additional credit to graduate in the following semester (see UNM Graduation Courtesy Policy below). If a student finishes the major revisions after the end date of the semester of the examination, they will need to pay an additional credit hour in the following semester. All conditional passes must be resolved by the examination deadlines for the semester following the semester of the examination. Once the conditions for the conditional pass are approved by the committee, the MPH Program office will submit a memo to Graduate Studies stating that the student has met the conditions and passed his/her exam.

**Fail**

If a student fails the examination, the MPH Program may recommend a second examination, which must be completed within one calendar year from the date of the first examination. The master’s examination may be taken only twice. A second failure results in a student being terminated from the program.

**Revisions of Professional/IE Paper Manuscript**

The Master’s Examination Committee may require revisions to the professional or IE paper manuscript before granting final approval. The chair of the committee will work with the student to explain the required revisions and will sign off on the final version when those changes have been satisfactorily addressed. The number of revisions likely to be required after the oral presentation will be reduced if the student has worked closely with all committee members throughout the research and writing process.