

GUIDELINES FOR ADVISING MPH STUDENTS
Master of Public Health, MPH
One University Place, Rensselaer, NY
402-0283

The following is a summary of key policies and procedures that should be used by Faculty Advisors to advise MPH students. These guidelines should be used together with the MPH Program booklet, which describes requirements for the MPH program and each area of concentration. If you have questions that are not answered in these guidelines or the MPH Program booklet, please call the Program Office for assistance.

Faculty and students are urged to consult the current Graduate Bulletin for the full, official descriptions of the University's Admission and Graduate requirements, regulations, degree requirements, thesis and dissertation regulations, and all graduate programs and courses. A Graduate Bulletin can be obtained <http://www.albany.edu/grad/>.

The MPH Program has six areas of concentration: Biomedical Sciences, Biostatistics, Epidemiology, Environmental Health Sciences, Social Behavior and Community Health, and Health Policy and Management. The areas of concentration are designed to achieve two purposes: to involve all departments of the school and to correspond with the five core areas of public health defined by the Council on Education in Public Health.

PLAN OF STUDY

A major responsibility of the Faculty Advisor is to assist the student in establishing a Plan of Study for his or her overall program. The Plan of Study form for the MPH program is designed to ensure that the student will fulfill all requirements for the MPH program, including the specific requirements for the chosen area of concentration. The student together with the Advisor should complete the Plan of Study form by the beginning of the second semester of full-time study, and the Plan should be reviewed every semester at the time of registration to ascertain that the student is making satisfactory progress toward completing the requirements. The Plan will understandably be subject to change as the student progresses through the program, but by the end of the student's program, it should show that all requirements are fulfilled.

COURSE REGISTRATION

For a student to register each semester, he/she must have an advisement form signed by the Faculty Advisor. This form verifies that the student has met with his/her advisor and both agree on the student's schedule for that semester and that the semester's coursework fits in with the student's Plan of Study.

All course registration directions and guidelines can be found in the Schedule of Classes which is available at the beginning of each term (fall, spring & summer). The deadlines

related to course registration and withdrawal (add/drop) are published every term in the Schedule of Classes. http://www.albany.edu/schedule_of_classes/

ADVISEMENT

Each semester the student is required to meet with their faculty advisor for advice on courses to be taken in the upcoming semester. The student must bring their advisement sheet, signed by their advisor, to the Department's Assistant-to-Chair. If after the student receives their AVN number they wish to add or drop a course, they must contact their advisor for verbal approval and then notify Assistant-to-Chair as well.

TYPICAL FIRST YEAR PROGRAM

Most entering full-time students will take core courses almost exclusively during the first semester. Except for Epi 501 and BMS 505, which are both offered in the fall, core courses are generally offered during both fall and spring semesters. The most important thing for the student to consider is how scheduling of core courses will affect his/her options to take more advanced courses later. A student planning to concentrate in a given area should take the core course(s) in that area as early in his/her program as possible.

CHANGE OF CONCENTRATION

If a student enters the MPH program and requests an initial concentration (for instance, Behavioral Science) and then later wishes to change to another concentration (for instance, Epidemiology), the following procedures apply. The student must obtain a "Change of Concentration" form from the Department. If a faculty advisor can be found for the student, they will be admitted to the concentration. **Students should be aware that if they are switching into a new concentration late in their program, they might need to complete new required courses for the new concentration.** Once all required faculty has signed the form, the student's file will then be moved to the Department of the new concentration.

CHANGE OF DEGREE PROGRAM

The procedure for changing from an MS to an MPH degree or vice versa is as follows: If the student wishes to change degree programs within their first semester in attendance they will not be required to pay the \$75 graduate application fee. Their complete file will be forwarded to the new program and it will go through their admissions procedure. If the Admissions Committee decides to accept the student they will be admitted to that department (program for an MPH). However, if the student wishes to change their degree program after their first semester in attendance, they will be required to re-apply to the University and pay the \$75 fee. If the department rejects the application, the student will have the option of staying in the program they had originally been admitted to.

ACADEMIC STANDING

To remain in good standing, graduate students must maintain a **B** average (3.0) in the eight (8) core courses as well as maintaining a **B** (3.0) average in their overall program. Numerical values for letter grades can be found in the Schedule of Classes. The University and the Dean's Office will notify you if your advisee's average falls below 3.0. A student with severe deficiencies may be terminated from the program. If your advisee is in academic difficulty, you may wish to discuss the situation with the Assistant Dean for Student Affairs. The student should be encouraged to request help with courses in which he or she is having difficulty. In some cases tutoring may be available.

TRANSFER OF CREDITS

The MPH program allows up to 9 credits of graduate work completed at another institution to be accepted and applied toward the student's program. To receive approval for the transfer of credit, the student must file with the University a Request for Transfer of Credit to a Graduate Program form which can be obtained from the Department. Procedures and policies pertaining to transfer credit are found on the back of the form. Once the student has completed this form, they must return it to the Department; the request will then be forwarded on for the appropriate signatures. If any person required to sign the request denies the request, it will be returned to the student as disapproved. However, if it is accepted, it will then be forwarded to the Graduate Admissions Office for their approval. The MPH program, in addition, requires that the instructor of the core course at our School of Public Health approve any credit transferred to fulfill a core course requirement. In most cases, credits to be transferred must have been earned within six years of the request. Under certain circumstances, MPH students may transfer older credits by filing the Request for Waiver of Statute of Limitations form. Once approved by Graduate Admissions, the transfer credits will appear on the student's transcript.

WAIVER OF CREDIT

The waiver request will give credit for previous graduate work, but will **not** reduce the number of credits needed to complete the MPH degree. The student can apply for a course waiver, but will be required to take a more advanced course in the same department. For example, if a student wishes to take a 600 level course in place of 500 level courses, they can apply for a waiver of the required 500 level courses and substitute the 600 level courses. Application for a course waiver must be made by using the MPH Request for Course Waiver form and then follow a similar procedure to that outlined above in "Transfer of Credit" for appropriate signatures.

INTERNSHIPS

The Faculty Advisor plays an important role in the establishment and assessment of a student's internships. While the student will receive significant help from the Placement Coordinator in establishing the internship, the student should consult with the Advisor before making a final choice. The Advisor must approve the placement and should work

with the student and the mentor in the training agency in designing the goals, objectives, and conditions of the internship. MPH learning objectives (see attachment) should be considered when choosing an internship and in designing its goals and objectives. A one month evaluation is required at which the Advisor should meet with the student and the mentor to ascertain that the experience is progressing successfully for both student and agency, to review learning objectives, and to assist in resolving any problems that may arise. It is the Advisor's responsibility to read the student's final report on the internship, attend the internship seminar, receive the final evaluations by student and mentor, and certify that the internship was satisfactory. Internship administrative procedures are described below. Any questions should be directed to Lynley Thomson, the Internship Coordinator, at 402-0283, or emailing lthomson@uamail.albany.edu.

A new requirement for the final report on the internship is an analysis by the student of the specific applications of relevant skills to the problem addressed during the internship, referring to the learning objectives for MPH internships (attached). As part of this analysis, the student should refer to courses taken and previous experience which offered the information and skills that were used in accomplishing the goals of the internship. The Faculty Advisor is encouraged to review this analysis with the student and evaluate whether the student's assessment of his/her achievements is acceptable.

MPH students are encouraged to begin planning their internships when they enter the MPH program, and should discuss these plans with the Advisor when preparing their Plan of Study. The Internship Coordinator has established files of current and prospective internship placement information. The student should contact the Placement Coordinator to access this information. Students are encouraged to use these files to familiarize themselves with the various organizations offering internship possibilities and with the focus of their proposals for student placements. To begin the process of establishing an internship the student must attend one of the several placement workshops offered at the beginning of each semester. Policies, procedures, and forms concerning the establishment, assessment, and waiver of internships are included in the Student Handbook for Internships. The Handbook is available on the School's website <http://albany.edu/sph/information/internships/index.htm> or by calling Lynley Thomson.

Most students are required to take 12 credits of internship experience. At least 6 internship credits will be in the student's area of concentration, and 3 to 6 credits must be in a different area. Four core courses must be completed before any internship may begin. MPH students with appropriate public health-related work experience may be exempted from a maximum of six credit hours of internship experience. The student must file a Request for Waiver of Credits of Internship Experience. The Advisor and the Internship Subcommittee must approve the waiver. If the waiver is approved, the student will be expected to present a seminar based on the previous public health experience.

The MPH internships carry regular course credit. It is essential that students register for the appropriate number of credits and in the correct area of concentration in the semester that the internship is being done. In order for internship registration to be complete students must register both within the school by means of a registration form, as well as

within the University by means of MyUAlbany. The student will meet with the academic advisor and the internship mentor to review the goals and objectives of the internship and to approve the placement. Students are required to provide the internship proposal and the one-month and final evaluations to faculty advisor, home department, and the Assistant Dean for Student Affairs.

Students are required to register for two (2) semesters of SPH680 (0 credit) Internship Seminar during their first year. Full-time students will be required to attend 75 percent of the seminar classes, and part-time students must attend 50 percent. Each seminar will give first year students an opportunity to listen to the different presentation projects that will in turn give students insight as to the many options they have in finding an internship for themselves. Due to the importance of these mandatory seminars, for both first year and second year students, we ask that students attending arrive on time and are prepared to display professional attentiveness. Students who arrive over ten minutes late will not be able to sign the attendance sheet, and will therefore not be able to count that particular seminar towards the 75 percent that they are required. Insufficient attendance will lead to an "I" grade in the internship seminar. Questions on this or other issues regarding internship administrative procedures should be directed to the Internship Coordinator.

To complete the internship the student will produce a final report and present a seminar. Seminars may not be presented until the Faculty Advisor certifies the student's final internship report to be satisfactory. Mr. Anthony Torres must receive the student's one-page abstract **and** written report, signed by the mentor and faculty advisor, one week prior to the date of the presentation. Internships are graded "S" or "U". ***If these conditions are not fulfilled by 1:30 p.m. on the Friday one week before the seminar is scheduled, the presentation will be canceled.*** For further information on internships, please consult the Student, Faculty and Mentor Handbook for MPH Internships.

DEGREE APPLICATION

If a student expects to complete all requirements for the MPH at the end of a particular semester, he/she must file a degree application with the Registrar. The form can be obtained on-line by logging on to www.albany.edu/myualbany/. Deadlines for filing degree applications are listed in the University calendar. The web address for access to the calendar is: http://www.albany.edu/catalogs_calendars_schedules/acad_cal.html. Students should also notify the Dean's Office of this intent.

MAILBOXES & LISTSERVE

Each student in the Master of Public Health (MPH) Degree Program is assigned a mailbox. The student is responsible for checking their mailboxes for important messages, announcements, surveys, and papers from professors. This is a major way of communicating with the students, therefore, it is suggested that the student check their mailbox on a routine basis.

Also important for internship opportunities and job announcements and to keep up to date on the School's current events, you should subscribe to the list-serve by going to http://www.albany.edu/sph/information/gso_listserv.htm.

Learning Objectives for MPH Internships

I. Analytic Skills

- a. Define the health problem being addressed in the internship.
- b. Describe the use of data, statistical methods, and/or laboratory procedures used in addressing the problem.
- c. Employ quantitative techniques to analyze data pertaining to the problem.
- d. Explain how the data illuminate ethical, political, scientific, economic, and overall public health issues.
- e. Make relevant inferences from the data.

II. Communication Skills

- a. Communicate effectively both in writing and orally.
- b. Present accurately and effectively demographic, statistical, programmatic, and scientific information for professional and lay audiences.
- c. Solicit input from individuals and organizations.
- d. Advocate for public health programs and resources.
- e. Lead and participate in groups to address specific issues.

III. Basic Public Health Sciences Skills

- a. 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 as pertains to this internship.
- b. Describe public health science research methods used in this internship.
- c. Identify the basic public health sciences used in this internship, including behavioral and social sciences, biomedical sciences, biostatistics, epidemiology, environmental health, and prevention of chronic and infectious diseases and injuries. (Many internships use more than one of the public health sciences.)
- d. Understand the historical development and structure of state, local, and federal public health agencies.

IV. Social and Cultural Skills

- a. Describe the dynamic forces contributing to cultural diversity
- b. Interact sensitively, effectively, and professionally with persons from diverse cultural, socioeconomic, educational, and professional backgrounds, and with persons of all ages and lifestyle preferences.

- c. Identify the role of cultural, social, and behavioral factors in determining disease, disease prevention, health promoting behavior, and medical service organization and delivery.
- d. Develop and adapt approaches to problems that take into account cultural differences.
- e. Identify techniques for involving community groups in devising solutions to their non public health problems.

V. Policy Development/Program Planning/Management Skills

- a. Collect and summarize data relevant to the public health issue addressed in the internship.
- b. State policy options and summarize the fiscal, legal, social, political, administrative and overall public health implications of each option.
- c. Articulate the health, fiscal, administrative, economic, ethical, scientific, legal, social, and political implications of each policy option as they affect decision making in public health policy.
- d. State the feasibility and expected outcomes of each policy option.
- e. Decide on the appropriate course of action.
- f. Write a clear and concise policy statement.
- g. Develop a plan to implement the policy, including goals, outcome and process objectives, and implementation steps.
- h. Translate policy into organization plans, structures, and programs.
- i. Identify public health laws, regulations, and policies related to specific programs.
- j. Develop mechanisms to monitor and evaluate programs for their effectiveness and quality.
- k. Monitor program performance.
- l. Apply basic human relations skills to the management of organizations and the resolution of conflicts.