GUIDELINES FOR M.P.H. STUDENTS

The following guidelines have been prepared to assist you in meeting program and university requirements as you pursue your M.P.H. degree. To avoid any unwanted surprises during your academic experience, please read and follow these guidelines closely. If you are new to the public health program, welcome! If you are a continuing student, welcome back!

1. Graduate Catalog and Calendar

You can find the online Graduate Catalog and Graduate School Calendar on the Graduate School website. The Graduate School Calendar contains graduation deadlines and other useful information. Please keep in mind that, as a graduate student at Northern Illinois University, you are responsible for all applicable requirements outlined in the Graduate Catalog, whether or not they are mentioned in these guidelines. Many of these and other resources are available on the Internet. Check out NIU’s home page (http://www.niu.edu).

2. Address Notification

You should provide the university with any changes in your current address, telephone number, or name. You can make these changes by yourself through MyNIU. In addition, you should provide the public health program secretary with the updated information. If you are an international student, you must inform the International Student and Faculty Office as well. It is also important to provide the name and telephone number of someone who can be contacted in the case of an emergency. You can call the program secretary at 815-753-1900 with this information or e-mail her at phhe@niu.edu.

3. Academic Advisers

The program office assigns each admitted M.P.H. student an academic adviser. Students-at-Large (SALs) are not assigned an academic adviser. Questions regarding your adviser should be directed to the program secretary at 815-753-1900 (e-mail: phhe@niu.edu).

It is your responsibility to meet with your adviser to plan your coursework and to fulfill other program and university requirements. Failure to keep in touch with your adviser could result in a delayed graduation. Remember that your adviser is here to assist you in meeting your educational and career goals. Get to know your adviser and seek consultation regularly as you progress through the program. SPECIAL NOTE: Students-at-Large (SALs) who plan to pursue
the M.P.H. degree may take public health program courses for which they have the proper prerequisites. A maximum of 18 semester hours of approved graduate coursework may be applied to the program. See the entry under “School of Nursing and Health Studies” in the online Graduate Catalog for details. SALs are expected to apply to the program in an expeditious manner. Failure to apply for admission in a timely manner could mean that you coursework would not be applied toward program requirements.

4. Degree Progress Report

Before applying for graduation, you should review your Degree Progress Report with your adviser to confirm that all requirements are completed or are being completed. Your Degree Progress Report is available through Self Service in MyNIU.

No more than 15 semester hours of course work transferred from another school may be applied to the requirements for the M.P.H. degree. The combined total of transfer and SAL semester hours is limited to 18.

The Graduate School stipulates that all requirements for a graduate degree must be completed within six consecutive years preceding the date of graduation. If you anticipate a problem in this regard, contact the program office or the Graduate School for specific requirements.

When nearing completion of the requirements for a graduate degree, a student must submit an application for graduation to the Graduate School through MyNIU. See the Graduate School Calendar for applicable deadlines. Upon the application, your student account will be charged a one-time graduation fee. See “Graduation” on the Graduate School website for more details.

5. Course Load

A full course load is considered to be 9-12 semester hours in the fall and spring semesters and 6 semester hours in the summer. If you wish to take more than 12 semester hours in the fall or spring or more than 6 semester hours in the summer, you must receive permission from your adviser. If you are on academic probation, you will not be permitted to take a course overload without the approval of your adviser and the Graduate School. Special rules apply for graduate assistants, international students, and SALs. For specific requirements, consult the current Graduate Catalog or contact your adviser. International students should check with the International Student and Faculty Office about specific rules on course load for international students. Graduate assistants and international students, for example, will need special permission to take fewer than 9 semester hours during the academic year.

6. International Students

If your first language is not English, you will be required to take a Test of English as a Foreign Language (TOEFL). Depending on your score, you may be required to register for ENGL 451 and 452, or ENGL 453. See the Graduate Catalog for specific requirements. These courses count toward the semester course load but do not count toward program requirements. Advisers may also have other recommendations to help you develop your oral and written English skills.
It is important that you stay in contact with the International Student and Faculty Office as you progress through the program. The Federal laws governing your immigration status are complicated and change from time-to-time. Your immigration status is your responsibility.

7. Internship in Public Health

You are required to take PHHE 695, Internship in Public Health, prior to graduation. Normally, M.P.H. students must take 6 semester hours of internship (equivalent of 300 hours). Enrollment in fewer than 6 semester hours of PHHE 695 must be based on written documentation of relevant public health experience of a significant nature, and must be approved in writing by your adviser. Internship credit cannot be granted for prior work experience, nor can normal job responsibilities be used to fulfill internship requirements. In no case will you be permitted to take fewer than 3 semester hours of internship.

Internship hours may not be taken until you have completed all core and specialization course requirements of the program. The core and required specialization courses are listed in the flyer, “The Program-at-a-Glance” and the Graduate Catalog.

Students anticipating an internship should obtain a copy of the “Internship Requirements and Forms” packet from the program website one semester prior to the anticipated internship. The packet contains a list of the requirements that you must complete prior to internship placement and through the internship period.

The university waives tuition for all graduate internships when the internship is a degree requirement. Tuition is also waived for any other courses taken in the same semester as the internship. Students are responsible for all fees associated with the internship and any other courses taken in that semester. Please see the program secretary to complete the appropriate paperwork.

8. Comprehensive Examination

You are required to pass a comprehensive examination in order to graduate from the program. Permission to take the comprehensive exam must be requested in writing prior to taking the exam. Letters of application should include your current address, phone number, ZID, and your specialization. Letters of application should be addressed to the Program Coordinator, Public Health and Health Education Programs, School of Nursing and Health Studies, Northern Illinois University, DeKalb, IL 60115-2854. The comprehensive exam cannot be taken until you have completed all core course requirements in the program. The core courses are listed in the online Graduate Catalog. You must also be in good academic standing to take the exam.

Your written request to take the comprehensive exam is important because it triggers a check of your eligibility, helps us update contact information, and provides us with a permanent record of your intent. All written requests to take the comprehensive exam will receive a written response specifying the specific exam dates and times and other pertinent information or requirements.

You must enroll in PHHE 698 for 1 credit hour during the semester in which you plan to take the comprehensive exam. Comprehensive exams involve a take-home project that must be completed within 4 weeks. Comprehensives are normally scheduled for 4 weeks starting in
October for the fall semester, 4 weeks starting in March for the spring semester, and 4 weeks starting in May for the summer term. The specific dates for comprehensives in a given term are available from the program secretary (815-753-1900; phhe@niu.edu) and will be posted outside the program office (Wirtz 241) and on the program web site at least one month in advance of the scheduled exams.

If you fail the comprehensive examination, you may petition the program coordinator in writing to retake the exam in a subsequent term. You will need to enroll again in PHHE 698 for 1 credit hour during the semester in which you plan to retake the exam. If you fail the exam a second time, in accordance with Graduate School regulations, you will not be permitted to continue in the public health program. Comprehensive exams are graded independently by three graduate faculty members in the program using a blind review process. For specific information about the comprehensives, contact your adviser.

9. Independent Study Courses

Independent study courses (PHHE 697) may be taken when a specific content area of interest does not exist in the curriculum. All independent study courses must be approved by your adviser and arranged with the advice and consent of the faculty member supervising the independent study. To initiate an independent study, you must provide the supervising faculty member and your adviser with:

1. A detailed description of the public health area to be studied;
2. The reasons an independent study is necessary;
3. A list of specific outcome objectives that are consistent with the M.P.H. program objectives;
4. A schedule of activities, assignments, resources, and a bibliography;
5. Suggested methods for evaluating achievement of the outcome objectives; and
6. The number of suggested credit hours (1-3).

Independent study courses must be at least as rigorous as other courses in the M.P.H. program and normally must not duplicate learning experiences that are readily available through courses already offered on campus. A proposal for an independent study must be approved at least two weeks before the first day of the term in which the independent study will be initiated. The program secretary can provide you with a form for meeting these requirements.

10. Incompletes

When a student is passing a course yet special circumstances prevent a student’s completing the requirements of a course, the instructor may, at her or his discretion, direct that the symbol I (indicating incomplete) be entered in the student’s record. When the I is assigned, the instructor will file in the departmental office and in the Graduate School an Incomplete/Reversion Grade Form outlining the work to be completed, the deadline for completion of the work, and the grade that will be awarded if the student fails to meet the deadline. In no case may the deadline be later than 120 days after the last day of final examinations during the term for which the incomplete is assigned. The incomplete must be removed within 120 days.
If the instructor does not change the incomplete within the period allowed for resolution, the incomplete (I) will be converted to an F or to the stipulated reversion grade. If no reversion grade is recorded, a grade of F will be awarded at the conclusion of 120 days. An administratively awarded grade, like one assigned by an instructor, may be changed at the discretion of the instructor of record prior to a student’s graduation. A student may not graduate with a transcript entry of “I” on his or her record.

11. Professional Conduct

The public health program subscribes to the basic standards underlying the professional codes of ethics adopted by many professional associations, such as the American College of Healthcare Executives (ACHE) and the Society for Public Health Education (SOPHE). As a student in the program, you are expected to follow basic professional standards of conduct. Failure to do so may result in dismissal from the program for professional reasons. (Please note the statement in the *Graduate Catalog* under “Termination of Admission; Retention” regarding requirements for satisfactory academic progress.) Copies of codes of ethics of the ACHE and SOPHE are available from the program secretary and from respective websites.


12. Academic Integrity

Cheating and plagiarism are not tolerated in the public health program. If you are found guilty of cheating on a quiz, exam, or assignment, you may be assigned a grade of “F” for the course involved and may, in flagrant cases, be dismissed from the program and university. Students found guilty of plagiarism will be subject to the same sanctions. Plagiarism is said to exist when you represent other people’s work, including their words, ideas, opinions, or concepts, as your own. All borrowed material, unless it is common knowledge, must be appropriately cited. It is far better to over-reference borrowed materials than to under-reference them. Falsification of methods or results also constitutes cheating. If you are in doubt regarding appropriate conduct, check with your professor or adviser. See the Office of Community Standards and Student Conduct website at [http://www.niu.edu/judicial/index.shtml](http://www.niu.edu/judicial/index.shtml) for more detail.

13. Style Manual for Written Assignments

The public health program recommends the style manual of the American Psychological Association (APA), sixth edition, for completion of written assignments, papers, theses, and comprehensive exams. You should obtain a copy of the style manual and use it in your written papers unless directed otherwise by your professor. Copies of the manual are available from the University Bookstore. Citations and referencing in written assignments should be in accordance with the guidelines outlined in this manual. The following web site provides valuable web-based resources for using the APA style format.

[http://owl.english.purdue.edu/handouts/research/r_apa.html](http://owl.english.purdue.edu/handouts/research/r_apa.html)
14. Graduate Assistantships

Graduate students should apply for a graduate assistantship at the time of application to the Graduate School. Typical graduate assistantships are for 10 to 20 hours per week during the fall and spring terms and are accompanied by a tuition waiver. Graduate assistants may be assigned to assist faculty members in teaching or research.

The program offers a limited number of graduate assistantships to qualified students. If you wish to apply for an assistantship in the program, complete an application, attach a current résumé, and turn it in to the program secretary in Wirtz 241. DO NOT APPLY DIRECTLY TO FACULTY MEMBERS. Application forms for graduate assistantships can be obtained at the Graduate School or on the Graduate School web site (http://www.chhs.niu.edu/scholarships/default.asp).

Please note that the program receives many more applications for assistantships than it has positions available.

15. Thesis

A thesis option is available in the public health program. If you select the thesis option, you will be required to complete 6 semester hours of thesis credit (PHHE 699) in addition to other program requirements. Normally, it takes at least one year from start to finish to complete the thesis. For more details, please see your adviser at least one semester in advance of the time you expect to begin working on a thesis.

16. Additional Aids

For web-based information regarding the university’s schedule of classes, the academic calendar, course offerings, admissions, etc., visit the NIU Office of Registration and Records’ web site at http://www.reg.niu.edu.

Other resources that should be useful to you are the public health program brochure and the flyer, “The Program-at-a-Glance”. Both are available from the program website and the program secretary in the program office (Wirtz 241).

17. Program Objectives

The instructional objectives of the public health program are designed to prepare public health professionals who are able to:

1. Identify, measure and prioritize the specific health needs of populations;
2. Plan, implement and evaluate public health programs in a culturally competent manner;
3. Synthesize and critique the findings of public health research;
4. Analyze the cultural, social, economic, political and professional forces that shape the delivery of public and community health services;
5. Identify the principal factors contributing to health and disease and the appropriate public health interventions, including changes in policy;
6. Demonstrate a mastery of information technology which underpins the planning, monitoring and evaluation responsibilities of those in public health positions;
7. Identify the principles of effective implementation and management of health-related programs and services; and
8. Demonstrate the values and ethical behaviors associated with the practice of public health.

*Health Promotion*

Graduates of the health promotion specialization will be able to:

1. Apply theories and principles of health promotion
   1.1 Demonstrate knowledge of cultural, social, economic and political factors that affect health behaviors
   1.2 Identify health promotion practices and theories consistent with current research and knowledge in the field

2. Assess individual and community needs for health promotion/disease prevention programs
   2.1 Identify, integrate and interpret appropriate sources of data regarding health needs and resources
   2.2 Utilize information technology in health promotion
   2.3 Determine priority areas of need for health promotion

3. Plan effective health promotion/disease prevention programs for individuals and communities
   3.1 Involve key personnel and agencies in the planning of health promotion programs
   3.2 Develop measurable goals and objectives in health promotion programming
   3.3 Demonstrate a wide range of health promotion strategies for diverse populations
   3.4 Develop an operational plan for health promotion programs

4. Implement appropriate community-based health promotion/disease prevention programs to meet the needs of diverse populations
   4.1 Utilize effective health promotion strategies
   4.2 Incorporate technology and other educational media into the health promotion process

5. Evaluate the effectiveness of health promotion/disease prevention programs
   5.1 Design or select appropriate program evaluation techniques
   5.2 Employ valid and reliable tests, survey instruments and evaluation methods pertinent to health promotion programming
   5.3 Analyze and interpret results of program evaluation
   5.4 Suggest appropriate program improvements based on program evaluation results

6. Coordinate health promotion/disease prevention services in the community
   6.1 Apply knowledge and skills necessary to build community coalitions in health promotion programming
   6.2 Consider the social and cultural forces influencing public perception and acceptance of health programs
6.3 Choose effective conflict reduction techniques and apply them when working with community constituents

7. Communicate health promotion/disease prevention needs to the public, media and policy makers
   7.1 Apply health theories and concepts in selecting effective communication techniques
   7.2 Demonstrate proficiency in communicating health education needs, concerns and resources

8. Demonstrate the values and ethical behaviors associated with the practice of the health promotion profession
   8.1 Apply the code of ethics of the health promotion profession in specific health promotion situations

*Health Services Management*

Graduates of the health services management specialization will be able to:

1. Identify the complex structures, roles and functions of health service organizations
   1.1 Apply systems analysis to the health care sector
   1.2 Analyze stakeholder interest in health care delivery
   1.3 Identify goals for health care delivery that are realistic and politically feasible

2. Employ conceptual and analytical skills to understand and respond appropriately to an evolving health sector
   2.1 Identify and access valid sources of information about the health sector
   2.2 Utilize information technology to analyze health sector data
   2.3 Develop/modify managerial policies in response to changes in the health sector

3. Identify the influence of the external environment; social, cultural political, economic and regulatory on managerial decision-making
   3.1 Formulate strategies for health services organizations that anticipate and respond to changes in the external environment
   3.2 Apply economic theory to formulate health care delivery solutions

4. Demonstrate leadership skills in planning, organizing, directing and controlling material and financial resources
   4.1 Apply strategies for utilizing information technology in the health care management process
   4.2 Apply financial analytic techniques in managerial decision-making
5. Demonstrate leadership skills in planning, organizing and directing human resources
   5.1 Analyze the major external environment factors that influence human resources management
   5.2 Analyze the major organizational factors that influence personnel management
   5.3 Formulate or modify personnel policies that reflect changes in the external and organizational environments

6. Evaluate the effectiveness of managerial policies and practices in health service organizations
   6.1 Design or select appropriate program evaluation techniques
   6.2 Analyze and interpret results of program evaluation
   6.3 Suggest improvements in managerial processes based on program evaluation results

7. Communicate effectively with a variety of constituencies internal and external to health services organizations
   7.1 Identify key stakeholders in management decisions
   7.2 Demonstrate proficiency in managerial communication in oral and written formats

8. Demonstrate the values and ethical behaviors associated with the practice of health services management
   8.1 Apply the code of ethics of the health services management profession in specific health services delivery situations

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