MASTER OF PUBLIC HEALTH

Academic Handbook

Class of 2016
Welcome

Congratulations on joining the Schulich Interfaculty Program in Public Health. As your faculty, we are pleased that you have chosen our Master of Public Health Program, an innovative program that we have designed for you, our future leaders and change agents in Public Health. As students in the Class of 2016 Master of Public Health program you are embarking on an exciting learning journey with us. We have thoughtfully chosen you and each one of your colleagues for not only your academic abilities but also the passion and experiences that you bring to the Program. Our case method learning helps make the most of this diversity of perspectives and experiences. To support your continued learning as professionals with such diversity, we believe that clear expectations can prevent misunderstandings and help create the optimum learning environment for each individual as well as collectively as a cohort.

Program Expectations

Studying the experiences of real-life public health cases and the actions of public health professionals develops insight into, and good judgment about, complex public health situations. We accomplish this using experiential learning including case method learning. To the extent possible, we must place ourselves into the public health context depicted in the cases – decide what we would do in the circumstances, why, and explain our proposed course of action.

To get the most from a course you will need to engage actively in the entire learning process. This means devoting time and energy to preparation before class, both individually and in your learning team, and then, during class, listening to others, engaging with their ideas, and being willing to put forward and explain your point of view. Collective reasoning and discovery are critical to the successful application of the case method. Detailed note-taking during class can often be distracting for others and counterproductive to your own learning. Instead, be selective in taking notes during class and consolidate what you have learned at the end of each class.

Note: Prior to any case discussion, engaging in discussions with (or examining notes from) others who may have already experienced a particular case is a clear violation of our norms. Also note that using your computer or other electronic devices during class for personal activities such as email, writing letters, surfing the Web, playing games, etc., is distracting and counter-productive. Allowable uses of such devices are entirely at the discretion of the professor.
Attendance Policy

1. Engaged participation is considered a milestone for satisfactory progress towards the completion of the MPH Program (see “Participation” below).

2. Students are expected to attend all sessions in every course.
   a. Students not in attendance will receive a mark of 0 for participation for the missed class.
   b. As per the University Secretariat policy, frequent absences may result in a student not being permitted to write the final exam or receive academic credit for course deliverables. Any student, who in the opinion of the instructor, is absent too frequently from class, will be reported to the MPH Graduate Chair. On the recommendation from the Graduate Chair, the student will be prevented from taking the regular examination in the course. (see: http://www.uwo.ca/univsec/pdf/academic_policies/exam/attendance.pdf).
   c. Any student who is absent for more than six classes per half course (3 classes for Health Communications) per semester may be prevented from writing the final exam or receiving academic credit for course deliverables, which may result in a failing grade in the course.
   d. Any student who is absent for more than 15% of all classes across the program per semester may be deemed to have failed to make satisfactory progress towards the degree, and may be required to withdraw from the program. (See SGPS Graduate Studies Regulations, Section 3: Program Regulations, http://grad.uwo.ca/current_students/regulations/3.html).

Notification of Absences

3. If a student is aware of an expected absence, they should inform the MPH Program Office in advance at publichealth@schulich.uwo.ca. In the event of an unexpected absence, students should notify the MPH Program Office in a timely manner. In both instances, the MPH Program Office will ensure that the appropriate professors are notified.

Late Arrivals & Early Departures

4. Students are expected to arrive on time and not leave before a session ends.
   a. A student will be marked as being late if they arrive after a session has begun, or as having left early if they depart before the conclusion of a session.
   b. Late arrivals and early departures will be recorded each class, and will be monitored by the MPH Program Office.
c. If a student is both late and leaves early for the same class, they will be marked as if absent, receiving a participation mark of 0.

5. Late arrivals and early departures may have an impact on a student’s participation mark.
   a. If more than five late arrivals or early departures, a student’s final participation mark in the course may automatically be reduced by a minimum of 5%.
   b. If more than ten late arrivals or early departures, a student’s final participation mark in the course may automatically be reduced by a minimum of 20%.

6. Students who consistently arrive late for classes or depart early may be at risk of failing to make satisfactory progress towards the completion of the course and/or MPH Program as outlined in section 3.
   a. The MPH Program Office will notify the MPH Graduate Chair of any student who has been late 5 times in one class or 10 times total in a semester.

Exemption

7. Students who breach this policy but qualify for any University Secretariat approved academic accommodation, in particular for medical illness or for religious holiday, will be exempt from any penalty. (see: http://www.uwo.ca/univsec/pdf/academic_policies/appeals/accommodation_medical.pdf and http://www.uwo.ca/univsec/pdf/academic_policies/appeals/accommodation_religious.pdf).

Professionalism

Because our MPH program is a professional program, we expect behaviour that is compatible with a professional public health practice environment. Hence here are a few ground rules:

- Be respectful of others’ time
- Remember to value and embrace those whose opinions differ from yours
- Practice emotional intelligence when dealing with your fellow classmates
- Do not use profanity with your fellow classmates
- Do not threaten, harass or insult your fellow classmates

Learning Teams – Conflict Resolution

The MPH Program uses learning teams to enhance and enrich student learning, and to mimic the group settings within which virtually all public health practice occurs. Eventually, every group experiences conflicts between team members. Conflicts arise for a variety of reasons, and vary in their
seriousness and potential to disrupt group functioning. Recognizing the conflicts that require prompt attention, and addressing them in a timely and appropriate manner are essential leadership skills on which our program places a high priority. As well, these skills generalize well beyond teams encountered in your professional practice. This conflict resolution resource forms part of a larger package of learning team tools.

Many conflicts are minor and transitory. A central tenet is that the first step of conflict resolution is informal. Thus, teams are encouraged to deal initially with conflicts on their own, in a professional manner. Key strategies for dealing with conflict are identified below. If a team is unable to come to a resolution, then they are to comply with the Program’s Conflict Resolution Policy.

In the event of a conflict, a Learning Team is encouraged to try to resolve the conflict internally. Before taking a conflict to the Faculty Advisor, the Learning Team should make three attempts to resolve the disagreement (“Three Before Me”). The “Three Before Me” strategy is simple: learning teams should be able to prove that at least three avenues have been tried to resolve a conflict.

Learning Teams can notify their Faculty Advisor of any team meetings concerning conflict. Learning teams are advised to record discussion and decision points of any conflict resolution meeting (i.e.: what were the three strategies, and what was the outcome(s)). When the Learning Team is able to resolve a conflict, they are encouraged to report any resolution/plan identified to their Faculty Advisor.

Key strategies for dealing with conflict:

- Meet and discuss as a group, allowing each member to share their point of view, if they so desire.
- Listen carefully, without interrupting.
- Focus on behaviour and events, not personalities.
- Identify points of agreement and disagreement.
- Explore and discuss potential solutions and alternatives.
- Agree on a plan that takes into account the needs of all team members.
- Follow through on your plan.
- Celebrate successes.

If a Learning Team is unable to resolve a conflict internally, they should immediately notify their Faculty Advisor and the following conflict resolution policy will guide the process.
There are times when a conflict should be referred directly to the Faculty Advisor or the MPH Program Office. Specifically scholastic offences
(http://www.uwo.ca/univsec/pdf/academic_policies/appeals/scholastic_discipline_grad.pdf) and violations of Western University’s student code of conduct
(http://www.uwo.ca/univsec/pdf/board/code.pdf). We request all students to read Western University’s policies to familiarize themselves with expectations of all students on campus.

Conflict Resolution Policy

1. **Step One – Learning Team & Faculty Advisor:** If a Learning Team is unable to resolve a conflict internally, they are required to meet with their Faculty Advisor.
   
   a. The Learning Team will find a suitable time to meet with the Faculty Advisor to discuss the issue.
   
   b. The role of the Faculty Advisor is to act as a mediator only, to help facilitate a resolution; the Faculty Advisor should not issue any directives.
      
      i. The Faculty Advisor will notify the MPH Program Office of any conflict resolution meetings with their team and will communicate with the MPH Program Office identifying the outcome of the meeting, and, if reached, any resolution/plan identified by the Learning Team.
      
      ii. If a Learning Team is unable to resolve a conflict with the assistance of the Faculty Advisor, the Faculty Advisor will immediately notify the MPH Program Director.

2. **Step Two – Learning Team & MPH Graduate Chair/Director:** If a Learning Team is unable to resolve a conflict with the assistance of the Faculty Advisor, they are required to meet with the MPH Graduate Chair/Director.
   
   a. The MPH Graduate Chair/Director may arrange to meet with members of the team individually, with the team as a group, and with the Faculty Advisor.
   
   b. The MPH Graduate Chair/Director will facilitate a meeting with the Learning Team.
      
      i. The initial role of the MPH Graduate Chair/Director is to act in the role of a mediator.
   
   c. If a Learning Team is unable to resolve a conflict with the assistance of the MPH Graduate Chair/Director, the Learning Team may be directed to a third party to assist with conflict resolution or can, at their discretion, impose a solution (see 4).

3. **Step Three – Learning Team and Third Party Resolution:** If a Learning Team is unable to resolve a conflict with the assistance of the MPH Graduate Chair/Director, the Learning Team will be directed to a third party to help with conflict mediation and resolution.
i. If a Learning Team, with assistance of a third party, is able to identify a resolution/plan, the Learning Team is to report this to the Faculty Advisor and the MPH Program Office.

ii. If a Learning Team, with the assistance of a third party, is unable to resolve a conflict, the Learning Team should notify the Faculty Advisor and the MPH Program Office immediately, and direct the matter to the MPH Graduate Chair/Director.

4. Step Four – Resolution of Conflicts: A Learning Team must arrive at a resolution to their conflict either by agreement or by declaration from the MPH Graduate Chair/Director.

   a. At all times, the MPH Graduate Chair/Director has the discretion to impose a resolution to a Learning Team conflict.

      i. The MPH Graduate Chair/Director will file a report on any imposed resolution with the MPH Program Office.

   b. A decision by the MPH Graduate Chair/Director under Step Four is definitive, subject only to the allowable grounds of appeal permitted by the University Secretariat.

Preparing for Class

The study questions and any readings assigned with each case or class (if no case has been assigned) are designed to guide and stimulate your analysis and preparation. They are not ‘assignments’ to be handed in unless explicitly noted. However, it will be assumed that you have done the readings. You will be called upon to apply the tools and concepts contained in the readings to the issues at hand during case analysis or class discussion. Informed discussion of case-specific issues can be assisted by reference to relevant models and concepts. This individual preparation precedes meeting with your learning team and discussing each case or topic prior to the class session. Other types of active class participation and experiential learning may be used throughout the course to supplement the case discussion. Cases are complex and benefit from multiple perspectives and sharing your analysis and thoughts with others.

*Note: Our class schedule, reading assignments and discussion questions appear on OWL Sakai. Please check OWL Sakai regularly for this information and other course news as changes may be made throughout the term.*
Ground Rules

The case discussion process works best if we are prepared to observe some basic ground rules. Most of the case studies we will be working on in each course are undisguised. We will be dealing with real people and real institutions. This encourages engagement in the case situations and facilitates follow-up on developments subsequent to the case events. It also creates some potential disadvantages that we need to minimize.

The process of analyzing, discussing and learning from cases depends in a significant way on discovery – discovering what the opportunities and problems in the case are as it stands in the time period covered by the case, evaluating the possible ways of dealing with issues, and thinking about the lessons that can be drawn from the case. The value of this process is diminished if we short-circuit it by jumping ahead to find out ‘what happened’ before we have done our best to understand the case – individually, in learning teams, and in the classroom. Similarly, we lose something when someone with special knowledge of the situation does not respect the necessary process of analysis. In addition, seeing what was actually done after the period covered by the case does not necessarily represent the best decision. It is not uncommon for decision makers to make poor choices or for good choices to be overtaken by unfortunate events.

**Ground Rule #1**: Unless explicitly asked for by the Professor, *do not call the organization, the author or any individuals named in the case*. Do not go on the internet, or otherwise attempt to find out ‘what happened’ in the case situation. It is not just the subsequent events that matter. Rather, it is the learning and discovery process – your thoughts, analysis and engagement with the case issues that have implications for our collective learning.

**Ground Rule #2**: Prior to any case discussion, *engaging in discussion with (or examining notes from) others who may have already experienced a case is a clear violation of our norms*.

**Ground Rule #3**: During class your attention should be focused on the discussion taking place in the classroom and learning from, *listening, and contributing to that process*. Thinking and developing new ways of thinking is what should be occurring during class. In order to minimize the need for note-taking e-copies of relevant visuals may be provided through OWL Sakai. You are encouraged to take a few minutes at the end of class, or at the end of the day to reflect upon what you learned from the class.
Participation

In-class contribution is worth 30% of your final mark in each course.

Your course professor and your peers will evaluate your contribution to the discussion in each class. You are expected to be present and prepared for every class; ready to share your views in the classroom discussion. In addition to learning the material, it is expected that you will assist the learning of your classmates. The class contribution grade recognizes your contribution to the learning of your classmates. Assessment of contribution follows the usual norms. People may be called upon to contribute (some faculty make use of the cold calling method), but it is safe to assume that waiting to be “cold-called” will not earn you a satisfactory contribution grade. You will need to contribute voluntarily.

At the same time, it is not possible for all students to contribute in every class. In grading class contribution, you will be assessed according to the extent to which you have established a meaningful presence in the classroom, over the course of the semester, by making solid contributions on a regular basis. Your goal should be to provide insights that pass the "so-what" test. This can range from helping to sort out the key facts in a complex case to developing an analysis that builds on prior comments, thereby moving the class discussion forward. Repeating comments without adding additional value is not positively assessed.

Contribution has aspects of both quantity and quality. With regards to quality some of the criteria follow:

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Components of in-class contribution</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Outstanding</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Several times a term, a student may make a truly grounded and ground-breaking contribution that lifts the learning experience to a new level of personal and professional meaning for all the participants.</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• These are memorable, one-of-a-kind, in-the-moment “aha”-s that punctuate how a class gets to experience real public health. These contributions are rare and extremely valuable beyond the teaching point at hand.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Excellent</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Comments add substantial value to the discussion.</td>
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<td>• Student demonstrates willingness to take risks in attempting to answer difficult or unpopular questions.</td>
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<td>• Student breaks new ground and raises the flow of discussion to a higher level, often by synthesizing material and applying multiple lenses/techniques.</td>
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<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Significant</td>
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<td>• Comments add value to the discussion, beyond case facts.</td>
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<td></td>
<td>• There is evidence of analysis rather than just the expression of opinion (although some espousal of opinion is acceptable, even necessary at times).</td>
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<td>• Comments linked to those of others, facilitating the flow of the discussion.</td>
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<td>• Student demonstrates knowledge of readings and other relevant course material.</td>
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<td>• Student incorporates relevant insights from other courses or current affairs.</td>
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<td></td>
<td>• Adds energy and enthusiasm to the class.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Category</td>
<td>Components of in-class contribution</td>
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| 1 Good   | • Comments advance the flow of the discussion (including responses to questions from the instructor).  
• Student demonstrates clear grasp of case material.  
• Information presented is relevant to the discussion. |
| 0 Neutral | • Statement of case facts; relevance not made clear.  
• Present, listening, but silent. |
| -1 Unsatisfactory | • Repeats what has already been said, adds no additional value.  
• Lack of preparation for class discussion; failure to listen.  
• Criticisms are directed at others versus towards their ideas.  
• Defensive or disruptive behaviour (e.g., aggression or withdrawal) is exhibited  
• Drains energy from class goals.  
• Inappropriate use of laptop, cell phone, iPod, Blackberry or other devices. |
| L Late Arrival | • Grade accordingly but note an L beside late arrivals |
| E Early Departure | • Grade accordingly but note an E beside early departures from class |
| A Absent | • Mark an A beside anyone who did not show up for class |

Each class, your in-class contribution will be marked by the course professor and by two or more of your peers. Each of you will have several opportunities per course to evaluate your peers’ performance in a class over the course of the term. For the class in which you take this evaluator role, you will receive a contribution mark of 2 (Significant). You are allowed, and encouraged, to contribute in every class – and you should not hold back your contributions during the class for which you are assigned an evaluation role. If you are well prepared for that session, your contributions can earn you a 3 (or even a 4). Appointment of evaluators to classes is done by random assignment by the MPH Program Office.

When your turn comes, you will receive a seating chart at the beginning of the class. Please keep track of contributions and, at the end of the class, take 5 minutes to assign each participant a score from -1 to 4 according to the grading chart above (for your convenience, this will be copied on the back of the seating chart). Please clearly write down who was absent that day, late arriving or departed early. If you assign a score of -1 please document your observations to justify the score. **Most importantly, please return your marked contribution sheet to your professor at the end of the class. Please do not forget to sign and date the grade sheet before you submit it.**

**The scores peer evaluators assign are confidential.** The professor compares the average of the peer evaluators’ scores to his/her evaluation for each class and assigns the appropriate score for each respective class.
MPH Academic Appeals – Procedures

This document outlines internal appeal procedures in the MPH program. Our procedures are consistent with those outlined by the School of Graduate and Postdoctoral Studies, with which students should familiarize themselves: [http://grad.uwo.ca/current_students/regulations/11.html](http://grad.uwo.ca/current_students/regulations/11.html)

**Steps**

1. If after informally consulting the course instructor(s) the student is still unsatisfied, s/he has the right to appeal to the Graduate Chair.
2. In reaching a decision the Graduate Chair may consult with others, including the course instructor(s), as deemed appropriate.
3. The Graduate Chair will either grant or deny the appeal, normally within 3 weeks of receiving it.
4. A student has the right to appeal the decision of the Graduate Chair to SGPS.

**Required Documentation**

The student submits a signed, dated appeal in writing to the Graduate Chair clearly indicating the following:

1. **The subject matter of the appeal:**
   - a mark (on examinations, assignments, courses)
   - a ruling (of an instructor, program or administrator in an academic matter)

2. **Grounds of Appeal.** An appeal must be based on one or more of the following grounds:
   - Medical or compassionate circumstances
   - Extenuating circumstances beyond the student’s control
   - Bias
   - Inaccuracy
   - Unfairness

   **Note:** A student’s mere dissatisfaction with a mark does not constitute a ground of appeal. Similarly, a claim that the grade does not reflect the student’s knowledge of the material or the effort expended on the assignment or course is not a valid appeal ground.

3. **A clear and detailed explanation of the facts supporting the grounds of appeal.**

4. **A statement of the desired outcome or remedy.**
Brown Bag Series

The MPH Program will be organizing a weekly seminar on Thursdays starting at 1:00 p.m. in the classroom (attendance is mandatory). The purpose of the weekly seminar is to provide an informal opportunity for students to present something on themselves, for faculty to present on their research, to host guest speakers that will enrich your learning and to discuss “hot topics” in public health. More information on the Brown Bag Series will be provided at a later date.

Academic Support

Your professors are all committed to each student succeeding in the MPH Program. If you have any concerns or are struggling with anything regarding your academic program, we are available to listen, support and advise you. We believe in “learning promotion” and preventing barriers to learning. Early intervention is best; do not struggle on your own.

If you have concerns about a particular course, please address your concerns first with the course professor. If the concerns extend across multiple courses or involve your team learning, you may wish to discuss these concerns with your Faculty Advisor. We encourage students to connect with the individual professor closest to the situation allowing her/him an opportunity to help resolve your concern or issue prior to discussing with another professor.

Procedure for Missed Exam

Students who fail to appear for an examination at the time set will not be allowed to write the examination thus missed. Students should report this irregularity immediately to the MPH Program Office and the course Professor. They may, with the approval of the Director, write a Special Examination.

Late Assignments

Late assignments are not acceptable and will result in a “zero” for the assignment. All accommodations (illness, death in the family) will need to be approved by the Director.
Plagiarism

You are reminded that plagiarism (representing another person’s ideas, writings, etc., as one’s own) is a serious academic offence; the penalty can be as severe as expulsion from the MPH program. Students must write their reflections, essays and assignments (this includes case exams and reports) in their own words. Similarly, all written work completed by the team must be in the words of one or more team members. Whenever students take an idea, or a passage from another author (or non-team member), they must acknowledge their debt both by using quotation marks where appropriate and by proper referencing such as footnotes or citations. Plagiarism is a major academic offence (see Scholastic Offense Policy in the Western Academic Calendar).

All required written assignments/papers (this includes case exams and reports) may be subject to submission for textual similarity review to the commercial plagiarism detection software under license to the University for the detection of plagiarism. All papers submitted will be included as source documents in the reference database for the purpose of detecting plagiarism of papers subsequently submitted to the system. Use of the service is subject to the licensing agreement, currently between The University of Western Ontario and Turnitin.com (www.turnitin.com).

It is our hope you will have fun, work hard, learn much, reflect often and develop professional, transferable skills for a lifetime.