

# **Master of Public Health Student Handbook**



# Welcome

to the Master of Public Health program  
at Armstrong Atlantic State University.

This Handbook has been developed to familiarize you with the policies and procedures of AASU's MPH program. Consider it a "survival guide" to your graduate years. You are also advised to become familiar with the current *AASU Graduate Catalog*. This can be a very rewarding and enjoyable experience, so relax and enjoy the ride.

Dr. Sandy Streater  
Head, Department of Health Sciences

Dr. Michael Mink  
Graduate Coordinator, MPH Program

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# **Program Mission Statement**

## **Vision**

To be a major center of public health education, information, and advocacy in the Georgia coastal region.

## **Mission Statement**

The purpose of the MPH program at AASU is to support and enhance public health for the Georgia Coastal region through workforce development, research, and community service.

## **Goals**

- To prepare students at the graduate level to be knowledgeable and effective public health professionals.
- To encourage and recognize academic achievement in public health students.
- To support the development of a well trained and professional public health workforce.
- To prepare students for leadership roles in the public health profession.
- To connect students with public health agencies and professionals in the community.
- To enhance the body of knowledge in public health through academic and applied research.
- To provide leadership, expertise, and assistance in public health education and promotion that responds to changing community health needs.

## **MPH Student Learning Objectives**

1. All graduates of the MPH program will be able to demonstrate proficiency in all program domains of knowledge basic to public health practice.
2. All graduates of the MPH program will be able to demonstrate proficiency in all program domains of knowledge and concepts basic to health education.
3. All graduates will demonstrate their ability to present research in a written format.
4. All graduates will demonstrate their ability to present research in an oral format.
5. Students and graduates will give a favorable assessment on all aspects of the MPH program.
6. All MPH graduates who take health promotion/education credentialing exams (e.g. CHES) will pass.

## Degree Requirements

### Program of Study for the MPH

The purpose of the Program of Study is to guide and document student progress in the MPH program and ensure that students complete the courses required for graduation. The MPH program will document the program of study (POS) for each student on the Program of Study form (see below). This form must be signed by the student, advisor, and program coordinator and forwarded to the Assistant V.P. for the School of Graduate Studies, as part of the student's Application for Graduation. No credit for courses with a grade of D, F, or U will apply toward the requirements for graduation.

The program of study required for the MPH degree is listed below:

<b>Required Courses</b>				
<b>Number</b>	<b>Course Title</b>	<b>Hours</b>	<b>Term/Year</b>	<b>Grade</b>
PUBH 7100	Foundations of Public Health, Concepts and Administration	3		
PUBH 7110	Epidemiology	3		
PUBH 7150	Environmental Health Issues	3		
PUBH 7200	Biostatistics	3		
PUBH 7720	Theory in Health Education	3		
PUBH 8710	Research Methods	3		
PUBH 8730	Health Communication	3		
PUBH 8745	Methods of Health Promotion	3		
PUBH 8861	Public Health Management	3		
PUBH 8890	Public Health Planning and Evaluation	3		
		<b>30</b>		
<b>Elective Courses</b>				
Elective		3		
Elective		3		
Elective		3		
		<b>9</b>		
<b>Public Health Practicum</b>				
PUBH 8920	Public Health Practicum I	3		
PUBH 8930	Public Health Practicum II	3		
		<b>6</b>		
		<b>Total</b>	<b>45</b>	

Please see the *AASU Graduate Catalog* for a complete listing of courses and course descriptions.

## **Academic Requirements**

Students are expected to maintain adequate progress throughout the program in order to meet the requirements for graduation. Adequate progress is defined using the following criteria:

- The student must maintain a 3.0 overall grade point average (GPA) on all graduate course work to meet graduation requirements.
- The student must earn a grade of C or better in any required course in order to count the course toward graduation requirements. A student who earns lower than a C in any course may retake that course no more than two more times in an effort obtain a grade of C or better. Any student who fails to achieve a grade of C or better in a required course after attempting it three times will not be allowed to continue in the program.
- Fifty percent (50%) of the program of study must be completed at the 7000-8000 levels.
- All degree requirements must be completed within seven (7) years.
- The student must successfully complete both cumulative experiences, which are delivered through the capstone course and the practicum requirement.
- The student must apply for graduation two (2) semesters before the date of graduation. The program of study must accompany the application for graduation.

## **Comprehensive Assessment**

The comprehensive assessment is measure of students' abilities to integrate and apply the public health competencies learned during the core courses. This assessment takes place during the program's capstone course, PUBH 8890 – Public Health Planning and Evaluation. During this course, students create a comprehensive public health program from scratch. This includes performing a community needs assessment, risk appraisal, program design, budget and timeline, and program evaluation plan. In the end, each student will create an in-depth program plan that can be used as a grant application or proposal packet. To be successful in this course, students will need to apply knowledge and skills learned in other core courses. Because of the nature of this course, it should be taken near the end of the program of study, after most or all of the other core courses have been completed.

## **Practicum**

The purpose of the Practicum project is to give students an opportunity to apply core competencies in the field of public health in a supervised setting. The Practicum follows a classic internship model, where students secure a placement with an agency that performs public health work. (See the *Practicum Guidebook* for further details.)

### Independent Study or Self-Directed Research

Students may propose independent studies to a faculty member who must agree to supervise the experience. No more than six (6) hours of independent credit may apply to the MPH degree.

### Thesis (Optional)

The student may choose to do a thesis in addition to the required practicum. Six (6) of the recommended elective courses may be used to complete the thesis (see the *AASU School of Graduate Studies Thesis Guidelines*).

### Course Sequence

Below is a master schedule which indicates the terms that core and recommended elective courses are usually offered. Yearly master schedules may change without notice, however, the list below can serve as a guide for helping students plan their course sequences. When planning courses for each semester, students should remember that all requirements for the MPH degree must be completed within seven years from the date of initial enrollment. Students may attend either full-time (9 or more credit hours per term) or part-time. Students should consider other demands on their time, including employment and family needs, when determining each semester's course schedule. Academic advisors are always available to help students with academic decisions.

#### Courses offered every Fall term:

Core Courses	Electives
PUBH 7100 – Foundations of Public Health	PUBH 5550 – Nutrition
PUBH 7110 – Epidemiology	PUBH 5560 – Introduction to International Health
PUBH 7200 – Biostatistics	PUBH 5565 – Prevention of Chemical Dependency
PUBH 8730 – Health Communications	PUBH 5570 – Women and Minority Health Issues
PUBH 8890 – Public Health Planning & Evaluation	PUBH 5580 – Health & Human Development
PUBH 8920 – Public Health Practicum I	SMED 5090 – Sports Nutrition

#### Courses offered every Spring term: (\*\* offered every other year)

Core Courses	Electives
PUBH 7100 – Foundations of Public Health	GERO 5510 – Healthy Aging
PUBH 7110 – Epidemiology	PUBH 5555 – Health & Human Performance
PUBH 7150 – Environmental Health Issues	PUBH 5575 – Human Sexuality
PUBH 7720 – Theory in Health Education	PUBH 5800 – Epidemiology of Cancer**
PUBH 8710 – Research Methods	PUBH 7350 – Complementary & Alternative Health**
PUBH 8861 – Public Health Management	PUBH 7760 – Special Topics: Stress & Coping**
PUBH 8930 – Public Health Practicum II	PUBH 8760 – Advanced Epidemiology**

**Courses offered every Summer term: (\*\* offered every other year)**

<b>Core Courses</b>	<b>Electives</b>
PUBH 7100 – Foundations of Public Health PUBH 7110 – Epidemiology PUBH 8740 – Methods of Health Promotion	MHSA 8870 – Managerial & Biomedical Ethics PUBH 5550 – Nutrition PUBH 7210 – Principles of Population Studies** PUBH 7220 – Zoonotic & Vector Borne Disease** PUBH 8720 – Health Promotion in the Worksite

**Suggested Course Sequences**

The course sequence options below are provided to help students plan their programs’ of study. Students are not required to follow one of the course sequences below, however, it these are highly recommended for keeping students on track. Students may also develop tailored course sequence plans with their faculty advisors.

<b>Term</b>	<b><u>Spring Start</u></b>	<b><u>Summer Start</u></b>	<b><u>Fall Start</u></b>
<b>Spring</b>	PUBH 7150 Environmental Health PUBH 7720 Theory in Health Ed		
<b>Summer</b>	PUBH 7100 PH Foundations <i>Elective</i>	PUBH 7100 PH Foundations <i>Elective</i>	
<b>Fall</b>	PUBH 7110 Epidemiology PUBH 7200 Biostatistics PUBH 8730 Health Communication	PUBH 7110 Epidemiology PUBH 7200 Biostatistics PUBH 8730 Health Communication	PUBH 7100 PH Foundations PUBH 7110 Epidemiology PUBH 7200 Biostatistics PUBH 8730 Health Communication
<b>Spring</b>	PUBH 8710 Research Methods PUBH 8861 PH Management	PUBH 7150 Environmental Health PUBH 7720 Theory in Health Ed PUBH 8710 Research Methods	PUBH 7150 Environmental Health PUBH 7720 Theory in Health Ed PUBH 8710 Research Methods
<b>Summer</b>	PUBH 8745 Health Promotion <i>Elective</i>	PUBH 8745 Health Promotion <i>Elective</i>	PUBH 8745 Health Promotion <i>Elective</i>
<b>Fall</b>	PUBH 8890 Planning & Evaluation PUBH 8920 Practicum I	PUBH 8890 Planning & Evaluation PUBH 8920 Practicum I <i>Elective</i>	PUBH 8890 Planning & Evaluation PUBH 8920 Practicum I <i>Elective</i>
<b>Spring</b>	PUBH 8930 Practicum II <i>Elective</i>	PUBH 8861 PH Management PUBH 8930 Practicum II	PUBH 8861 PH Management PUBH 8930 Practicum II <i>Elective</i>

# Student Conduct

## Preamble

Armstrong Atlantic State University exists to provide an environment in which intellectual achievement, scholarship and character development can flourish. The AASU community (students, faculty, administration and staff) willingly shares the responsibility for sustaining a creative and productive atmosphere through adherence to the highest standards of personal and professional conduct. All who are privileged to be a part of AASU campus life must remain cognizant that they are representatives of Armstrong Atlantic State University, whether they are on campus or elsewhere, and are therefore expected to avoid behavior which brings discredit or dishonor upon themselves or the university as an institution. Recognizing that trust is the cornerstone of all human relations, students will work to build and sustain the trust of their peers, the faculty and the administration by obeying both the letter and the spirit of the Honor Code and Student Responsibilities.

## Student Responsibilities

At each registration, students agree to abide by the rules of the Honor Code and the Code of Conduct. The Honor Code and Code of Conduct are printed in the *AASU Graduate Catalog* and on the university Web site.

In addition, students are expected to:

1. Exercise honesty in all matters, both academic and personal in nature.
2. Be fair and courteous with others, treat them fairly and with respect, showing sensitivity to cultural, ethnic, and religious diversity, and personal dignity.
3. Refrain from engaging in discriminatory or harassing behavior; and
4. Accept personal responsibility for appropriate behavior as defined by the Honor code and Code of Conduct.
5. Know the offenses under each code and the penalties for violating them.
6. Understand that they are responsible for knowing and following any additional written or verbal requirements given by the professor which relate to honor or conduct, and which are inherent to the classroom or university functions.
7. Know what plagiarism is, as defined under the Honor Code; recognize that it undermines individual and academic integrity; and ensure that it is avoided in both spirit and deed.
8. Understand that the codes apply at all university activities whether on the main campus or at other university-sanctioned locations.
9. Remember that they are representatives of Armstrong Atlantic State University, and that they must always conduct themselves in a manner which brings credit upon themselves and the university.

Cheating, plagiarism, fabrication, facilitating academic dishonesty, and other Honor Code infractions WILL NOT BE TOLERATED. Instances of academic dishonesty or other violations of the student honor code can result in disciplinary action by the MPH Program or University,

including removal from the program or expulsion from the University. It is the student's responsibility to know and understand what constitutes cheating, plagiarism, fabrication, etc.

### **Honor Code Policy**

This Honor Code policy applies to all students enrolled in a course taught by Health Sciences faculty. Students who are caught violating AASU's Honor Code and Code of Conduct in any Health Sciences course will be subject to the following disciplinary action:

1. The first instance will result in a score of zero (0) on the assignment in question;
2. The second instance, regardless of whether it occurred in the same course as the first, will result in an automatic failing grade (F) for the course;
3. The third instance, regardless of whether prior instances occurred in the same course, will result in dismissal from the program.

Honor Code violations will be documented in the student's departmental file. Moreover, the instructor reserves the right to: (1) accelerate the above three penalties based on the instructor's assessment of the severity of the violation; (2) report the Honor Code violation to the appropriate program coordinator; (3) review assignments and exams from previous Health Sciences courses for possible Honor Code infractions; and (4) refer instances of honor offenses to the Office of Student Affairs and the AASU Honor Court.

### **Essential Qualifications and Technical Standards**

In addition to the academic requirements for your degree program, there are core performance standards required for its completion. These standards are necessary to obtain employment in the degree fields:

1. It is essential the student behave in a professional manner. The student must not, in any fashion, cause distraction to the department, faculty, fellow students, or clients. Furthermore, the student must have the ability to: reason morally; behave in an ethical manner; demonstrate good judgment, maturity, sensitivity, and emotional stability; and establish effective harmonious relationships with faculty, fellow students, and clients.
2. It is essential that the student have the sensitivity, interpersonal, and professional skills sufficient to interact with individuals, families, and groups. Students will be evaluated using tools such as classroom performance and experiential evaluations, utilized by faculty and site supervisors, on the basis of their ability to appropriately adapt their manner of interaction with clients from a variety of social, emotional, cultural, and intellectual backgrounds.
3. It is essential that the student have communication abilities sufficient for interaction with others in verbal and written form. Students must be able to appropriately adjust presentation/communication styles to a level that is compatible with the communication abilities of the client(s).

When students do not meet required academic and professional performance standards, departmental options shall include, but not be limited to, the following specifically defined actions:

- **Suspension**  
Exclusion from an academic, practicum, or internship course or series of courses and/or exclusion from one or more components of an academic course or courses. Such suspensions may be conditional, stipulating that the suspended student must satisfy a certain prescribed set of requirements or follow a certain prescribed course of action in order to return to full academic status.
- **Interim Suspension**  
Temporary exclusion from an academic, practicum, or internship course or series of courses and/or exclusion from one or more components of an academic course or courses, pending the outcome of a hearing or appeal, as the case may be.
- **Dismissal with Possibility of Readmission**  
Termination from a program with the possibility of readmission.
- **Dismissal**  
Permanent termination from a program, with no possibility of readmission.

### **Policy on Distractions**

Consistent with the Health Sciences Department's **Essential Qualifications and Technical Standards** (see above), which outlines the importance of students maintaining professional behavior both in the classroom and out in the community, the department has a firm policy regarding classroom distractions. Distractions of any kind negatively affect those trying to listen to or discuss the material being presented and are in direct violation of the Essential Qualifications and Technical Standards. Therefore, distractions will not be tolerated. Any distraction will be viewed a significant disruption of the class, and ***the student(s) will be asked to leave the classroom immediately***. The professor reserves the right to determine what is distracting in his/her class, but common distractions include:

- Students using the text or voice functions on a cell phone;
- A beeper, cell phone, or any other noise-making device ringing or vibrating;
- Students leaving the classroom repeatedly, or leaving the classroom to make or answer a phone call or text message;
- Students having private conversations in the classroom; and
- Students doing any other work than that which is related to the material being presented in class at that time.

Particular attention should be given to cell phones as they are especially distracting. If you must carry one, make sure it is **OFF** before you enter the classroom. The professor may, at his/her discretion, drop a student from a course if that student violates this policy three times in any one

course. If necessary, the full resources of the University will be utilized in order to enforce the Policy on Distractions.

### **E-mail Policy**

The Health Sciences Department often communicates with its students via e-mail about policies, program changes, events, educational opportunities, etc. Because of privacy concerns and regulations, all e-mails will be sent to your official AASU e-mail address. It is imperative, and the student's responsibility, to check and maintain this account on a regular basis.

If you correspond with the Health Sciences Department or any of its faculty and staff using an e-mail account other than your AASU account, the Department and its faculty and staff are not responsible for any sent e-mails or reply e-mails filtered as "junk" or "spam."

### **Criminal Background Checks and Drug Testing**

Clinical and other health-related agencies utilized by the College of Health Professions may require criminal background checks and/or drug testing prior to acceptance of the student into such facilities. Students who do not pass the criminal background check and/or drug test may be unable to attend clinical courses and, therefore, may be unable to complete their program of study. Any fees or costs associated with background checks and/or drug testing are the responsibility of the student.

### **Code of Ethics for the Health Education Profession**

#### **Preamble**

The Health Education profession is dedicated to excellence in the practice of promoting individual, family, organizational, and community health. The Code of Ethics provides a framework of shared values within which health education is practiced. The responsibility of each health educator is to aspire to the highest possible standards of conduct and to encourage the ethical behavior of all those with whom they work.

#### **Article I: Responsibility to the Public**

A health educator's ultimate responsibility is to educate people for the purpose of promoting, maintaining, and improving individual, family, and community health. When a conflict of issues arises among individuals, groups, organizations, agencies, or institutions, health educators must consider all issues and give priority to those that promote wellness and quality of living through principles of self-determination and freedom of choice for the individual.

#### **Article II: Responsibility to the Profession**

Health educators are responsible for their professional behavior, for the reputation of their profession, and for promoting ethical conduct among their colleagues.

### **Article III: Responsibility to Employers**

Health educators recognize the boundaries of their professional competence and are accountable for their professional activities and actions.

### **Article IV: Responsibility in the Delivery of Health Education**

Health educators promote integrity in the delivery of health education. They respect the rights, dignity, confidentiality, and worth of all people by adapting strategies and methods to the needs of diverse populations and communities.

### **Article V: Responsibility in Research and Evaluation**

Health educators contribute to the health of the population and to the profession through research and evaluation activities. When planning and conducting research or evaluation, health educators do so in accordance with federal and state laws and regulations, organizational and institutional policies, and professional standards.

### **Article VI: Responsibility in Professional Preparation**

Those involved in the preparation and training of health educators have an obligation to accord learners the same respect and treatment given other groups by providing quality education that benefits the profession and the public.

*\*Adopted by the SOPHE Board of Trustees on June 17, 1999*

## **Academic Policies**

### **Course Load and Limitations**

A full-time graduate student is defined as one who registers for nine (9) or more credit hours. A full-time graduate student who has been awarded a graduate assistantship must enroll in a minimum of six (6) credit hours during each semester in the contract term. Graduate students may not take more than twelve (12) credit hours per semester, excluding the summer semester during which they may take a maximum of nine (9) credit hours. The respective dean, upon the recommendation of the department head, must approve exceptions.

### **Graduate Transfer Credit**

A maximum of six (6) semester hours of credit may be accepted for the program of study from credit completed at another regionally accredited institution. Only courses with grades of B or better will be accepted. The courses must have been completed no more than seven (7) years prior to the completion of graduate requirements. Graduate transfer credit must be approved by the MPH Program Coordinator and the Graduate Office and require proof of successful completion of coursework to be transferred.

### **Time Limitation**

All requirements for the degree must be completed within seven (7) years. This may not apply to certificates, based upon recommendation of the advisor. An extension of time may be granted by the respective dean in cases of unusual circumstances.

### **Financial Aid**

See the *AASU Graduate Catalog* or the university Web site for information.

### **Graduate Assistantships**

The Graduate Assistantship Program at Armstrong Atlantic State University provides professional growth and development through a limited number of supervised work experiences. The student earns a degree and contributes to the academic mission and applied research endeavors of the institution, while maintaining a satisfactory academic standing. See the *AASU Graduate Catalog* for more information and application materials.

### **Academic Probation and Standing**

A student who falls below a 3.0 overall grade point average upon completion of nine (9) semester hours approved by the MPH program will be placed on academic probation. A 3.0 overall grade point average (GPA) must be earned upon completion of an additional nine (9) semester hours to have the academic probation removed. Failure to achieve a 3.0 overall grade

point average will result in the student being academically dismissed from the School of Graduate Studies.

### **Appeals**

Candidates may appeal progression and graduation decisions through the School of Graduate Studies. The student will be required to complete the appeal form and to provide additional information that demonstrates the student was treated unfairly or capriciously or was working under unusual circumstances that warrant exception to established policies. Being disappointed with a grade or being too busy to complete coursework does not constitute adequate grounds for an appeal. Contact the School of Graduate Studies for appeal information and procedures.