

Master of Public Health Student Handbook



Revised January 2006

Introduction

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

This Handbook has been developed to familiarize you with program policies and procedures. 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.

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Degree Requirements

Program of Study for the MPH

The MPH program will maintain a program of study (POS) for each student. The program of study, signed by the student, advisor, and program coordinator, must be forwarded to the Assistant V.P. for the School of Graduate Studies accompanying the student's Application for Graduation. No credit for courses with a grade of D, F, or U will apply to the program of study.

MPH student's progress is documented in the program of study (POS). The POS serves two purposes. First, the POS serves to document student progress in the MPH program. Second, the POS serves to provide a final document, submitted with the student's graduation application. The final POS is submitted with the student's graduation application to the School of Graduate Studies.

Program of Study -- Master of Public Health

Course Number	Course Title Required Courses - 36 Hours	Hours	Term/Year Completed	Grade
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 8700	Public Health Planning and Evaluation	3		
PUBH 8710	Research Methods	3		
PUBH 8730	Health Communication	3		
PUBH 8770	Public Health Program Assessment	3		
MHSA 8861	Organizational/Administrative Theory and Behavior in Health	3		
PUBH 8920	Public Health Practicum I	3		
PUBH 8930	Public Health Practicum II	3		
Elective Courses - 9 Hours				
		3		
		3		
		3		

TOTAL: 45 Semester Hours

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

Advisement

Each student must be advised by the MPH Coordinator prior to registering for the next semester. Letters are sent to students in the preceding semester noting times for advisement. This is important as some courses have prerequisites, and many courses are only offered once each calendar year. Advisement ensures timely progression through the program.

All Health Sciences Department electives are accepted. Please see your advisor before considering other electives.

Advisement for On-Line Students: Students who are in the on-line MPH program receive the majority of advisement via telephone. These students, in the same way as traditional students, schedule an advisement appointment with the MPH Coordinator. Although they may choose face-to-face advisement, most on-line students utilize advisement via telephone. At their scheduled appointment, they telephone the graduate coordinator who (with his or her MPH file in hand) advises the student via telephone. Students may also choose advisement via e-mail, however most prefer the telephone or the face-to-face method. In either case, the Graduate Coordinator documents student progress appropriately in his or her MPH file.

Comprehensive Assessment Exam

The culminating experiences for the MPH degree consists of a written comprehensive assessment exam, a written practicum, and an oral presentation and defense of the practicum.

The comprehensive assessment is a take-home exam administered over a four-day period in which a case study is presented and students must address specific issues pertinent to this case study. The case study is developed each term by MPH core faculty. The case study requires the students to apply all areas of public health and community health education (core courses) in a comprehensive manner. Students may use any resource in addressing the case study except another person – for example they may consult course notes, texts, and/or appropriate internet sources.

The written comprehensive exam is taken during the semester in which the student will graduate. Students are responsible for all material in the core area of their degree program. The written comp will be graded within two weeks of their administration. Grades of pass, marginal pass, or fail will be assigned to each core area in question. The student must retake in writing, any failed section of the comprehensive exam. Two unsuccessful retakes of the written comp will result in the student being re-tested orally on the failed sections (on-line students will be tested via conference call). A third failure will result in, at the MPH faculty's discretion, the student re-taking one or more courses for completion of degree requirements and being retested on that course material at the completion of the repeated course(s), or the student being dismissed from the MPH program.

An oral practicum presentation is also part of the culminating experience. Students present/defend their practicum with appropriate audio-visual support. Students are given a grade of S (satisfactory) or U (unsatisfactory) on the practicum (written and verbal presentation combined). An online student also presents his or her practicum in-person. If extenuating circumstances (eg. a student cannot physically attend in person) make this method impractical, then alternative formats (eg. videoconferencing) will be utilized as needed.

Practicum

See the *MPH Practicum Guidelines* for detailed information. This culminating experience of the MPH program requires advance planning for successful completion of its written and oral components.

- **Liability Insurance**

Students must secure liability insurance the term prior to beginning their practicum. See the *MPH Practicum Guidelines* for instructions.

▪ **Student Medical Report**

Students must obtain medical clearance prior to going on-site to begin their practicum (see the *MPH Practicum Guidelines*). There also may be specific courses that require students to have medical clearance; if this is the case, students will be notified by the course instructor.

Independent Study or Self-Directed Research

Students may propose independent studies to a faculty member who must agree to supervise the experience. Only 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*).

Standards of Progression and Graduation

- 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 a comprehensive examination.
- The student must apply for graduation two (2) semesters before the date of graduation. The program of study must accompany the application for graduation.
- The student must earn a 3.0 overall grade point average (GPA) on all graduate course work to meet graduation requirements.

Academic Policies

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. Contact the School of Graduate Studies for appeal information and procedures.

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.

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.

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.

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.

Society for Public Health Education Ethics

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*

Student Responsibilities

At each registration, students must 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.

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. Accept personal responsibility for appropriate behavior as defined by the Honor code and Code of Conduct.
4. Know the offenses under each code and the penalties for violating them.
5. 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.
6. 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.
7. Understand that the codes apply at all university activities whether on the main campus or at other university-sanctioned locations.
8. 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.

Honor Code and Code of 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 Code of Conduct.

Honor Code

Violations fall under four categories: **Plagiarism, Cheating, Fabrication, and Facilitating Academic Dishonesty.**

Plagiarism:

The intentional offering of the words, ideas, or computer data, programs, and/or graphics of others for one's own in any academic exercise. Examples of plagiarism include (but are not limited to):

1. The offering of another's work, whether verbatim or paraphrased, as original material in an academic paper;
2. The offering of another's original ideas or concepts as one's own, in an academic paper or assessed exercise;
3. The inclusion of another's material in one's own work without appropriate or accurate citation or credit;
4. Offering as one's own materials or data from the Internet or similar computer databases.

Cheating:

The intentional use or attempted use of unauthorized materials, information, or study aids in any academic exercise; and/or intentional actions taken to gain unfair or undue advantage over others. Examples of cheating include (but are not limited to):

1. Receiving or providing unauthorized assistance on any work required to be submitted for any course.
2. Using unauthorized materials or assistance during an examination, including looking at another's paper.
3. Alteration or insertion of any academic grade or evaluation so as to obtain unearned academic credit.
4. Taking, or attempting to take, an examination for another student. This act constitutes a violation for both the student enrolled in the course and for the proxy or substitute.
5. Tampering with another student's work or impairing the professor's ability to assess the academic performance of another student.
6. Using false excuses to obtain extensions of time or other considerations which would or may yield an unfair advantage over other students.
7. Impeding the ability of students to have fair access to materials assigned or suggested by the professor (e.g., removal or destruction of library or other source materials).

Fabrication:

The intentional and unauthorized falsification or invention of any information or citation in an academic exercise. Examples of fabrication include (but are not limited to):

1. The offering of contrived or fraudulently created information as the result of systematic research that was never conducted.
2. The deliberate alteration of legitimate research data to obtain a desired result.
3. The alteration or distortion of laboratory experiments to reach a desired result.
4. The deliberate distortion of another's work or results in order to rebut or undermine the original author's work or concept.

Facilitating Academic Dishonesty:

The intentional help, or attempt to help, another student to violate any provision of this code. Examples of facilitating academic dishonesty include (but are not limited to):

1. Instigating, encouraging, or abetting plagiarism, cheating, or fabrication in others.
2. Giving perjured testimony before the Student Court.
3. Intimidating or attempting to intimidate witnesses appearing before the Student Court.
4. Failing to report a suspected violation of the Honor Code.
5. Deliberately misleading or deceiving university administrators conducting an investigation of a violation.

Admission Requirements

Students must submit all application materials including a letter of intent to the School of Graduate Studies. When the application packet is complete, it is sent to the MPH Program Coordinator or in his or her absence, the Associate MPH Coordinator, who reviews each application according to the guidelines from the Graduate School and the MPH program guidelines. Students are accepted on a regular or provisional basis.

For Regular Admission the Applicant Must Have:

1. Completed requirements for a baccalaureate degree from a regionally-accredited institution; AND
2. A minimum 2.6 overall undergraduate GPA; AND
3. A minimum test score for one of the following tests:
 - a. GRE: No less than 500 Verbal AND 400 Quantitative OR Analytical section score of 3.5-4; OR
 - b. GMAT: Minimum score of 450; OR
 - c. MAT: Minimum score of 405; AND
4. Letter of Intent

Note: In lieu of the above requirements, an earned doctorate or master's degree from a regionally-accredited institution will qualify the student for consideration for regular admission.

For Provisional Admission the Applicant Must Have:

1. Completed requirements for a baccalaureate degree from a regionally-accredited institution; AND
2. A minimum 2.3 overall undergraduate GPA; AND
3. Minimum admissions formula scores as follows (choose one):
 - a. GRE: (GRE Verbal + GRE Quantitative) x GPA \geq 2100 OR (GRE Verbal + GRE Analytical x 100) \geq 2100
 - b. GMAT: (GPA x 200) + GMAT score \geq 900
 - c. MAT: (GPA x 100) + (MAT) \geq 600; AND
4. Letter of Intent
5. Once admitted provisionally, a student may take no more than nine semester hours that have been determined by the program coordinator. Only credit earned at Armstrong Atlantic State University may be used to satisfy provisional admission requirements for the MPH, which is an autonomous graduate degree. The student will be reclassified to degree-regular status if the courses prescribed by the program coordinator are completed with a grade of no less than B in each course.

Program Mission Statement Goals and Objectives

Mission:

The mission of the MPH program at Armstrong Atlantic State University is to enhance the quality of human health status and public health practice through community-based health promotion and education initiatives, workforce development, and scholarly activities that are responsive to the behavioral, ecological and dynamic determinants of health.

Vision:

The mission supports the following vision: To continue serving as a valuable community resource for promoting public health and wellness and to become recognized as the leader in developing a workforce of highly trained professionals who provide quality health education and promotion programs and services throughout the AASU MPH program service area.

Program Goals and Objectives

The MPH program has identified three major goals consonant with the above mission. To provide continuity within the text presented below, the relevant objectives immediately follow each goal.

Instruction:

Goal # 1: To prepare students at the graduate level to be effective professionals through an integrated program of quality teaching, mentorship, leadership opportunities and service projects.

Objective 1.1

The MPH program will serve both traditional and non-traditional students by utilizing available technologies.

Objective 1.2

All graduates of the MPH program will be able to demonstrate proficiency in all areas of knowledge basic to public health. These areas include:

- Biostatistics
- Epidemiology
- Environmental Health Sciences
- Health Services Administration
- Social and Behavioral Sciences

Objective 1.3

All graduates of the MPH program will be able to demonstrate proficiency in all conceptual areas basic to health education. These areas include:

- Community Health Analysis
- Health-Related Behavior
- Educational Processes
- Educational Program Planning
- Research
- Administration

Objective 1.4

All MPH graduates who take health promotion/education credentialing exams will pass.

Research and Scholarship

Goal #2: To contribute to the field of community health education through scholarship by conducting, analyzing, and synthesizing scholarly activities that will contribute to the body of knowledge of the profession, enhance the quality of human health status in the community and provide research opportunities for students.

Objective 2.1

Each year each MPH faculty member will develop an Individual Faculty Mission (IFM) that describes his or her scholarly goal/strategies for the year. The Health Sciences Department head's approval of the scholarly goals/strategies in the IFM will signify acceptance as conforming to standards set by the MPH program goals and objectives and the HS department strategic plan.

Objective 2.2

All MPH faculty members will conduct applied research projects that address specific public health issues.

Objective 2.3

All MPH faculty members will disseminate research findings that are of interest to the program service area.

Objective 2.4

All MPH faculty members will have the venues to develop and maintain research skills through professional development.

Objective 2.5

The MPH program will continue to include student participation in faculty research.

Objective 2.6

All MPH faculty members will satisfy research requirements to maintain graduate faculty status.

Service

Goal #3: To provide, via faculty and graduates, leadership, expertise, and services in public health education and promotion that will respond to changing community needs.

Objective 3.1

Each MPH faculty member will develop an annual IFM that describes his or her service goal/strategies for the year. The HS Department head's approval of the service goals/strategies in the IFM will signify acceptance as conforming to standards set by the MPH program goals and objectives and the HS department strategic plan.

Objective 3.2

All faculty, and students when appropriate, will provide technical assistance, leadership or consultation to health-related organizations that serve Chatham County and the surrounding areas of South Georgia.

Objective 3.3

The program will support student-led public health initiatives and a Health Sciences student association.

Objective 3.4

The program will contribute to workforce development by graduating an average of ten students per academic year.

Objective 3.5

MPH program representatives will be participants in a leadership capacity in national, regional and state professional organizations

Objective 3.6

All MPH faculty members will satisfy service requirements to maintain graduate faculty status.

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 (eg. CHES) will pass.