Master of Public Health in Public Health Practice

Public health embraces an ecological approach that recognizes the interactions and relationships among multiple determinants of health. Public health professionals typically take a community or population focus. Our graduate program prepares public health practitioners who identify and assess needs of populations; plan, implement and evaluate programs to address those needs; and otherwise assure conditions that protect and promote the health of populations. The Master of Public Health (MPH) in Public Health Practice is an interdisciplinary degree designed to provide a broad background to meet the challenges of the diverse and complex field of public health, with a particular focus on the needs of Alaska and the circumpolar north. Students with backgrounds in the natural sciences, social sciences, health professions, human services, business, education and law have successfully entered the field of public health at the graduate level.

Both mid-career students and recent graduates may pursue their careers with minimal disruption while working on the MPH because all required courses are offered via distance format. Students are required to attend one mandatory meeting in Anchorage each year, typically in conjunction with the Alaska Public Health Summit, and are expected to communicate frequently with their MPH academic advisor. In-person oral defense of capstone thesis in Anchorage is also expected of the student at the end of the MPH program.

This degree requires core courses in health education and behavioral sciences, environmental and occupational health, health management and policy, biostatistics, and epidemiology. It also includes coursework in research methods, program evaluation, circumpolar health issues, and management of public health emergencies and disasters, as well as the opportunity to create an individualized emphasis as the foundation for the required capstone project.

MPH Mission Statement

The MPH in Public Health Practice program at the University of Alaska Anchorage enhances health in diverse communities across Alaska, the circumpolar north, the nation and the world. This is accomplished through excellence in the education of public health practice leaders, scientific investigation of public health issues and engaging communities in an organized effort to identify, assess, prevent and mitigate community health challenges.

MPH Program Goals and Program-Level Objectives

Based on national accreditation criteria and quality standards, the program goals are:

Service

To provide leadership and service to enhance public health practice at the local, state, national and international levels.

1. Provide expertise to public health agencies and organizations in the surrounding region in order to find innovative solutions to existing public health problems.
2. Promote collaboration with a variety of public and private agencies in the rural areas and the surrounding region to meet current and future public health practice needs.
3. Provide leadership to national, regional and state public health and community health education professional organizations.

Teaching and Research

To develop an academic public health program that contributes to and helps train students and support faculty to participate in conducting and translating the growing body of knowledge to enhance the health of communities and strengthen evidence-based public health practice.

1. Support a local and global research agenda through enhanced international collaboration and increased graduate student involvement in research.
2. Increase the opportunities for students to participate in and learn from faculty-directed research designed to inform public health decision-making.
3. Facilitate qualitative, quantitative and mixed-method research.
4. Stimulate innovative, crosscutting, interdisciplinary research (grounded in the ecological model) that will help solve public health problems.
5. Facilitate the publication and dissemination of student and faculty research.
6. Strengthen and support student and faculty capacity for conducting ethical research.

Workforce Development

To provide an instructional program that enhances public health education practice and strengthens the capacity of the existing public health workforce.

1. Conduct needs and/or asset assessments of communities or professionals in region to determine needs for workforce capacity building.
2. Conduct continuing education programs that help meet the needs determined in the assessments above.
3. Facilitate student collaboration with faculty to participate in community and continuing education.
4. Periodically evaluate the current program, student/faculty perceptions and experiences.
5. Revise or enhance courses, the program, opportunities, and resources based on an evolving body of knowledge and on results of periodic evaluations.
6. Create and/or enhance mechanisms (media, pamphlets/fliers, meetings, seminars, and others) to provide educational opportunities for education regarding ongoing and emerging public health issues, especially those based on community concerns.
7. Provide student MPH opportunities in communities to disseminate information and foster action on public health issues.
Student Outcomes
To prepare public health professionals who can demonstrate attainment of our MPH program competencies.

1. Give, solicit and receive oral, written, graphic and numerical information, taking into consideration target audience and using a variety of mechanisms in both formal and informal settings. [Competency: Communication]
2. Interact sensitively and professionally with individuals and communities with diverse characteristics. [Competency: Diversity and cultural proficiency]
3. Create and communicate a shared vision to improve the public’s health.
4. Develop and champion solutions to population health challenges.
5. Demonstrate ethical choices, values and professional practices implicit in public health decisions, giving consideration to the effect of choices on community stewardship, equity, social justice and accountability, as well as to commit to personal and institutional development. [Competency: Professionalism and ethics]
6. Design, develop, implement and evaluate strategies and interventions to improve individual and community health. [Competency: Program planning and assessment]
7. Recognize dynamic interactions among human and social systems and how they affect the relationships among individuals, groups, organizations and communities. [Competency: Systems thinking]
8. Utilize biostatistics in the practice of public health. [Competency: Biostatistics]
9. Design, develop, implement and evaluate approaches for assessing, preventing and controlling environmental hazards that pose risks to human health and safety. [Competency: Environmental health]
10. Utilize epidemiological skills for informing scientific, ethical, economic and public health policy decisions on health issues. [Competency: Epidemiology]
11. Understand the main components and issues of the organization, financing and delivery of health services and public health systems in the U.S. [Competency: Health policy and management]
12. Understand the role of social, behavioral and community factors in both the onset and solution of public health problems. [Competency: Social and behavioral science].

Environment
To create an environment where diverse faculty, students, and staff work collaboratively and respectfully to promote public health.

1. Maintain a diverse student body that reflects the diversity of the region we serve.
2. Maintain a student body with diverse educational and professional backgrounds.
3. Provide a multi-disciplinary, ethnically diverse, and experienced public health faculty and staff.
4. Provide students with contact and involvement with diverse communities and peoples within and outside the MPH program, that provide and/or enhance knowledge and experience.
5. Annually monitor and continually evaluate processes for recruitment and admission into the program.

MPH Public Health Practice Track-Specific Competencies
Students completing the MPH program will have public health practice knowledge and skills in the following:

- Community needs assessment: Diagnose public health problems in the community and gather the information needed to determine when and whether to involve public health specialists and other experts.
- Public health response: Respond quickly and effectively to emerging public health concerns, coordinating the response and enlisting the help of specialists as appropriate.
- Applied research and evaluation: Apply the core public health research and evaluation skills in real world situations where the practitioner may have little control.

Professional Program Fee
A professional program fee is required of all students in the MPH program in addition to course tuition fees, lab fees, course material fees and student activity fees. The professional program fee is a sum equal to 50 percent of resident tuition, and is charged upon enrollment in MPH courses. The fee contributes directly to program support.

Admission Requirements
Satisfy the Admission Requirements for Graduate Degrees (http://catalog.uaa.alaska.edu/academicpoliciesprocesses/admissions/graduate). In addition, students should also meet the following criteria when applying for admission to the MPH program:

- Submit documentation indicating a grade of 2.00 (C or higher) in an introductory statistics course which covers descriptive and inferential statistics.
- Provide copies of one or more substantial professional writing samples.
- Submit an essay explaining how and why obtaining the MPH would contribute to the student’s career goals.

Completed applications are reviewed twice each year. The Department of Health Sciences deadlines are March 1 for fall admission and October 1 for spring admission. The UAA process may take as long as four months so applicants are encouraged to apply to the university first and early.

Note also that:
- To the extent that there are limited positions available in the program, preference may be given to Alaska residents as defined by the university’s policy on residency for tuition purposes.
- Preference may also be given to applicants with two or more years work experience in the field of public health. Such applicants must submit documentation of their public health-related work experience, and a request for special consideration to the admissions committee.
Academic Requirements

In order to maintain satisfactory academic progress toward the degree, a student in the MPH program is expected to complete a minimum of 6 semester credits each academic year, beginning with the first semester of enrollment. For satisfactory academic progress, the 6 semester credits may consist of prerequisite courses or program courses. Failure to comply with the 6 credit minimum each academic year may result in the removal from the program. See also General University Requirements for Graduate Degrees (http://catalog.uaa.alaska.edu/graduateprograms/dgreerequirements) for additional requirements to remain in good standing and to maintain satisfactory academic progress toward the degree.

Candidacy Requirements

See the section Advancement to Candidacy (http://catalog.uaa.alaska.edu/graduateprograms/dgreerequirements).

Graduation Requirements

- Satisfy the General University Requirements for Graduate Degrees (http://catalog.uaa.alaska.edu/graduateprograms/dgreerequirements).
- Complete the program requirements below.

Program Requirements

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<tr>
<th>Code</th>
<th>Title</th>
<th>Credits</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>HS A605</td>
<td>Public Health and Society</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HS A610</td>
<td>Environmental and Occupational Health</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HS A615</td>
<td>Health Services Administration</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HS A624</td>
<td>Circumpolar Health Issues</td>
<td>3</td>
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<tr>
<td>HS/NS A625</td>
<td>Biostatistics for Health Professionals</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HS/NS A626</td>
<td>Principles of Epidemiology</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HS/SWK A628</td>
<td>Program Evaluation</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HS A629</td>
<td>Public Health Research Tools and Methods</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HS A630</td>
<td>Public Health Emergencies and Disasters</td>
<td>3</td>
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Complete three focused public health-related emphasis courses at the 600-level with advisor approval: 9

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Code</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>HS A698</td>
<td>MPH Project Practicum</td>
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<tr>
<td>or HS A699</td>
<td>Thesis Practicum</td>
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Total Credits: 42

A total of 42 credits is required for the degree.