



Recommended Critical Component Elements of an Undergraduate Major in Public Health

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ASPPH ASSOCIATION OF
SCHOOLS & PROGRAMS
OF PUBLIC HEALTH

There is a growing interest in undergraduate education for public health. The [Association of Schools and Programs of Public Health \(ASPPH\)](#) recognizes that there is significant value in education in undergraduate public health regardless of a graduate's ultimate career destination, and that some programs will choose to provide education in public health as a part of a general liberal arts education. There are important distinctions between undergraduate and graduate education with regard to the acquisition of knowledge, skills, competencies, and career opportunities. While ASPH is undergoing a process of reviewing the nature of public health education overall, it has also charged an expert panel with providing guidance for those seeking to start a new undergraduate program in public health or to expand or improve an existing program.

Background Domains

Content Areas

1. **Science:** Students should have an introduction to the foundations of scientific knowledge, including the biological and life sciences and the concepts of health and disease
2. **Social and Behavioral Sciences:** Students should have an introduction to the foundations of social and behavioral sciences
3. **Math/Quantitative Reasoning:** Students should have an introduction to basic statistics
4. **Humanities/Fine Arts:** Students should have an introduction to the humanities/fine arts

Skill Areas

1. **Communications:** Students should be able to communicate, in both oral and written forms and through a variety of media, to diverse audiences
2. **Information Literacy:** Students should be able to locate, use, evaluate, and synthesize information

PUBLIC HEALTH DOMAINS

1. **Overview of Public Health:** Students should have an introduction to the history and philosophy of public health as well as its core values, concepts, and functions across the globe and in society
2. **Role and Importance of Data in Public Health:** Students should have an introduction to the basic concepts, methods, and tools of public health data collection, use, and analysis and why evidence-based approaches are an essential part of public health practice
3. **Identifying and Addressing Population Health Challenges:** Students should have an introduction to the concepts of population health, and the basic processes, approaches,

and interventions that identify and address the major health-related needs and concerns of populations

4. **Human Health:** Students should have an introduction to the underlying science of human health and disease including opportunities for promoting and protecting health across the life course
5. **Determinants of Health:** Students should have an introduction to the socio-economic, behavioral, biological, environmental, and other factors that impact human health and contribute to health disparities
6. **Project Implementation:** Students should have an introduction to the fundamental concepts and features of project implementation, including planning, assessment, and evaluation
7. **Overview of the Health System:** Students should have an introduction to the fundamental characteristics and organizational structures of the U.S. health system as well as to the differences in systems in other countries
8. **Health Policy, Law, Ethics, and Economics:** Students should have an introduction to basic concepts of legal, ethical, economic, and regulatory dimensions of health care and public health policy, and the roles, influences, and responsibilities of the different agencies and branches of government
9. **Health Communication:** Students should have an introduction to the basic concepts of public health-specific communication, including technical and professional writing and the use of mass media and electronic technology

CUMULATIVE EXPERIENCE AND FIELD EXPOSURE

Students should have opportunities to integrate, apply, and synthesize knowledge through cumulative and experiential activities that include:

1. **Cumulative Experience:** Students should have a cumulative, integrative, and scholarly or applied experience or inquiry project that serves as a capstone to their educational experience
2. **Field Exposure:** As an integral part of their education, students should be exposed to local level public health professionals and/or to agencies that engage in population health practice

CROSS-CUTTING AREAS

Students should be exposed to concepts and experiences necessary for success in the

workplace, further education, and life-long learning. These may include the following:

- Advocacy for protection and promotion of the public’s health at all levels of society
- Community dynamics
- Critical thinking and creativity
- Cultural contexts in which public health professionals work
- Ethical decision making as related to the self and society
- Independent work and a personal work ethic
- Networking
- Organizational dynamics
- Professionalism
- Research methods
- Systems thinking
- Teamwork and leadership

Throughout the curriculum, students should have a wide range of instructional methods and experiences that provide exposure to a solid foundation of the diverse nature of public health practice. In addition, students should receive career and graduate school advising.

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