



THE UNIVERSITY OF  
**SOUTHERN MISSISSIPPI**

The Department of Public Health  
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3 May 2016

Kristen Varol, MPH, CHES  
Director of Accreditation Services  
Council on Education for Public Health  
1010 Wayne Avenue, Suite 220  
Silver Spring, MD 20910

Dear Ms. Varol,

This is the interim report requested in support of the accreditation result for our program.

In its summer 2015 accreditation decision letter, the Council asked that the USM MPH program document that it:

**a) “consistently presented the competencies throughout program documents.” Also requested was that “the report provide evidence in the form of sample syllabi and links to program handbooks or webpages” that this request was met.**

Since June 2015, the Accreditation and Evaluation committee has met monthly to review program documents, handbooks, and webpages to ensure that competencies were consistently provided. Additionally, the committee developed a process by which course syllabi are reviewed each semester to confirm that the appropriate competencies are listed. The committee reviewed syllabi from courses taught in Summer 2015, Fall 2015, and Spring 2016. After reviewing **syllabi for all core and emphasis courses**, only 2 syllabi were found to have missing competencies. Following our process, the faculty members responsible for the courses were notified, and the competencies addressed in the courses were added to the syllabi. One representative syllabus from each core and emphasis course taught between Summer 2015 and Spring 2016 can be found in Appendix A.

Additionally, the committee verified that the **program handbooks** and the **departmental website** presented MPH program core and emphasis competencies consistently. There are two **program handbooks**, one for all emphasis areas delivered in the traditional format, and one for the Health Policy and Administration Executive Format. These handbooks include course and emphasis area competencies. (Also placed in Appendix A):

*MPH Student Handbook*

<https://www.usm.edu/community-public-health-sciences/mph-graduate-student-handbook>

*MPH Health Policy and Administration (Executive Format) Student Handbook*

<https://www.usm.edu/sites/default/files/groups/department-public-health/images/emphstudenthandbook.pdf>

<https://www.usm.edu/sites/default/files/groups/department-public-health/images/emphstudenthandbook.pdf>

*The competencies for core courses and each emphasis area can be found here:*

Epidemiology and Biostatistics

<https://www.usm.edu/community-public-health-sciences/mph-epidemiology-and-biostatistics>

Health Education

<https://www.usm.edu/community-public-health-sciences/mph-health-education>

Health Policy and Administration

<https://www.usm.edu/community-public-health-sciences/health-policy-and-administration>

Health Policy and Administration (Executive Format)

<https://www.usm.edu/community-public-health-sciences/master-public-health-executive-format>

**b) “appropriately integrated competencies into the EMPH practice experience.” (Criterion 2.7)**

After the CEPH accreditation site-visit, and with a focus on comments received, the EMPH practice experience was amended such that the Fieldwork program integrated the health policy and administration emphasis area competencies. The Fieldwork Program Guide (DPH 767) can be found in Appendix B, and can be accessed in an electronic format by clicking on the following link:

<https://www.usm.edu/sites/default/files/groups/department-public-health/images/dph767casestudyfieldworkguide-emphstudentsonly121.doc>

**c) “collected and assessed data on alumni perceptions of their ability to perform competencies in the workplace.” (Criterion 2.7)**

Data collected from cohorts graduating from Fall 2014 – Summer 2015 reflecting alumni’s perception of their ability to perform core (Table 1) and emphasis area competencies (Table 2-4) can be found in Appendix C. In summary, graduates from academic year 2014-15 (n=54) were surveyed via email to determine their perceptions of their abilities to perform core and emphasis area competencies after graduation. The response rate was 63.0% (n=34). Of the 34 respondents, 41.1% (n=14) were from the epidemiology and

biostatistics emphasis area, 26.5% (n=9) were from the health education emphasis area, and 32.4% (n=11) were from the health policy and administration emphasis.

When surveyed, students were asked to rate their competency level on a Likert-type scale ranging from 1-5 with 1 indicating that they felt extremely competent and 5 indicating that they felt extremely incompetent to perform the competency listed. More than 85% of students reported that they felt extremely competent (1) or somewhat competent (2) for all 10 competencies related to core courses in the MPH program.

Similarly, more than 85% of alumni in the epidemiology and biostatistics emphasis area reported that they were either extremely competent (1) or somewhat competent (2) in all 8 emphasis area competencies.

Ninety percent of all alumni in the health education emphasis area reported that they were extremely competent (1) in all 7 emphasis area competencies.

Approximately 82% of all alumni in the health policy and administration emphasis area reported that they were extremely competent (1) or somewhat competent (2) on all 8 emphasis area competencies.

**d) “consistently presented the curricular requirements for each joint degree program in program documents, including the university catalog.” (Criterion 2.11)**

After receiving comments on this item, the Accreditation and Evaluation committee petitioned the university catalog to include the curricular requirements for the joint degree programs described in the self-study document under Criterion 2.11. The university refers to these academic partnerships as “dual degree programs”.

It is important to note that when students graduate from this type of degree program, they are awarded two Masters degrees, one from our program (MPH) and another from the academic partner’s program participating in the dual degree. The two colleges within the University with which we currently have an academic partnership are the College of Arts and Letters, and the College of Business. Thus, students complete all requirements for the MPH curriculum as if they were a single degree-seeking student, while at the same time, they complete all requirements from the partnership college. To that end, they are completing two degrees simultaneously and are thus awarded two separate Masters level degrees.

The curricular requirements are presented in the MPH student handbook:

<https://www.usm.edu/community-public-health-sciences/mph-graduate-student-handbook> as well as in the official university graduate bulletin:

Masters in Public Health (Epidemiology and Biostatistics emphasis)/Masters in Anthropology Dual Degree

[http://catalog.usm.edu/preview\\_program.php?catoid=13&poid=6356&returnto=802](http://catalog.usm.edu/preview_program.php?catoid=13&poid=6356&returnto=802)

Masters in Public Health (Health Education emphasis)/ Masters in Anthropology Dual Degree

[http://catalog.usm.edu/preview\\_program.php?catoid=13&poid=6357&returnto=802](http://catalog.usm.edu/preview_program.php?catoid=13&poid=6357&returnto=802)

Masters in Public Health (Health Policy and Administration emphasis)/Masters in Business Administration Dual Degree

[http://catalog.usm.edu/preview\\_program.php?catoid=13&poid=6358&returnto=802](http://catalog.usm.edu/preview_program.php?catoid=13&poid=6358&returnto=802)

If additional information is required, please let us know and it will be provided promptly. As always, we greatly appreciate the continuing support from your organization.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Ray G. Newman". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Ray G. Newman, PhD, MPhil, MBA  
Chair and Professor