

INTEGRATIVE LEARNING EXPERIENCE (ILE) MANUAL (REV. 8/5/20)

Public Health Program
Master in Public Health

Ponce Health Sciences University



PHSU

PONCE HEALTH SCIENCES UNIVERSITY

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MASTER IN PUBLIC HEALTH: INTEGRATIVE LEARNING EXPERIENCE (ILE)

INTRODUCTION

The Integrative Learning Experience is an integrating experience, requisite for graduation in the Master in Public Health (MPH) of Ponce Health Sciences University (PHSU) and for the Council on Education for Public Health (CEPH). It provides an opportunity for students to reflect on, integrate and synthesize the knowledge and skills acquired during classroom and practice experiences, while pursuing their public health degree. The Integrative Learning Experience serves as evidence of compliance with the public health competencies and occurs after the majority of course requirements are completed. The Integrative Learning Experience is a high quality-written product that demonstrates synthesis of competencies (CEPH, personal communication, March 14, 2019; CEPH, personal communication, May 28, 2019). MPH graduates must be able to engage in substantive, logically flowing writing (<https://ceph.org/constituents/schools/faqs/2016criteriafaq/ile/>).

The Integrative Learning Experience approved by the Public Health Program of PHSU consists of a Comprehensive Exam, which will be described in the following sections of this manual. The Comprehensive Exam is taken during the last trimester of the expected graduation date.

The Public Health Integrative Learning Experience process consists of the following steps:

1. Complete general eligibility criteria required for registering in the Integrative Learning Experience.
2. Register for the Integrative Learning Experience.
3. Participate in the Integrative Learning Experience Orientation sessions.
4. Complete the evaluation requirements for the Integrative Learning Experience.

To complete the Public Health Integrative Learning Experience, the student must pass the overall Comprehensive Exam with a grade of C or higher ($\geq 70\%$).

INTEGRATIVE LEARNING EXPERIENCE COMPETENCIES

The foundational competencies addressed in the MPH's Integrative Learning Experience are based on traditional public health core knowledge areas (biostatistics, epidemiology, social and behavioral sciences, health services administration and environmental health sciences), cross-cutting and emerging public health areas (CEPH, *Accreditation Criteria: Schools of Public Health & Public Health Programs*, p. 17) and include:

- Evidence-based approaches to public health
- Public health & health care systems
- Planning & management to promote health

- Policy in public health
- Leadership
- Communication
- Interprofessional practice
- Systems thinking

Each area has detailed competencies established by the CEPH. In addition, each concentration (General, Environmental and Epidemiology) has specific competencies. The Public Health Program expects that the Integrative Learning Experience will be the occasion to integrate and synthesize these foundational and concentration competencies. Students should refer to Appendix A to identify the specific competencies to be addressed. In addition, a copy of the competencies is provided by the Integrative Learning Experience Coordinator to faculty and students during the Orientation Sessions. The list of competencies is also published on the **MPH _____ - Integrative Learning Experience's** area on the university's online platform and discussed during the Integrative Learning Experience Orientation Sessions. During the following sections, a detailed description of the Integrative Learning Experience will be provided.

INTEGRATIVE LEARNING EXPERIENCE COURSE PRE-REQUISITES

1. Students must be in good academic standing and have completed most of their coursework before proceeding to register for the Integrative Learning Experience. Students must complete 29 credits of core courses (first year) and at least 15 credits of concentration coursework.
2. Students either must have completed, waived, or are concurrently completing the Public Health Practicum in order to register for their comprehensive exam.

INTEGRATIVE LEARNING EXPERIENCE LEARNING OBJECTIVE

Upon successful completion of this course, students are expected to demonstrate the integration and synthesis of foundational and concentration competencies through a comprehensive exam.

INTEGRATIVE LEARNING EXPERIENCE REQUIREMENTS

This section describes the **MPH _____ - Integrative Learning Experience** course requirements approved by the Public Health Program of PHSU, which consists of a Comprehensive Exam. The Comprehensive Exam requires that students demonstrate mastery over foundational and concentration competencies. Students will prove the ability to integrate and synthesize competencies acquired in their academic program and to apply their knowledge to issues pertinent to the public health profession. The exam should reflect the students' ability to integrate information across the competencies. It is not a retesting of individual courses.

The exam consists of foundational and concentration competencies. It will be taken during the last trimester of the second MPH year.

INTEGRATIVE LEARNING EXPERIENCE TEACHING METHODS

The comprehensive exam is self-directed. Students are advised to establish a study schedule to perform well on the comprehensive examination. Review/preparation sessions may be held, at the availability and discretion of Public Health Program Faculty, only addressing key points of the competencies and not intending to be a duplication of all the coursework.

INTEGRATIVE LEARNING EXPERIENCE EVALUATION

The Comprehensive Exam will be administered via the Exam Soft platform at PHSU. Public Health Program Track Coordinators and Faculty will proctor the exam. Students will receive identifier numbers to preserve their identity during grading and reduce the possibility of bias. Seating charts will be used. Snacks, water and juice will be provided at no cost to students. The Exam Soft platform will run continuously until the programmed time ends, as specified in the itinerary of the exam. In addition, students will receive a manila envelope with six (6) sheets and two (2) pencils for personal notes, materials which need to be returned at the end of the exam. Students will also have access to a window in the Canvas and/or Moodle platforms to upload outputs or documents that cannot be uploaded in Exam Soft, if applicable. More specific Comprehensive Exam logistics will be distributed close to the exam date, as needed.

If during the academic year, there is an event of major significance or natural disaster, the Public Health Program reserves the right to choose between the possible and available alternatives at that moment to administer the Comprehensive Exam, which may include an electronic take-home exam (using the official PHSU software/platform for monitoring of academic integrity or hard copy exam only if no/limited electricity is available.

INTEGRATIVE LEARNING EXPERIENCE GRADING

The Integrative Learning Experience is graded on a *Pass/Fail* basis. All students are required to take and pass the overall Comprehensive Exam with a grade of 70%. Students who pass the overall exam and who complete all MPH requirements can graduate in June. Students who do not pass the first opportunity of the Comprehensive Exam have the opportunity for one retake, within the same trimester. This retake may contain different questions than the first Comprehensive Exam. Only one retake will be offered in the trimester.

Students who are not successful on either the first attempt or the retake within the same trimester will receive an INCOMPLETE GRADE and will NOT graduate in June. Students will have the opportunity for a second retake (all questions) during the first trimester of the next academic year. This second retake may contain different questions than the first Comprehensive Exam and retake.

In preparation for the second retake, students should study and review independently. In addition, the Public Health Program recommends the following study strategies, as applicable: meet with the professor(s); tutoring; auditing courses (paid by the student); and/or remedial work.

Students who pass the overall second Comprehensive Exam retake with 70% or better and who complete all MPH requirements can graduate in the next PHSU academic commencement ceremony. Students who obtain less than 70% overall exam in the second retake will not pass the course. Students will not be able to graduate with a No Pass on their transcript for this class and will be referred to the Student Promotions Committee. Depending on the recommendation of the Student Promotions Committee, students may need to register again in **MPH _____ - Integrative Learning Experience** during the next available trimester and may have only one last opportunity for a retake. This last opportunity may contain different questions than the previous exams. A flow chart of the retake policy can be found in Appendix B.

INTEGRATIVE LEARNING EXPERIENCE CALENDAR

Orientation and review sessions will be by arrangement, as per the availability of faculty. The schedule for the 2020-21 academic year can be found below:

TABLE 1: INTEGRATIVE LEARNING EXPERIENCE TENTATIVE CALENDAR
TBA = To be announced

TIMELINE	ACTIVITY	RESOURCE
MPH1		
Orientation Week	Brief overview of ILE and introduction to competencies	Dr. Brenda Soto MPH-ILE Coordinator
1st Trimester	Introduction to critical thinking skills and essay questions (August 18, 2020)	Dr. Elizabeth Rivera
	Writing skills seminar (September, TBA)	Guest speaker
	COE type questions in courses (Throughout the trimester)	Faculty
	Orientation Session(Description, Objectives and Competencies) (October 6, 2020)	Dr. Brenda Soto MPH-ILE Coordinator
2nd Trimester	Writing skills seminar (November)	Guest speaker
	COE type questions in courses (Throughout the trimester)	Faculty
3rd Trimester	Orientation Session (March 9, 2021)	MPH/DrPH ILE Coordinators
	Writing skills seminar (April, TBA)	Guest speaker

	COE type questions in courses (Throughout the trimester)	Faculty
MPH2		
1st Trimester	Critical thinking skills and essay questions (Refresher) (August 18, 2020)	Dr. Elizabeth Rivera
	Time management (September 8, 2020)	Dr. José Soto
	Stress management (October 13, 2020)	Dr. José Soto
	COE type questions in courses (Throughout the trimester)	Faculty
2nd Trimester	Orientation sessions (November 10, 2020 & January 19, 2021)	Dr. Brenda Soto MPH-ILE Coordinator
	Practice Session and Exam Soft Logistics (February 2, 2021)	MPH/DrPH ILE Coordinators; Educational Technologists-PHSU; Track Coordinators or Representative(s)
	Reviews (January – February, TBA)	Faculty (as per availability)
3rd Trimester	COE Administration (1 st week of the trimester) (February 26, 2021)	ILE Coordinators Track Coordinators Track Faculty
	Faculty submit COE grades to ILE Coordinators (March 12, 2021)	Track Faculty in Charge of Exam Questions
	Session to distribute grades (March 19, 2021)	Dr. Brenda Soto MPH-ILE Coordinator
	Retake Administration (if applicable) (March 26, 2021)	MPH/DrPH ILE Coordinators; Track Coordinators; Track Faculty
	Professors submit Retake grades to ILE Coordinators (April 9, 2021)	Track Faculty in Charge of Exam Questions
	Session to distribute grades (April 16, 2021)	Dr. Brenda Soto MPH-ILE Coordinator

	Evaluation of the COE process (May)	MPH/DrPH ILE Coordinators and Educational Technologists-PHSU
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The PHP reserves the right to make changes to the scheduled dates, if needed.

POLICY INFORMATION

MPH students are expected to follow policy guidelines in the areas of: ethics, timeliness, academic integrity, reasonable accommodation, and syllabus change.

ETHICS

Academic dishonesty and misconduct (cheating, plagiarism, etc.) will not be tolerated and will be dealt with according to university rules and regulations.

TIMELINESS

The Integrative Learning Experience Coordinator evaluates progress based on the approved timeline. All evaluations have a specific due date. Not complying with the assigned dates will affect the student's evaluation and the possibility of taking the Comprehensive Exam. If the student is going to miss an evaluation activity, he/she must contact the ILE Coordinator prior to the evaluation due date and supply documentation of reasons to the Office of Academic Affairs. If the student misses the first take of the exam, he/she will only be able to sit for the retake, as scheduled.

ACADEMIC INTEGRITY

Academic integrity, which is the pursuit of scholarly activity free from fraud and deception, is an educational expectation at PHSU. Dishonesty includes cheating on a test, falsifying data, misrepresenting the work of others as your own (plagiarism, or improper citation of sources), and helping another student cheat or plagiarize. For complete information about the Institution's policy on cheating, consult the PHSU *Student Policy Manual* and the PHSU *Catalog*.

REASONABLE ACCOMMODATION

PHSU acts in accordance with the *Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990*. It is the student's responsibility to initiate the process to request reasonable accommodation and must submit a written request to the Office of Academic Affairs. It is recommended that students make their arrangements at or before the beginning of the course. Reasonable accommodation procedures will follow the procedures established by the PHSU *Student Policy Manual* and the PHSU *Catalog*.

HANDBOOK AND SYLLABUS CHANGE POLICY

The handbook and the syllabus are course guides and are subject to change. The Public Health Program of Ponce Health Sciences University reserves the right to make changes to the handbook, syllabus and course information, as needed. Any change will be notified in advance.

In addition to the policy guidelines, there are diverse roles and responsibilities for the students and faculty involved in the Integrative Learning Experience. This will be discussed next.

ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

The Integrative Learning Experience is an educational experience where students, Track Coordinators, Track Faculty and the Integrative Learning Experience Coordinator interact. Each of these have different roles and responsibilities, as described in this section.

Integrative Learning Experience-related responsibilities for students include:

- Develop a study plan and study independently for the Comprehensive Exam.
- Identify, collect and organize all their class-related material, including but not limited to: Power Point presentations, books, handouts, epidemiology and biostatistics exercises/worksheets, etc. throughout their coursework.
- Attend the Integrative Learning Experience Orientation Sessions/Meetings to discuss logistics throughout the academic year.
- Be aware of the times and dates for the Comprehensive Exam and be present to take them as scheduled. These times/dates will be announced in advance.
- Meet with the MPH Integrative Learning Experience Coordinator to receive and discuss the grade.
- Review the *Integrative Learning Experience Manual* and the information posted on the university online platform.
- Complete the eligibility criteria to register in the Integrative Learning Experience.
- Failure to comply with some/all of these responsibilities may result in any of the following: receiving an *Incomplete* or a *No Pass* grade.

Other Integrative Learning Experience-related responsibilities include:

TABLE 2: OTHER INTEGRATIVE LEARNING EXPERIENCE-RELATED RESPONSIBILITIES

TIMELINE	TASK	RESOURCE
Orientation Week, MPH1 and MPH2	Orientation Sessions	MPH/DrPH ILE Coordinators
August-October	Preparation of Exam	Track Coordinators Track Faculty

1 st week of November	Track Coordinator submit the final COE version to ILE Coordinators	Track Coordinators
3 weeks before the administration of the exam	Uploading Exam	MPH/DrPH ILE Coordinators in coordination with the Educational Technologists- PHSU
3 weeks before the administration of the exam	Logistics and Preparation Session for COE	MPH/DrPH ILE Coordinators
2 weeks before the administration of the exam	Verification that all exam sections and items have been uploaded and are correct	Track Coordinators or Representative(s)
During pre-registration for the third trimester	Verification of eligibility for COE	Administrative Assistant
2 weeks after the administration of the exam	Grading of COE	Track Faculty in Charge of Exam Questions
3 weeks after the administration of the exam	Distribution of grades to students	MPH/DrPH ILE Coordinators
Depending on the academic calendar	Submission of student grades to Registrar	MPH/DrPH ILE Coordinators

ADDITIONAL REFERENCES AND RESOURCES:

Refer to the [MPH _____: Integrative Learning Experience](#) area on the university online platform for additional/updated information.

APPENDICES

APPENDIX A: MASTER IN PUBLIC HEALTH COMPETENCIES

Foundational MPH Competencies

EVIDENCE-BASED APPROACHES TO PUBLIC HEALTH

1. Apply epidemiological methods to the breadth of settings and situations in public health practice.
2. Select quantitative and qualitative data collection methods appropriate for a given public health context.
3. Analyze quantitative and qualitative data using biostatistics, informatics, computer-based programming and software, as appropriate.
4. Interpret results of data analysis for public health research, policy or practice.

PUBLIC HEALTH & HEALTH CARE SYSTEMS

5. Compare the organization, structure and function of health care, public health and regulatory systems across national and international settings.
6. Discuss the means by which structural bias, social inequities and racism undermine health and create challenges to achieving health equity at organizational, community and societal levels.

PLANNING & MANAGEMENT TO PROMOTE HEALTH

7. Assess population needs, assets and capacities that affect communities' health.
8. Apply awareness of cultural values and practices to the design or implementation of public health policies or programs.
9. Design a population-based policy, program, project or intervention.
10. Explain basic principles and tools of budget and resource management.
11. Select methods to evaluate public health programs.

POLICY IN PUBLIC HEALTH

12. Discuss multiple dimensions of the policy-making process, including the roles of ethics and evidence.
13. Propose strategies to identify stakeholders and build coalitions and partnerships for influencing public health outcomes.
14. Advocate for political, social or economic policies and programs that will improve health in diverse populations.
15. Evaluate policies for their impact on public health and health equity.

LEADERSHIP

16. Apply principles of leadership, governance and management, which include creating a vision, empowering others, fostering collaboration and guiding decision making.
17. Apply negotiation and mediation skills to address organizational or community challenges.

COMMUNICATION

18. Select communication strategies for different audiences and sectors.
19. Communicate audience-appropriate public health content, both in writing and through oral presentation.
20. Describe the importance of cultural competence in communicating public health content.

INTERPROFESSIONAL PRACTICE

21. Perform effectively on interprofessional teams.

SYSTEMS THINKING

22. Apply systems thinking tools to a public health issue.

General Track Competencies

1. Identify basic theories, concepts and models from a range of social and behavioral disciplines that are used in public health research and practice.
2. Analyze the role of social determinants in the onset, development and solution of public health problems.
3. Identify resources, methodologies and quantitative and qualitative application of research in public health.
4. Apply ethical principles to public health program planning, implementation and evaluation.
5. Analyze how principles of linguistic competence, cultural competency and health literacy apply in a public health situation.
6. Apply evidence-based principles and the scientific knowledge base to critical evaluation and decision-making in public health.

Environmental Health Competencies

1. Identify sources, means of exposure, and control methods for the principal chemical, physical and biological agents that affect human health.
2. Develop designs and interpret risk evaluations for human health.
3. Develop effective risk communication techniques.
4. Evaluate the impact of environmental intervention on human health.

5. Develop preventive measures and environmental control for public health.
6. Write reports related to field investigations.
7. Use appropriate statistical tools for each individual situation.
8. Establish pertinent recommendations after analyzing data of a research project.
9. Recognize environmental health problems as an indispensable component of public health.
10. Apply ethical and legal values in any public health investigation.

Epidemiology Competencies

1. Describe the methodology of basic epidemiologic study designs (e.g., cross-sectional, case-control, cohort, and randomized controlled trial) to address hypotheses under different circumstances.
2. Describe how to collect reliable data regarding priority health-related phenomena using public health surveillance systems.
3. Utilize the application of statistical and epidemiological methods that are critical to epidemiologic inquiry; manage and manipulate data sets in statistical and epidemiological analysis software packages.
4. Application of comprehensive knowledge of health needs of a population by the appropriate interpretation of indicators of risk, morbidity, disability, mortality and burden of diseases.
5. Apply critical thinking using epidemiological designs to explain exposures and potential associations that influence health and disease.
6. Recognize potential ethical and legal issues and implement the concepts of ethical conduct and legal principles of research in epidemiologic studies.

Appendix B: POLICY OF COMPREHENSIVE EXAM RETAKES

COMPREHENSIVE EXAM (COE) RETAKE POLICY (Rev. 051120)

