

MPH CURRICULUM

The adoption of the 2016 Criteria defined a competency-based approach as the foundation for the MPH curriculum, replacing a disciplinary-based, five core area approach.

Previous accreditation criteria required students to “complete sufficient coursework to attain depth and breadth in the five core areas of public health knowledge.” In practice, all units addressed this expectation by requiring at least one distinct course in each of the five knowledge areas. Units were also required to define a set of competencies that describe students’ knowledge and skills, including those related to the five core areas. The set of courses through which units provided this knowledge and skills was typically referred to as the “core curriculum.”

The 2016 Criteria define a set of 12 foundational learning objectives (“knowledge”) and 22 foundational competencies for the MPH, with no specific references to core areas or disciplines. This section focuses on the evolution and trends in the curriculum completed by all MPH students. For clarity and to align with the 2016 Criteria’s terminology, this report will use the term “foundational curriculum” to describe the curriculum completed by all MPH students to satisfy the accreditation requirements relating to foundational knowledge and competencies.

Accredited Units Included in Analysis

Information in this section is based on 184 MPH curricula from 180 accredited units,* constituting 93% of all accredited units that offer MPH degrees. This includes all units whose curriculum was reviewed by March 2020; these units had undergone a full accreditation review (n=43) or a paper review by the Council as a component of the compliance reporting process implemented for units whose next full reviews were more distant from criteria adoption (n=137).

Information for this section was drawn from three sources: 1) self-study documents and electronic resource files, 2) compliance report submissions and associated documentation, 3) websites and/or course catalogs accessed by CEPH staff between March and May 2020.

**Four units had different required curricula for different MPH modalities (e.g., online vs. on campus, part-time vs. full-time).*

OVERALL CURRICULUM DESIGN TRENDS & DEFINITIONS

Each of the 184 MPH curricula is classified into one of the three design categories listed below.

- Discrete courses in all 5 former core areas
- Introduction to public health course in some cases
- No other courses required of all MPH students

Curriculum A



- 3 to 5 discrete courses in former core areas, plus
 - At least one additional course (other than an introduction to public health) in a discipline outside the former core areas
 - OR
 - Additional course(s) in at least one former core area

Curriculum B



- 2 or fewer discrete courses in former core areas
- Remainder of curriculum includes disciplines outside the former core areas and/or courses that combine and fuse multiple former core areas and/or other disciplines

Curriculum C



NUMBER OF CURRICULA IN EACH DESIGN CATEGORY

Curriculum Design (n=184)	Total (n=184)	SPH (n=60)	PHP (n=124)
A	18 (10%)	9 (15%)	9 (10%)
B	145 (79%)	33 (58%)	112 (89%)
C	21 (11%)	18 (29%)	3 (1%)

CLASSIFICATION AND DEFINITION OF COURSES

For the purposes of categorizing curricula into design categories, courses were categorized according to their disciplinary orientation. Though most courses' disciplinary orientation is easily identifiable by title, course titles vary widely. For cases in which the disciplinary orientation was not obvious by course title, course descriptions and/or syllabi were reviewed.

REQUIRED COURSES ACROSS ALL CURRICULA



CURRICULA BY DESIGN CATEGORY

CURRICULUM DESIGN A

Ten percent of all accredited units have followed Curriculum Design A. Curriculum Design A retains the former five core area framework and modified the curriculum in these courses to incorporate the 12 foundational learning objectives and 22 foundational competencies. Curriculum Design A has five to six required courses for all MPH students: one discrete course identified with each of the five core areas, plus an introduction to public health course, in some cases.

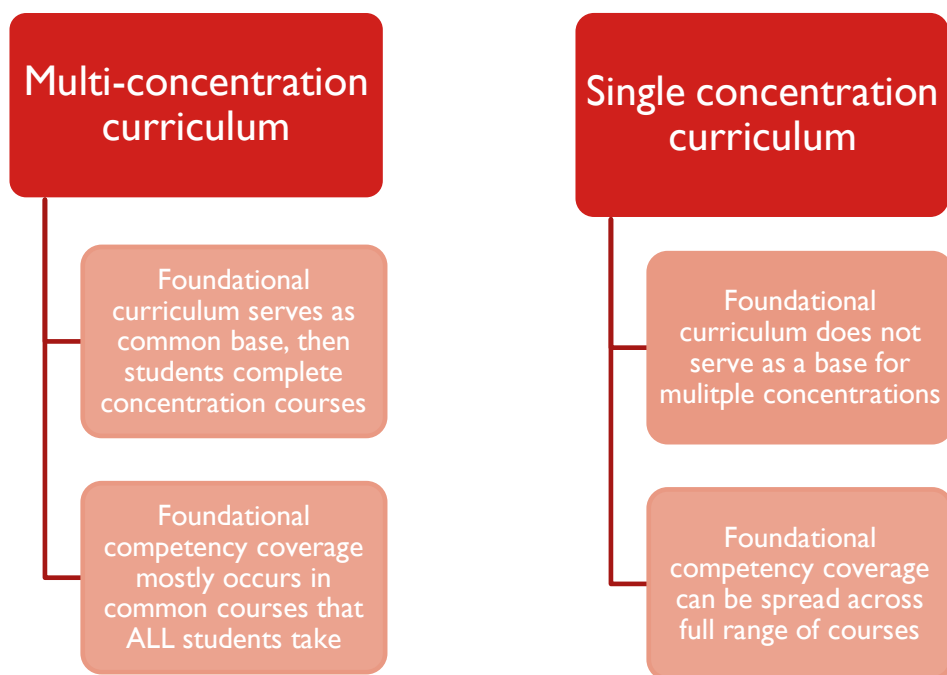
CURRICULUM DESIGN B

The majority of accredited units follow Curriculum Design B, retaining discrete courses in most or all of the former core disciplines AND adding one or more courses outside the former core disciplines, a second (or third) course in one of the former core disciplines, and/or a course that combines disciplines.

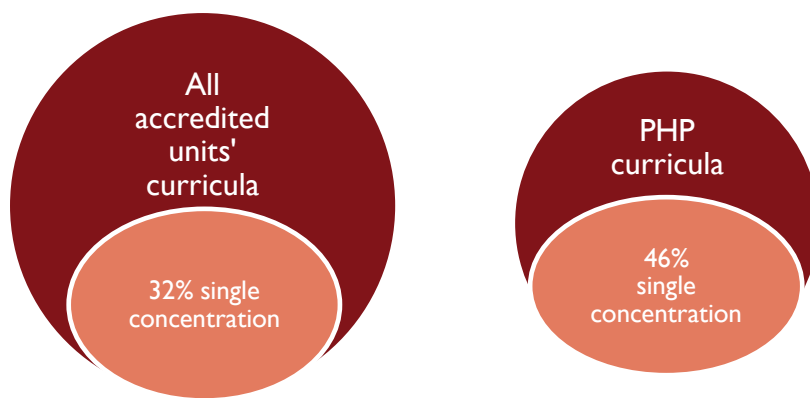
Curricula in this category have a median of eight required courses; as noted previously, courses are not all equal in credit. Units with higher numbers of required foundational courses generally do not weight all required courses equally, in terms of credit hours.

CURRICULUM DESIGN B AND SINGLE CONCENTRATION CURRICULA

Curriculum Design B is more prevalent in PHP than in SPH. This difference is largely attributable to the fact that single concentration curricula are more prevalent in PHP, and ALL single concentration curricula currently follow Curriculum Design B. Single concentration curricula typically blur the line between foundational classes and concentration classes, with few distinctions between courses designed to meet foundational competencies and courses designed to meet concentration competencies.



Nearly one-third of the curricula that CEPH accredits are single-concentration curricula. While most single concentration curricula are in PHP, some SPH offer a specialized curriculum without multiple concentrations for a particular population of students (e.g., online students), and these curricula are included in the single concentration count.



Single concentration curricula predominantly are offered as generalist degrees, followed by SBS, as noted below. See the [Background](#) document for a key to abbreviations.

Concentration	# of single concentration programs
General Public Health	33
SBS	13
Health Equity or Priority Populations (Urban Health, Hispanic Health, etc.)	7
Public Health Practice*	4
Global Health	2
Nutrition	1
HSA	1

* Category includes concentrations with the words “public health practice” in the concentration title.

COMMON COURSE ADDITIONS TO CURRICULUM DESIGN B

The defining characteristic of Curriculum Design B is adding required coursework beyond the five core area framework. The most common course additions are as follow:

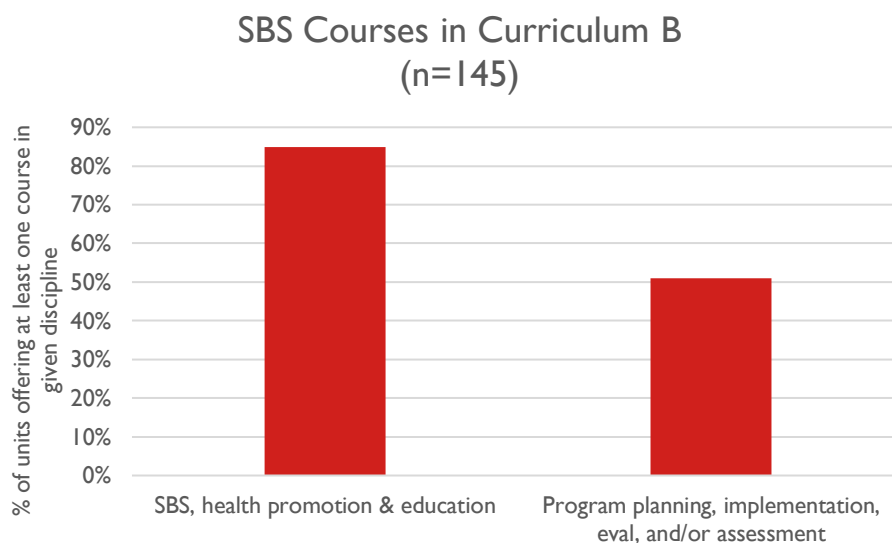
Course area	% curricula with at least one course
Program planning, implementation, &/or evaluation	51%
Research methods, qualitative and/or quantitative	50%
Introduction to public health	44%
Combined**	21%
Health equity or priority populations (urban, rural, Hispanic health)	19%
Public health law and/or ethics	17%
General seminar	14%
Communication	13%

**Combined courses have two or more unique disciplines rolled into one, e.g., Social, Environmental, and Structural Determinants of Health; Policy and the Environment; Leadership and Communication.

CURRICULUM DESIGN B AND COURSES IN THE FORMER CORE AREAS

Some units included in Curriculum Design B require multiple classes in one or more of the five core disciplines. SBS and HSA are the most common areas for multiple required courses.

The following graph provides information on the prevalence of SBS classes.



Sample course titles for SBS, health promotion & education category	Sample course titles for program planning, implementation, &/or evaluation category
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Health Behavior • Introduction to Behavioral Sciences • Human Disease and Health Promotion • Health Social Sciences • Social and Behavioral Dimensions of Public Health 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Public Health Community Needs & Solutions • Urban Community Health Assessment • Evaluating Public Health Initiatives • Planning, Implementation & Evaluation of Public Health Interventions • Design of Public Health Interventions • Monitoring and Evaluating Global Health Programs

HSA is also a common area for multiple required courses. The broad umbrella of HSA coursework includes some easily discernible and distinct sub-disciplines, but the categories are, by nature, fluid and sometimes difficult to distinguish. Some HSA courses focus on leadership and management techniques; others focus on policy analysis, policy making, and/or advocacy; some focus on healthcare delivery systems; and others fuse two or more of these emphases. 40 curricula (28% of Curriculum Design B) required more than one HSA course; 14 curricula (10% of Curriculum Design B) required three or more HSA courses.

EXAMPLES OF CURRICULUM DESIGN B

Unit 1: Multi-concentration
Principles of Environmental Health Sciences
Design & Analysis of Studies in the Health Sciences
Preventing Disease & Promoting Health Through Behavioral Science
Introduction to Health Care Organizations
Principles of Epidemiology

Unit 2: Multi-concentration
Biostatistics Methods
Principles of Epidemiology
Social and Behavioral Sciences
Environmental Health
US Health Care System
Qualitative Methods in Public Health

Unit 3: Single concentration
Introduction to Public Health
Epidemiology I
Biostatistics I
Biostatistics and Epidemiology Lab
Research Methods for Quantitative Studies
Research Methods for Qualitative Studies
Social and Behavioral Determinants of Health
Public Health Program Planning and Evaluation
Public Health Policies and Systems
Environmental and Occupational Health
Introduction to Global Health
Public Health Professional Development Seminar

Unit 4: Single concentration
Environmental Health
Biostatistics
Behavioral & Social Aspects of Public Health
Public Health System
Methods of Research in Public Health
Health Policy
Biological Aspects of Public Health
Management of Health Services Organizations
Community Health Analysis

Unit 5: Multi-concentration
Research Methods in Public Health
Social & Behavioral Theory & Applications in Public Health
Public Health Administration
Principles of Environmental Health
Biostatistics
Principles of Epidemiology

Unit 6: Multi-concentration
Introduction to Public Health
Quantitative Research Methods in Public Health
Qualitative Research Methods in Public Health
Social and Behavioral Sciences
Applied Statistics for Health Professions
Public Health Epidemiology
Environmental & Occupational Health
Health Administration, Service & Policy

Unit 7: Single concentration
Achieving Health Equity: from Individuals to Social Systems
Healthcare Systems & Public Health Policy
Research Methods & Design for Health Professionals
Environmental Health: Impact of Community Health
Introduction to Epidemiology
Introduction to Biostatistics
History, Theories & Core Functions of Public Health
Program Planning & Evaluation
Developing Leadership & Practice Skills for Program Evaluation

CURRICULUM DESIGN C

Curriculum Design C is roughly equally prevalent to Curriculum Design A overall, but Curriculum Design C is more common in SPH than in PHP. Just under one-third of SPH curricula follow Curriculum Design C. These curricula do not generally follow a disciplinary model based on the former five core areas. Curriculum Design C combines multiple public health disciplines and foundational competencies into each course.

Curricula in this category have a median of five required courses, with a range of one to 10 required courses, for a range of eight to 24 required semester credits.

COURSES THAT COMBINE DISCIPLINES AND COMPETENCIES

The bedrock of Curriculum Design C is combined courses that address multiple disciplines and competencies.

Sample titles of combined courses
Administration, Supervision & Consultation in Public Health
Evidence-based Methods in Public Health
Health Equity, Communication & Advocacy
Investigation & Control: Acute Public Health Events
Leadership & Teamwork
Public Health Interventions
Using & Creating Evidence in Public Health Practice
Leadership, Teams & Coalitions: Policy to Advocacy

DISCIPLINARY COURSES

In addition to the combined courses that constitute the bulk of the curriculum, these curricula may also include some courses like the disciplinary courses typically found in Curriculum Designs A and B. The following table presents the most common such courses:

Course	% of Curriculum C units offering ≥ 1 discrete course
Intro to Public Health	52% (11/21)
SBS*	48% (10/21)
BIOS	29% (6/21)
HSA	29% (6/21)

*Includes courses in SBS; health education; health promotion; and program planning, implementation, and/or evaluation.

EXAMPLES OF CURRICULUM DESIGN C

Example 1

Ethical Issues in Public Health

Mission & Practice of Global Health

Methodological Approaches to Understanding Population Health

Generating Evidence from Public Health OR
Theory of Biostatistics

Health Care Across the Life Course: From Policy to Practice I

Environmental and Biological Determinants of Health

Translating Evidence & Theory for Community Practice OR
Assessment, Intervention, Development, and Evaluation

Example 2

Foundations of Public Health

Analytic Methods in Public Health

Health Systems, Regulations & Policies

Community-based Methods in Public Health

Health Leadership & Management

Example 3

Ethics & Justice

Quantitative Skills

Leadership & Teamwork

Understanding Public Health Issues

Methods & Measures

Data Analysis for Public Health

Conceptualizing Public Health Solutions

Developing, Implementing & Evaluating Public Health Solutions