

ACCREDITATION - *MASTER IN PUBLIC HEALTH*

INTERNATIONALIZATION ADDITIONAL DIMENSION

30th November- 2014

Coordinator: Cristina López Rodríguez

Evidences: <https://portal.upf.edu/intranet/cquid-ciencies-de-la-salut/dimensions-adicionals>

1. Training Program for internationalization

Orientation and focus of the formative program

For several years, the steering committee of the Master in Public Health (MPH) program reviewed and updated the Study Plan in order to identify educational gaps and to adapt it to be most consistent with international accreditation standards in postgraduate Public Health education.

There were clear indications of the need of improving the program to ensure that students achieved the highest level of skills required for a good professional practice in the Public Health field. In this regard, the committee reviewed, among many others, relevant international proposals postgraduate educational initiatives, including the following:

- **Association of Schools of Public Health (ASPH)**
- **Association of Schools of Public Health in the European Region (ASPHER)**
- **Master's Degree in Public Health Core Competency** (Development Project, 2006 www.asph.org)
- **Council of Education in Public Health** (<http://www.ceph.org>)
- **Council on Linkages Between Academia and Public Health Practices, 2008** (www.asph.org)
- **Public Health Agency of Canada [PHAC]** (Core competencies of Public Health in Canada, 2007; www.phac-aspc.gc.ca)
- **Spanish Epidemiology Society** (<http://www.seepidemiologia.es/>)

Most of these initiatives share a very similar nuclear set of basic competences. These competences were identified, discussed and finally incorporated to program Study Plan, along with other specific modifications arising during the process. The result of this thorough review process led to the new Study Plan (2011-2013), which is currently active. It is indeed a very distinctive Plan when compared with those of similar programs in Spain.

A very remarkable consequence of the Study Plan of year 2011 was the move from a 1-year to a 2-year MPH program. This expansion was necessary to allow students achieving all the skills and competences required at the level desired. Only one academic year was just not enough, especially if we take into consideration that a vast majority of graduate students have a lack of relevant academic background in the PH field. This situation is similar to that faced by most MPH international post-graduate programs.

Another important change in the program was to include, for the first time, the Professional Training Activities. These activities are considered an important requirement by many leading educational institutions in several countries (in both the US and Europe). Professional practice training is not included in public health programs in Spain, so this is a distinctive feature of our MPH program.

Current content and duration of our program are well in consistency with international recommendations and make our program attractive for international students, and also for national students with an interest in an international career.

Since the implementation of the European Higher Education Area (known as well as the “Bologna Process”), a 3 + 2 years high education format (bachelor degree + master) exists in many European countries. As a consequence, most MPH programs last for 2 in Europe (in the United States of America too) and they offer a specialization after a more generic bachelor. This format allows continuing with PhD studies.

(See Evidences: Study Plan)

Languages of the MPH program

English proficiency is important because English is considered an official language of the program. A high proficiency (B2 level) is required to be admitted in the program. But students must also demonstrate a similar level of proficiency in Spanish. While most courses are offered in Spanish, most of the readings are in English and, in addition, up to six elective courses are offered in that language. Both Spanish and English are considered official languages in our program.

Some of the elective courses and one mandatory course of the Research track are taught entirely in English. Bibliography of both elective and non-elective subjects has most of their references to international authors and teachers provide additional material in English so students need to be familiar with the language. Therefore students use the language regularly in order to get all the information provided to follow lessons.

(See Evidences: Teaching Plan- Subjects in English)

It is important to notice that several of the reports from the Master’s Thesis are written in English to be sent to international journals to be considered for publication. It is compulsory for students to submit a summary of their master thesis in English.

(See Evidences: Master Thesis Guide)

Finally, the presence of international students entails the use of both languages in the classroom, Spanish and English; especially when students work together and do team works.

Students are allowed and encouraged to express their own ideas in both languages as well as to submit their projects and essays in English or Spanish whatever the subjects.

Other International Aspects of our Program:

Since the current Study Plan was set in 2011-2013, students obtain a subset of their educational credits in international public health institutions. Since 2014, 3 students are developing their Professional Training Activities (14 ECTS during the 2nd year) and their master thesis (30 ECTS during the 2nd year) in renowned institutions abroad (including SAW, Thailand, ECOSUR, Mexico and Guatemala)

(See Evidences: International Agreements)

It should be pointed out that a considerable number of training and research activities related to the master thesis are developed within international projects frameworks and in collaboration with international research consortiums. For instance, master thesis on social epidemiology and environmental epidemiology are carried out in institutions with an important international and relevant activity, as CREAL or the ASPB (leading public health institutions in Spain).

(See Evidences: Master thesis Partner Agencies)

An interesting indicator of the international relevance of the master theses of the students in our program is that the majority of them have been published as scientific papers in international peer-reviewed journals. Specifically, 60.5 % of the master thesis defended between 2007 and 2013 were subsequently published in scientific journals indexed in PubMed, part of them being edited outside Spain.

(See Evidences: Study Ex-Students MSP)

International Collaborative Programs:

Since the very beginning of its inception, the MPH program has held a close institutional relationship with the Johns Hopkins Bloomberg School of Public Health (JHU), Baltimore, MD, United States. Some of our program professors had been trained there and some of them hold joint positions with the famous American public health school.

Since 2003, the UPF, the JHU and the Barcelona Public Health Agency (ASPB) offer together the *Fall Institute in Health Policy*, which takes place in November in Barcelona. Our program Steering Committee and some teaching staff participate in the organization and the teaching activities of the Fall Institute. Such activities are offered for credit to JHU students. In addition, UPF MPH students may enroll in up to two courses, which credits are valid for our program.

Other International Collaborations:

In recent years the MPH has also collaborated with the Erasmus University of Rotterdam (Netherlands), which develops various masters programs relating to Public Health, one with the same name and directed by Professor Machenbach. Several teachers of the MPH collaborate scientifically in this program, especially Dr. Carme Borrell.

Mobility Programs:

Also noteworthy is an experience of international collaboration with high added value to our program in the field of mobility funded by the European Commission: the *ERACOL program*, established between European universities and three Latin American countries. (2010-2013).
(See Evidences: <http://erasmus-columbus.eu/>)

In Europe, the ERACOL Consortium has been formed by the Erasmus University Rotterdam, Karolinska Institutet in Sweden, Catholiques Universitet Leuven in Belgium and University of Torino in Italy, in Europe. In Latin America are involved Rosario University and the University of Cauca in Colombia, Latin University of Panama, University of Panama and the Central American University and the University of Costa Rica. As part of this mobility agreement, UPF received 20 students and allowed five Catalan students complement their studies with working experiences in Panama and Costa Rica.

Currently the MPH also participates in the 2nd phase of the *AESOP + program*, an Erasmus Mundus partnership between Europe and Africa, which next year will allow mobility in postgraduate education for South-African and European students. This program has been approved by the European Commission and will begin in the course 2015-2016. The MSP is included in the UPF- Academic Exchange Program offer.
(See Evidences: <http://www.aesoplus.eu/>)

International Studentship:

The MPH, as explicitly stated in the existing syllabus, aims to be an international program of excellence for training public health professionals. One of the most prominent elements of its international character is the consistently high number of international students that join the program every year.
(See evidences: *International Students Figures*).

The cumulative percentage between students of new admission since academic year 2007-2008 to the present is 33 %, a proportion that is somewhat in the rise in recent years. Foreign students come predominantly from South- and North-America, and, in smaller magnitude, from Europe, Africa and also from Asia.

Spain	226	67%
South America	67	20%
Europe	20	6%
USA and Canada	16	5%

Spain	226	67%
International	109	33%

Africa	4	1%
Asia	2	1%

(N: 335 students; Academic years: 2007-2014)

International Scholarship Programs:

Historically, the MPH has made a great effort to maintain partnership with international institutions that provide funding to master students such as the Spanish *Carolina Foundation* (2 scholarships annually), the *Ford Foundation* (1-2 scholarships per year), and the *Spanish Ministry of Foreign Affairs* co-operation (MAE- AECI). Very unfortunately, the financial crisis has had a strong impact on the educational and research fields and this collaboration has provisionally stopped. However, the proportion of international students was not lower than 40% during 2012-2013. Participation in mobility programs mentioned above also meant that up to 4 students from Colombia and Costa Rica could make full MPH during 2010-2011. For the course of 2015-2016 the program has regain international collaboration with two grants for Latin American students (PROBEPI- Mexico)

In addition, the UPF has historically offered between 2 and 3 scholarships for international students enrolled in the program, and currently offers 2 scholarships for first year student tuition.

Several public calls in Latin American countries also fund some students enrolled in the program: CONYCIT (Chile), CONACYT (Mexico), SENESCYT (Ecuador), among others. In this sense, one of the objectives for the future is to consolidate and expand cooperation with public institutions in these emerging countries where interest and demand for excellent training in public health are so important.

On the other hand, some of the partner institutions offer scholarships aimed at non-EU students. Specifically, the Health and Social Consortium of Catalonia has provided an average of 2 annual scholarships covering 66% of the total cost of tuition.

Finally, and from the loss of one of the most emblematic of the Master professors , in the 2013-2014 year the Program launched the *Manel Nebot* Scholarship, that covers all tuition and is also open to international students.

(See Evidence: *Table Scholarship*)

2. Faculty Internationalization

One factor that allows the MPH to maintain a high level of education , both in research and professionalization, is the collaboration with the best professionals in the country , in an area of knowledge -PH- in which Catalonia is a region leader in Europe. Our faculty includes several professors from abroad as well as visitors from international universities.

Regular Teachers	International Teachers	National Teachers from International Universities	Master Faculty
------------------	------------------------	---	----------------

8 (10%)	3 (4%)	80 (100%)
---------	--------	-----------

Although the number of national professors in our program is high compared with international, our faculty has a high level of international experience both in research and in teaching. More than a quarter (27%) of our professors completed their doctoral theses outside Spain. Almost half of the professors (45%) have professional experience in one international university.

(See the evidence: Teachers table)

Some of the universities where our international teachers have worked include:

- . *Royal Brompton, National Heart & Lung Institute, London, GB*
- . *Institute of Public Health, Göteborg, Sweden*
- . *The New England Epidemiology Institute, Tufts University, Boston, Massachusetts, USA*
- . *Universitete i Oslo, Oslo, Norway*
- . *Harvard University, Cambridge, Massachusetts, USA*
- . *University of California, Berkeley, USA*
- . *Johns Hopkins University School of Public Health, Baltimore, Maryland, USA*
- . *New England Medical Center, The Health Institute, Boston, Massachusetts, USA*
- . *University of Alberta, Alberta, Canada*
- . *University of Toronto, Toronto, Canada*

Nowadays, many of the teachers responsible for subjects are taking part in international research projects and networks. This contributes effectively to achieve the educational objectives of the Master Program.

Some of the international projects where Master teachers are involved are:

- *Global Allergy and Asthma European Network*
- *World Mental Health (WMH) Survey Consortium*
- *Towards Unity for Health (TUFH)*

Beyond the direct staff, our academic partners, those who supervise from their institutions the master theses and the professional training activities, have extensive international experience, as they are mostly top researchers in their work areas .

3. Internationalization Results

Reflecting the international nature of our program, in 2013 the AGAUR (the Catalan Agency for University and Research Grants) awarded the *Mention of International Master Program (IMP)* to our Master in Public Health program. This recognition is valid for two years and selects

those programs with a remarkable international projection and participation among the master programs in Catalonia.

(See evidence: Resolution Mention Award)

In addition, with the help of this recognition as an International Master's Program, the program is also working on its international accreditation, namely the one certified by the aforementioned Association of Schools of Public Health in the European Region (ASPHER). Now that content development is already established and that the new curriculum has been set, we intend to move forward in the design and international accreditation of program, in order to place the MPH among the best programs in Europe.

Since 2013, the Master Program in Public Health develops its own communication strategy. This strategy includes, for instance, dissemination through specific distribution networks in Latin America and Europe (for instance: the distribution lists of the Pan American Health Association (PAHO) and of the ERACOL consortium, as well as others in North America (ASPH and TUFH networks). Our main goal is trying to meet the growing demand of quality training in Public Health in some emerging countries. These areas are of particular interest to the MPH, since a large number of students come from South American Countries. This strategy is a result from the internal process of evaluation inside the UPF and the Monitoring Reports, which identified the need to develop a specific dissemination of the program.

(See Evidences: Communication Plan 2013-14)

Finally, it is worth to mentioning that one of the changes made that is having international impact is the passage of a part of the MSP (30 ECTS) into online training. This semi – presence format meets a real demand from many international students that contact and show their interest in the MPH. This format would become (apart from other logistical and access issues regarding international students), an additional element for the internalization of the program.

(See evidence: Teaching Plan Online Courses of Public Health Diploma)