

**ACADEMIC STANDARDS POLICY AND PROCEDURES
FOR MASTERS PROGRAMS**
TULANE UNIVERSITY SCHOOL OF PUBLIC HEALTH AND TROPICAL MEDICINE

Approved:

Executive Faculty: August 19, 2016

General Faculty: August 23, 2016

Student Enrollment in Graduate Degree Programs:

Students are accepted to and enrolled in a specified graduate degree program in one department (primary department).

- Students may take courses in any department and may complement their degree program with interdisciplinary study.
- Students may transfer to a program in another department if that department agrees to accept them into that degree program. The student must process a change of degree form and obtain signatures of the chair of the department and Associate Dean of Student Affairs.

SPHTM has combined (joint) degree programs with other schools within Tulane University and other universities (e.g., MD/MPH, MPH/MSW, BSPH/MPH). Combined degree students may be in only one SPHTM graduate degree program. In combined (joint degree) programs, courses taken in the other degree program that count toward the MPH are defined for each joint program, fulfill specific competencies and may not be substituted.

Students must be continuously enrolled in a degree program. Students who do not register each semester (not including summers) will have to be re-admitted to the school by the Director of Admissions to continue study toward their degrees.

Change in Requirements for Academic Programs: If program requirements change while a student is enrolled, the student may complete their degree under the requirements they entered. A student may voluntarily opt to complete their degree under the new requirements; however, all of the new program requirements must be fulfilled.

Time for Completion of Degrees:

Students enrolled in a professional master's degree program are required to complete the degree requirements within seven (7) years. Part time students or those with special circumstances may request an extension with a plan for completion to the Committee on Admissions and Academic Policy.

Students enrolled in a MS program must complete the degree requirements in five (5) years.

Tulane Course Credit Expiration:

For students applying for readmission to SPHTM, any course credits earned at Tulane more than ten years previously cannot be applied toward a SPHTM degree. While the credits may be more than ten years old by the time the student completes the SPHTM degree, they would still count toward the degree, provided the student has remained continuously enrolled in SPHTM.

Departments and schools may apply more restrictive rules in evaluating credits to be applied

toward a major or professional degree. Any exceptions to these rules regarding course credit expirations must be approved by the Senior Associate Dean of Tulane University's School of Public Health and Tropical Medicine.

Readmitting Students to Degree Programs

Students who are readmitted to a Master's degree program after leaving the School of Public Health and Tropical Medicine must satisfy the current degree requirements and not the degree requirements under which they originally enrolled. Students who are readmitted can apply applicable earned credit hours to their degree, provided that those credit hours have not expired (see "Tulane Course Credit Expiration" section above).

Advisors:

Each student is assigned a faculty advisor who will provide information on the degree and program requirements, advise the student about academic and professional issues, and monitor that all requirements including practicum and culminating experience are met prior to graduation.

- Students are expected to meet with their advisor at least once each semester.
- Students may change advisors with the agreement of another faculty to serve as their advisor.
- Students must inform the departmental administrator of the change in advisor.

Minimum Academic Standards to Graduate from SPHTM Master's Degree Programs:

To graduate from all SPHTM master's programs, a student must:

- Achieve an overall grade point average (GPA) of at least a 3.0 on a 4.0 point scale. GPAs below 3.0 cannot be rounded up.
- Not have a grade of C or lower in more than 2 courses
- Not have a grade of F in more than 1 course

Departmental faculties may establish more stringent standards for academic performance. These standards will be communicated to students in written departmental student guidance.

Academic Probation for SPHTM Master's Degree Programs:

Students who fail to maintain good academic standing will be placed on academic probation.

The Associate Dean of Student Affairs will place students on academic probation if a student:

- Has an overall GPA of less than 3.0 after attempting at least 12 credit hours, or
- Receives the grade of C or lower in 2 courses in one semester, or
- Receives one grade of F in one semester.

Students who receive a "C" or "F" may retake the course once. The original grade remains on the transcript and is included in calculating the overall GPA.

Please note that a "WF" is calculated as an "F" when determining a student's GPA and is considered as an "F" in probationary and dismissal decisions.

Terms of Probation:

The terms of probation will be determined by the departmental chair and academic advisor in consultation with the Associate Dean of Student Affairs. The terms of probation will be transmitted to the student in writing and a copy will be sent to the Office of Student Affairs no later than two weeks after delivery of the probation letter. Unless otherwise noted, students will have one semester to satisfy the terms of probation. If the student does not satisfy the terms of probation, they may be dismissed from the School.

Students will not be allowed to change degree programs or departments during a probationary semester unless both the chairs and academic advisors of the transferring and accepting departments/programs approve the change.

Additionally, students will not be allowed to enroll in a certificate program while on probation.

Finally, academic probation and any special conditions of probation will be noted in the student's academic record, with the following exception: probation occurs during the student's first semester, and the conditions of probation are met within the second semester.

Release from Probation:

The student's academic faculty advisor must notify the Associate Dean of Student Affairs if/when a student has satisfied the conditions of probation. The Associate Dean of Student Affairs will then officially release the student from academic probation and note the change of status in the student's academic record.

Academic Warning for SPHTM Master's Degree Programs:

Students whose semester GPA is less than 3.0, but overall GPA is above 3.0, will not be put on probation, but will receive a written warning.

Students whose overall GPA is less than 3.0, but who have attempted less than 12 credit hours will receive a written warning.

Students who receive a second grade of C or lower (after receiving one grade of C or lower in a previous semester) will not be put on probation, but will receive a written notice that they have reached maximal number of grades of C or lower allowed to graduate from SPHTM.

Dismissal from the School:

A student will be dismissed from the School if any one of the following occurs:

- A student receives two grades of F.
- A student receives three grades of C or lower.
- The terms of academic probation are not met.

Please note that a "WF" is calculated as an "F" when determining a student's GPA and is considered as an "F" in probationary and dismissal decisions.

Student Request for Review of Status or Dismissal

Any degree candidate enrolled and placed in jeopardy by these policies may request a review of status by their departmental faculty and the Committee on Admissions and Academic Policy. The procedure for a request of a review is:

- The student submits a written explanation of extenuating circumstances or other matters pertinent to the request for hearing to their advisors and/or department chair.
- The department may request a hearing with the student prior to submission to the Committee on Admissions and Academic Policy.
- If the department determines that the appeal has merit, the department will notify the student and the Senior Associate Dean for Academic Affairs in writing and request a hearing. If the department does not feel that the appeal deserves further consideration, it will so notify the Senior Associate Dean for Academic Affairs and the student in writing.
- If the department does not support the student's appeal, the student may send a written appeal to the Dean for Academic Affairs for consideration by the Committee on Admissions and Academic Policy.

The decision of the Committee on Admissions and Academic Policy shall be considered final.

Grading System

Grades are reported as follows:

A	4.00
A minus (A-)	3.67
B plus (B+)	3.33
B	3.00
B minus (B-)	2.67
C	2.00
F	0.00
WF	0.00
I (Incomplete) –	

Incomplete (I) Grades

A grade of "I" automatically becomes an "F" thirty days after the final examination date. An extension may be obtained with the permission of the instructor by officially filing for an extension with the Office of Student Affairs. Both the student and instructor must sign the extension form. It is the responsibility of the student to obtain the form and see that it has been filed properly. If an extension is granted, all incomplete grades must be completed by the end of the following semester of receiving the grade.

WITHDRAWAL FROM COURSES

- A. For Fall and Spring Semesters, students may drop a course without record approximately up to four weeks after the semester begins (please see official Academic Calendar for exact dates each semester and for applicable dates for the summer semesters).
- B. Students who drop a course between the last day to drop courses without record and the last day to drop a course will be assigned either a "W" or "WF" (please see official Academic Calendar for exact dates each semester). Note that a grade of "WF" is calculated into a student's overall GPA (as a zero), while a grade of "W" is not calculated into the overall GPA.
- C. Students cannot withdraw from a class after the last day for add/drop (please see official Academic Calendar for exact dates each semester). After this date, a regular/earned grade must be assigned by the instructor. For the School of Public Health and Tropical Medicine, the following can be assigned as a regular/earned grade: A, A-, B+, B, B-, C, F, WF.

Students who drop a course after the midterm examination will have WF recorded, unless there is a written request from the instructor justifying the recording of a W.

COURSE AUDIT

- A. Students may audit any course in the School of Public Health and Tropical Medicine that he/she is otherwise qualified to attend except under the following circumstances:
 1. the course has reached capacity with "for grade" students and/or
 2. the course is listed as "permission of the instructor required: and permission has not been granted," and/or
 3. the course is listed as "no audit permitted" in the registration materials and in the admissions office.
- B. Official course registration for audit is required. Approval of the advisor, tuition and fees and add/drop dates apply. No transfers from audit to credit will be permitted after add/drop date.
- C. There are no class work or attendance requirements.
- D. A student may take a course for credit any following semester after taking the course for audit, if qualified. This requires a second official registration and payment for the course.

- E. Students paying audit tuition and fees are entitled to copies of handouts, assignments and/or other class materials.
- F. Courses taken for Audit will not appear on the final transcript.

CORE REQUIREMENTS (Students Entering Prior to Fall , 2018)

With the exception of the academic degrees, MS and PhD, and the MHA, all degree programs offered by the School are considered professional degree programs subject to the entire core. A practicum and a culminating experience is a requirement for all professional students.

SPHTM requires that all students in professional programs complete the public health core requirements. The disciplinary areas for the core courses are mandated by the Council on Education and Public Health, the accrediting body for all schools of public health. The required core courses for SPHTM are:

BIOS 6030 – Introduction to Biostatistics	3 credits
EPID 6030 – Epidemiologic Methods	3 credits
GCHB 6030 – Social and Behavioral Aspects of Global Health	3 credits
GEHS 6030 – Survey of Environmental Health	3 credits
GHSD 6030 – Health Systems, Management, and Policy	3 credits

Student in the MPH, MSPH and MPH&TM are expected to have knowledge of basic public health biology. TRMD 6010 – Biological Basis of Disease (3 credits) is offered to provide this knowledge. Those without this background may take a challenge exam to assess if TRMD 6010 is needed. Some programs require student to take TRMD 6010 or pass the challenge exam. .

All students in professional degree programs must complete a Practicum and a separate Culminating Experience (See the Practicum Handbook and the Culminating Experience Handbook for details.)

Students who receive a failing grade (“F”) in a core course must retake and pass the course to graduate.

FOUNDATIONAL COURSE REQUIREMENTS (Students Entering Fall, 2018 and After)

In Fall, 2018, SPHTM has moved from the disciplinary core courses to the new Foundational Curriculum. All SPHTM professional degrees (MPH, MSPH, MPH&TM, DrPH) are required to complete the five course (15 credit) foundational curriculum, an Applied Practice Experience (APE) and Integrated Learning Experience (ILE). Professional degree students who entered prior to Fall, 2018 will take the core courses; student in the transition work with their advisor to accommodate this change.

Students must complete the following foundational curriculum within 1 year of matriculation:

- SPHL 6020 Foundations of Public Health (3)
- SPHL 6050 Biostatistics for Public Health (3)
- SPHL 6060 Epidemiology for Public Health (3)
- SPHL 6070 Health Systems Policy and Management (3)
- SPHL 6080 Design Strategies in Public Health Programs (3)

SPHL 6020 Foundations of Public Health is required for students in the academic degrees (MS, PhD and MSPH in Tropical Medicine) and the MHA.

All students in professional degree programs must complete an Applied Practice Experience (APE) and a separate Integrated Learning Experience (ILE) (See the Practicum Handbook and the Culminating Experience Handbook for details).

Students who receive a failing grade (“F”) in a core course must retake and pass the course to graduate.

PROCEDURE FOR WAIVING CORE COURSE REQUIREMENTS

All students receiving a degree from SPHTM must demonstrate competencies in the public health core areas. This knowledge is obtained by completing the SPHTM core courses or documenting achievement of the core competencies. The request for waiver must be made by each student for each core course. Blanket waivers for groups of students are not allowed under any circumstance.

For a core course to be waived, the student must demonstrate achievement of the core area competencies. The waiver of a core course can only be made by the department chair (or designee) where the core course resides. Demonstration of the competencies in order to waive a core course include either:

1. Completion of at least 3 credits of graduate coursework that has competencies comparable to SPHTM from a CEPH accredited school or program of public health with a grade of B or higher. (Graduate coursework in statistics from other universities may be able to suffice).
2. Pass a challenge exam demonstrating the competencies given by the department responsible for the core area.

Documentation of course work includes the course syllabus with the course competencies and a transcript showing completion of the course with a B or better grade. The departmental chair where the core course resides in consultation with the instructor/coordinator of the core course will review the content to determine if the SPHTM competencies are met. The department may require any student seeking to waive the core course to take a challenge exam. Students requesting a waiver based on undergraduate study may waive a basic 6030 core course by passing the challenge exam; students may be required to take another course in that core area to fulfill that core requirement.

The waiver of a core course does not reduce the total credits toward the degree. While the course may be waived, the credits required for the degree are not decreased. In some cases, a core course from another CEPH accredited institution may be officially transferred for credit (see section on transferring credit for details).

If the department chair in consultation with the faculty coordinator/ instructor of the core course approves the waiver, the student should process a CORE COURSE WAIVER FORM from the Office of Student Affairs and attach the supporting documentation. The form must be signed by the student’s advisor, the faculty coordinator/instructor of the core course, and the chair of the department in which the core course resides. Documentation supporting the waiver must be in the student’s official file in the Office of Student Affairs and a copy in the student’s departmental files. A student will not be allowed to graduate with incomplete documentation.

Waiver of Foundational Courses for Students Entering Fall, 2018 and After: To waive a Foundational course, students may take a challenge exam to demonstrate that knowledge. Consult the instructor of the foundational course for the challenge exam.

TRANSFER CREDITS

No more than 25 percent of the total required for the award of degree may be transferred into SPHTM. The individual SPHTM departments reserve the right not to accept the transfer of credit toward a SPHTM degree. Credits from non-traditional universities or universities that give credit for “life experience” are not eligible for transfer.

For a course to be eligible for transfer to SPHTM, a course must:

- Be taken at a regionally US Department of Education accredited 4-year college or university*
- Student received a grade of B or higher
- Must be graduate level
- Must not have been used towards any other degree
- Must directly relate to the degree program
- Completed course in the last 5 years
- Should be equivalent to a SPHTM course**
- Must be recommended by the student’s academic advisor and reviewed by the Office of Student Services

*Courses taken at universities outside of the United States must be evaluated by a transcript evaluation service (such as the World Education Service, “WES”). Educational systems in other countries may differ greatly from the US system and the course must be evaluated to determine if it is graduate level and the equivalent number of US credits.

**Tulane University requires that transfer courses are equivalent to an existing course. In special circumstances credit for courses directly relevant to the program of study, but not comparable to an existing SPHTM course, may be considered for transfer as elective credit with special permission and preapproval. Such courses will be entered on the student’s official transcript as a general course number and description “REGR 7940 – Transfer Coursework”. The course must meet all other transfer eligibility criteria.

Core courses (Students entering prior to Fall, 2018): The transfer of a core course is subject to the rules for the waiver of a core course for the credit to count toward the degree (see section above).

Foundational Courses (students entering Fall, 2018 and after): Because the wide variety of approaches to the Foundational Courses across CEPH accredited schools and programs of public health, students must take the Five Foundational Courses at Tulane SPHTM.

All transfer courses: The department chair and/or advisor evaluate and must approve each course requested for transfer and determine its direct relevance to the degree and identify an equivalent course within SPHTM. The department chair and/or advisor determine if the course may be used as a concentration/ program requirement or elective. Transfer courses with a Tulane equivalent are indicated as transferred from another university, with the equivalent Tulane course title will be documented in the academic record

Courses taken while enrolled in an undergraduate degree, cannot be counted towards graduate degrees, even if the course itself is designated as a graduate-level course. Credits in excess of requirements for an undergraduate degree may not be used toward a graduate degree, even if designated as a graduate level course. Graduate level courses taken after completion of an undergraduate degree are eligible for transfer according to the SPHTM transfer policy.

Transfer of credit for matriculating students: Students accepted into a master's program who have not yet matriculated may seek to transfer in prior graduate courses for degree credit, and seek related core course waiver, before matriculation. Approval of transfer credit and related core course waiver before matriculation will be a binding decision of SPHTM for one year. Any course transferred upon entering SPHTM must meet the same eligibility criteria for all transferred courses.

The procedures for transferring credit to be used toward the award of degree for matriculating students are:

1. The student must consult with their advisor on the course to be transferred. The advisor should coordinate with Student Affairs to complete a Pre-Matriculation Review of Transfer Credit and Core Course Waiver Form, and obtain from the student a copy of a transcript (the official transcript must be in the student file in the Office of Student Affairs), the course syllabus with topics, and learning objectives/competencies of the school where the course was taken.
2. Student Affairs will submit the form to the advisor and the departmental chairperson.
3. If the request is for a core course, Student Affairs will submit the form to the department responsible for that core course per the core course waiver policy.
4. Student Affairs will submit the form for final approval by the Associate Dean of Student Affairs and Admissions, and process the approval, if given.

Transfer of credit for enrolled students: Students should consult with their advisor prior to taking a course at another university with the intent of transferring credit toward their degree. It is the student's responsibility to ensure that the course meets the criteria for transfer and is applicable to their degree program. Transfer of credit is not automatic and not all courses may be accepted toward their program. If a student considers taking a core course at another university, s/he needs prior approval from the department responsible for that core course to ensure it could be transferred as a substitution of the SPHTM core course. Transfer of credit is not automatic and not all courses may be accepted as a substitution for a core course.

The procedures for transferring credit to be used toward the award of degree for enrolled students are:

1. The student must consult with their advisor on the course to be transferred. The advisor and departmental chair must approve the course for direct relevance to the degree.
2. The student must submit a Transfer Credit Form to the academic advisor along with a copy of a transcript (the official transcript must be in the student file in the Office of Student Affairs), the course syllabus with topics, learning objectives/competencies, and overall course description.
3. The advisor then submits the form to the departmental chairperson.
4. If the request is for a core course, the department responsible for that core course must review the course per the core course waiver policy.
5. The student submits the request for transfer with all approvals to the Office of Student Affairs for final review and processing.

NOTE: If transfer is for a core course, a Core Course Waiver Form must also be submitted.

Transfer Credit Expiration: No credit earned at another college or university more than ten years previously may be applied to a SPHTM degree. This rule would apply to the date when the credit is evaluated. While the credits may be more than ten years old by the time the student completes the SPHTM degree, they would still count toward the degree so long as the student had remained continuously enrolled at Tulane.

DEFINITION OF EDUCATIONAL EXPERIENCES CATEGORIES

- 1. Graduate Certificate (on-campus):** The graduate certificate is a 15-credit hour non-degree program of study for those enrolled in a SPHTM professional master's programs and is designed to provide a second area of study. Graduate certificates replace dual concentrations. Credits used toward a certificate may count toward the total credits required for the professional master's degree. The same course cannot count toward both the program requirements and certificate.
- 2. Professional Graduate Certificate (Distance Learning):** Professional graduate certificate are non-degree programs that require 15-18 credits of graduate level courses that may be used to qualify for professional certifications. The credits earned in a professional graduate certificate may be subsequently applied to the professional master's degree in the same program.
- 3. Combined Degree:** The sequential combination of the undergraduate BSPH degree with the graduate professional MPH, MSPH or MHA degree. Students in the BSPH/MPH, MSPH or MHA may take the SPHTM graduate core courses in their senior year which will apply to both degrees. The MHA has designated course that may count toward both degrees.
- 4. Course:** An organized unit of instruction with stated objectives taught in a formal classroom or laboratory setting for academic credit based on number of contact hours. One credit is equivalent to 15 contact hours in a classroom. Credits for laboratory work require a greater number of contact hours, usually 3 hours per credit. Foundation or introductory graduate level courses are listed in the 6000 series. The 7000 series indicate more advanced courses and usually require prerequisites. Courses in the 8000 series designate doctoral study.
- 5. Concentration:** A concentration (or program) is in-depth study in a specialty area of public health. The concentration/program has a defined curriculum with 18-21 credits of required that must be completed in addition to the school core courses, a practicum and culminating experience.
- 6. Culminating Experience (SPHL 7950):** All students in each professional master's degree must complete a culminating experience as a degree requirement. The culminating experience is designed to synthesize and integrate knowledge acquired through course work and other learning experiences and to apply theory and principles in an experience that approximates some aspect of professional practice. There are three options for the culminating experience: thesis, public health analysis, and comprehensive examination. Students in the SPHTM must register for the Culminating Experience and are allowed to enroll in the Culminating Experience for a maximum of four (4) semesters. (See guidance for Culminating Experience.) Culminating Experience may also be called an Integrated Learning Experience (ILE).
- 7. Dual Concentrations** - Two programs of study (concentrations) within the school. This required the completion of all required programmatic courses for both concentrations. Dual concentrations have been replaced by graduate certificate options.
- 8. Degrees:** SPHTM offers the MPH and MSPH, MPH&TM, and MHA professional degrees at the master's level and the ScD and DrPH at the doctoral level. The MS and PhD are academic degrees.
- 9. Dual (or joint) Degree** – simultaneous enrollment in two separate degrees from two different schools within the university (e.g, MD/MPH with the School of Medicine; MSW/MPH with the

School of Social Work.)

- 10. Program:** A program (or concentration) is in-depth study in a specialty area of public health. A program (concentration) has a defined curriculum with 18-21 credits of required courses, in addition to the school core courses, a practicum and culminating experience.
- 11. Dual Programs -** Two programs (concentrations) of study within the school. This required the completion of all required programmatic courses for both programs. Dual programs have been replaced by graduate certificate options.
- 12. Full time Student:** enrolled in 9 or more credits in a semester.
Part time Student: Enrolled in less than 9 credits in a semester.

Full and Part time status is determined by the number of credits in which a student is enrolled each semester and may change semester to semester. Full and part time status may affect financial aid.

- 13. Practicum (SPHL 9980) (0 credit):** All students in each professional degree must complete a practicum as a degree requirement. The Practicum (minimum 200 contact hours) is designed to provide students with the experience of working in actual settings directly related to their field of study. The practicum may not be waived. Those with prior work experience in the program area may do an advanced leadership practicum. Blanket waivers for a group of students are not allowed under any circumstance. Students in the SPHTM must register for the Practicum and are allowed to enroll in the Practicum for one semester; if the practicum takes longer, permission to register a second semester may be requested from the Associate Dean of Student Affairs with validation the practicum is ongoing.

See the Practicum Handbook for additional information and full details for the practicum, including the minimum criteria and roles and responsibilities of the student, preceptor and advisor. Your department or faculty advisor has examples of successful practicum projects.

14. Special (or Independent) Study (SPHL 7990 and SPHL 8990) (1-3 credits)

SPHL 7990 is the designation for a special (independent) study in a master's program.
SPHL 8990 is the designation for a special (independent) study in a doctoral program.

A special study or independent study is a one-on-one academic experience on a topic related to their degree program, allows for study on a topic not offered in a course, or more in-depth study in an area. The topic and activities are arranged and agreed upon by the student and their advisor. The instructor must have documented expertise in the topic. Adjunct faculty may assist with an independent study, but may not be the primary instructor.

.An independent or special study generally involves in-depth analysis of a specific issue and documentation of the findings. The special study is equivalent to a course and must meet the same rigor and degree of effort and time as a comparable credit course. A description of each special study agreement will be placed in the students' departmental files (through Terra Dotta). It must include the title of the special study, description of the type of work, the academic activity that will be undertaken, the student's learning objectives, a written product (e.g., paper or other format) and outcome measures and the method (rubric) the faculty member will use to evaluate the extent to which the objectives are met. In specifying the number of credits, the sponsoring department must determine the number of contact hours that would be necessary to complete an equivalent course taught through conventional means. A special / independent study is not described in the Courses of Instruction and does not require a course review document.

Independent Study course may be from 1 to 3 credits. A special / independent study is not described in the Courses of Instruction and does not require a course review document. A total of no more than 6 credits are allowed for master's programs and no more than 12 credits for doctoral programs may be earned in Special Studies. (See Independent Study Guidance for more details.)

15. Seminar (7000): An organized academic experience designed to expose students to current aspects of program topic areas through use of current literature or available experts. Seminars will be held in formally scheduled meetings which may be scheduled throughout an academic term or as short specialized courses. The department sponsoring a seminar will place in the department files a description of the content, materials or expertise used, and method of evaluating the learning outcome of each seminar it has conducted. Because of the specificity and currency of materials covered and/or use of outside expertise, a seminar need not be described in the Courses of Instruction nor undergo course review documentation.