

Academic Programs

GENERAL INFORMATION

Although the subjects dealt with in the programs described in this section are related, the educational objectives and academic requirements differ significantly among departments. While all departments offer master's level study, several also train doctoral candidates. Primary responsibility for developing the programs of study rests with the faculty, although student participation in curriculum planning and evaluation is considered essential.

Course Information

GENERAL

Courses are reviewed and new courses approved throughout each academic year. Courses are grouped in this Bulletin under department or program to provide a general guide to the perspective from which the course is taught.

The University reserves the right to withdraw, add to, or modify the courses of instruction or to change the instructors or scheduling at any time. Course requirements for programs provided in this Bulletin are suggested programs. Students, in consultation with their academic advisor supplemented by the department student handbook, select the courses that meet their needs. Therefore, the sample programs should be considered only as a guide.

KEY TO COURSE NUMBERS

Each course number consists of the capital letter "P" followed by four digits.

The first digit indicates the level of the course, as follows:

- 6 Master's level course
- 8 Advanced master's or doctoral level course
- 9 Doctoral level course or seminar

The second digit indicates the subject area of the course:

- 0 General public health
- 1 Biostatistics
- 3 Environmental health sciences
- 4 Epidemiology
- 5 Health policy and management
- 6 Population and family health
- 7 Sociomedical sciences
- 8 Global Health
- 9 Doctoral research

The last two digits identify that particular course.

TERM DESIGNATIONS

The academic year is divided into three terms, fall, spring, and summer. Fall and spring courses meet for 14 weeks, usually with one class meeting per week. The summer term is composed of two intensive summer sessions of six weeks each. In the fall and spring, a few courses are given for quarter (half-term) periods.

POINTS OF COURSE CREDIT

The number of points that a course carries appears after the title of the course in the sections that follow. Most courses carry 3 points.

TUTORIALS

Students may have an interest in an area or specific topic that is not addressed in the curriculum. A tutorial (independent study), which is a learning contract between a student and faculty member to explore an area of mutual concern, is intended to provide opportunities for specialized study. Tutorials are offered by every department and are available for 1 or more points per semester. Before registering for a tutorial, the student must first obtain the approval of the sponsoring faculty member.

Beginning with *Biostatistics* on page 31, this Bulletin contains a description of the total curriculum of each department/program. However, not all courses are given every year. The specific courses offered are listed in a course schedule prepared and distributed each term through the Office of Student Affairs (OSA) and can be found online by selecting "Student Affairs" on the School's home page.

REGISTRATION

After getting program approval from their academic advisor, and course permission from departments where appropriate, students register for Public Health courses by touch-tone telephone or online at the beginning of each term. Registration dates appear in the *Academic Calendar* in this Bulletin; the Office of Student Affairs will alert all students to any changes in these dates.

International students requiring student visas are required to pursue a full-time course of study during the academic year. For more information, visit <http://www.columbia.edu/cu/isso/admit> and <http://www.columbia.edu/cu/isso/incoming/>.

To comply with current and anticipated Internal Revenue Service mandates, Columbia University requires all students to report their Social Security number at the time of admission. Newly admitted students who do not have a Social Security number should obtain one well in advance of their first registration. International students should consult the International Students and Scholars Office, located at 524 Riverside Drive (212-854-3587), for further information.

Students who are not citizens of the United States and who need authorization for special billing of tuition and/or fees to foreign institutions, agencies, or sponsors should bring a copy of the sponsorship

letter to the Office of Student Administrative Services, 1-141 Black Building. Special billing authorization is required of students whose bills are to be sent to a third party for payment.

Cross-registration

Registration for courses taken in other schools of the University is done in person during the change-of-program period. School/instructor permission, as well as advisor approval, is required for each course. Completed cross-registration or program change forms must be brought to the Office of Student Administrative Services, 1-141 Black Building, during the change-of-program period. Courses taken at Teachers College (TC) will be charged at the TC tuition rate.

Students registered through other graduate schools of Columbia University must get permission of the instructor and the Dean of Students at MSPH by completing a Cross-Registration Form, available in OSA or online at <http://asp.cumc.columbia.edu/stuaf/stuaf2/download-form.asp>. **Cross-registration must be done in person during the change-of-program period.** Cross-registrants are limited to two courses per term. These courses may not be used as transfer credits toward a public health degree. Exceptions to this policy are (1) dual degree students who have previously registered in the School of Public Health; (2) Ph.D. students in Biostatistics, Environmental Health Sciences, Epidemiology, and Sociomedical Sciences; and (3) a student who has been given prior permission by the Dean of Students.

CHANGES IN PROGRAMS OF STUDY

After the change-of-program period, students will need approval from both their advisor and the Office of Student Affairs to drop courses. Approved forms must be brought to 1-141 Black Building to be processed. *Program changes must be made in person.* For individual courses dropped after the last day of the change-of-program period, no adjustment of tuition will be made. There is also a date in the *Academic Calendar* after which courses may not be dropped.

Failure to attend classes or unofficial notification to the instructor does not constitute dropping a course and will result in a grade of UW (unofficial withdrawal). Courses can be dropped only through the change-of-program procedure described above.

Grades

The School uses a letter grade system. Grades are: **A, B, C**, with + and - as applicable, **F, IN** (Incomplete), **R** (Registered), and **UW** (Unofficial Withdrawal). A pass/fail (**P/F**) grade option is available in some circumstances. Grades are defined as follows:

Excellent:

- A+** Reserved for highly exceptional achievement.
- A** Excellent. Outstanding achievement.
- A-** Excellent work, close to outstanding.

Good:

- B+** Very good. Solid achievement expected of most graduate students.
- B** Good. Acceptable achievement.

Fair:

- B-** Acceptable achievement, but below what is generally expected of graduate students.
- C+** Fair achievement, above minimally acceptable level.

Minimally Acceptable:

- C** Fair achievement, but only minimally acceptable.
- C-** Very low performance. The records of students receiving such grades are subject to review by the Academic Standards Committee.

Failure:

- F** Failure. Course usually may not be repeated unless it is a required course. When the course is required, the student will reregister and obtain a satisfactory grade. The previous grade remains on the transcript.

Registered:

- R** The grade of **R** (Registered) credit is automatically assigned for *Doctoral research instruction (P9980)* and is an option for auditing other courses. Except for *Doctoral research instruction*, courses graded **R** do not count toward the course points needed to meet degree requirements. All **R** credit courses require full tuition payment.

Incomplete IN and Unofficial Withdrawal UW:

There is no automatic grade of "Incomplete" (IN). *Students are expected to complete ALL course assignments and exams on schedule by the end of a semester.*

An Incomplete (**IN**) may be given only when a student has met the attendance requirement but certain course assignments have not been completed for reasons satisfactory to the instructor. The instructor may grant an extension, usually for a specified period of time, and usually not more than several weeks. Unless there is notification of change of grade from **IN** to a letter grade within one year from the end of the semester of registration, the **IN** will automatically be converted to Unofficial Withdrawal (**UW**), defined as "student did not complete attendance and/or assignments, but failed to withdraw."

Pass/Fail P/F Option:

Some courses, at the discretion of the instructor and according to course content, are graded only on a pass/fail (**P/F**) basis.

The **P/F** option may also be elected by students in a few selected courses (not to exceed 15 points total for M.P.H. students) with permission of the instructor and the student's advisor. This option was designed to permit students to register for credit in courses relevant to, but outside of, their area of study. **The pass/fail option is NOT available for core courses and is not allowed for required department track courses.**

In addition to the letter grade, qualitative forms of evaluation to assist the student in the learning process include the instructor's written or verbal comments on papers, exams, and presentations, dealing with the strengths and weaknesses of the performance, and suggestions for improvement.

REPORTING OF GRADES

Students may obtain their grades either by phone (212-854-7373), using the Personal Identification Number (PIN) assigned to them by the University, or online by accessing Student Services On-Line. Students' academic records are also available to the faculty advisors

for counseling purposes. Grades of **F** (Fail) or **IN** (Incomplete) are reported to the Academic Standards Committee of the School.

Grievance Procedure

Questions about a course grade should be discussed first with the course instructor and then with the program head or department Chair, if necessary. In the case of a serious unresolved disagreement between a student and instructor concerning grades, an ad hoc committee of three faculty members is appointed by the Dean of Students. The committee reviews the case with the instructor, and with the Dean when appropriate.

Academic Progress

Normally, full-time study for the M.P.H. or M.S. degree is completed in one and one-half to two years. Full- and part-time students are expected to complete all degree program requirements within five years.

As a general rule, good academic progress for a student taking coursework can be defined as completing no less than 9 points of coursework within a year. Progress of master's students engaged in completing a practicum or master's essay is determined by their academic department.

Doctoral students should review the academic standing policy on pages 21–22. The University allows seven years for completing a doctoral degree program. Students not registered for three or more terms lose their active student status. Before being allowed to register again, these students must contact the Office of Student Affairs for reinstatement. Students who have not registered for two or more years must complete an application for readmission before being allowed to continue their studies.

LEAVE OF ABSENCE/WITHDRAWAL

Master's students who have registered and have reason to withdraw or take a leave of absence must drop all courses and complete a Registration Withdrawal/Leave of Absence Form, available in OSA. Additional information can be found in the section Fees, Expenses, Billing on page 125.

Students not currently registered who will not be registering for more than three semesters must apply for a formal Leave of Absence. This can be accomplished by completing the Leave of Absence Form available in OSA.

REINSTATEMENT

Students who have not registered in more than three semesters (one calendar year) but in less than two years, must notify OSA during the semester before they intend to return for reinstatement.

Students who have taken a formal Leave of Absence must notify their department and OSA in the semester prior to returning.

READMISSION PROCEDURE

Students who have been on leave from or have outstanding degree requirements in a department of MSPH who wish to return to complete their studies after two or more years, must apply for readmission to MSPH. This can be accomplished by submitting (1) an Application for Readmission, (2) a Student Readmission Data Sheet, (3) a current résumé or CV, and (4) a personal statement describing why the leave was necessary and what current circumstances assure completion of their degree program. The student's academic record and readmissions material will be reviewed by OSA, the student's department, and the MSPH Admissions Committee. An interview may be required. Reinstatement may require that the student take new courses and meet updated academic requirements. An agreement to readmit a student must be unanimous between OSA and the student's academic department.

All forms mentioned in this section are available in the OSA or online at <http://asp.cumc.columbia.edu/stuaf/stuaf2/download-form.asp>.

ACADEMIC STANDING

Students are expected to maintain satisfactory academic standing at all times. A student's work in individual courses and in the program as a whole is reviewed regularly by the Dean of Students and the student's faculty advisor. As described earlier in this chapter under Grades, earning grades of B- or better is considered acceptable.

In cases where a student's academic standing is in question, he or she is sent written notification as follows:

Department approval to register—Students carrying two grades of IN, or a recent grade of UW, or a C in a core course, or two grades of C will be notified that they must discuss their academic progress with their advisor, and further registration will require the advisor's approval.

Dean's Hold—Students with three or more grades of IN, or one or more grades of F, or three or more grades of C will have their registration placed on Dean's Hold. In serious cases of unsatisfactory performance, a Dean's Hold may lead to dismissal from the School upon recommendation by the department and review by the Academic Standards Committee. Students placed on Dean's Hold may be permitted to continue study by meeting conditions specified by the department and receiving (1) formal written approval of the department and (2) approval by the School's Academic Standards Committee.

Doctoral students will be reviewed within their departments regarding their academic standing and will be notified of unsatisfactory performance.

Honor Code

In 1978, the School adopted an Honor Code relating to student/faculty responsibilities in assuring academic integrity. Copies of the

Honor Code are distributed to all new students upon acceptance to the School and again when they first register, and are available at all times in the Office of Student Affairs.

The code describes the School's standards for coursework, assignments, and examinations. In all academic work, students must submit original material only; provide proper citations when paraphrasing or quoting from other sources; and discuss with the instructor in advance any plan to depart from these standards—for example, seeking editorial assistance or submitting the same or similar material used to meet requirements for another course.

The Honor Code is reviewed periodically by an ad hoc committee composed of faculty, staff, and students. The work of this committee is reported to the School community.

Public health practice and research require the highest degree of responsibility and integrity. Violations of the Honor Code are viewed very seriously by the School.

Requests for Transcripts and Certifications

The amended Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA) of 1974 prohibits release of educational records without the written consent of the student (for certain exceptions and further restrictions, consult *FACETS*, the University student handbook, <http://www.columbia.edu/cu/facets/>). You may obtain an official transcript of your academic record at Columbia University by writing to Student Administrative Services, Columbia University, Room 141, Black Building, Unit 45, 650 West 168th Street, New York, NY 10032, Attention: Transcripts.

Please include the following information with your request: current and former names; Social Security number; schools attended and dates of attendance; degrees awarded and dates awarded; number of transcripts desired and complete address for each; your current address and telephone number; and your signature authorizing the release of your transcript. You may also order transcripts in person at Room 141 of the Black Building on the Columbia University Medical Center campus (9 a.m.–4:30 p.m., Monday–Friday). Currently enrolled students may order transcripts for themselves and for colleges and universities via the Student Services page on the World Wide Web at <http://www.columbia.edu/cu/students/>. There is no charge for issuing transcripts; however, all students pay a one-time transcript fee of \$45 upon their first registration at the University. The normal processing time for transcripts is two to three business days. If you mail in your request for a transcript, you should allow several additional days for delivery to and from the University.

Currently enrolled students may order certifications of their enrollment and degrees in person or on the Student Services page on the Web as described above. Certifications are provided while you wait if you come to the Black Building to request them. There is no charge for certifications.

The Registrar's Office no longer handles requests by non-current students, by alumni, or by third parties. Their requests should be made either by calling the National Student Clearinghouse: 703-742-4200; by e-mailing: degreeverify@studentclearinghouse.org; or by mail: National Student Clearinghouse, 13454 Sunrise Valley Drive, Suite 300, Herndon, VA 20171.

Graduation

DEGREE APPLICATION

Degrees are awarded three times a year—in October, February, and May. A candidate for a Public Health degree must file an application, which requires the signature of his/her academic advisor. The application form is available from the Office of Student Affairs. Before submitting the application, students should conduct a degree audit with their academic advisor using the graduation checklist as a guide. The last day to file for each degree is:

August 1—October degree

December 1—February degree

February 1—May degree

Applications received *after* these dates will not be considered for that conferral date.

If the student is unable to complete degree requirements by the conferral date for which he or she has made application, the student must file another application. Additionally, students who previously filed and did not graduate must meet all requirements before application for graduation will be accepted.

GRADUATION CEREMONIES

The University and the School hold Commencement exercises in May for all those who have earned their degrees during the current academic year. In early spring, all the October and February graduates, and all students anticipating a May degree, will be sent information directly in preparation for these events. Because many students are unable to return for Commencement, the School hosts a Closing Ceremony for October and February graduation candidates at the end of the fall semester.