**Master in Public Health (MPH)**

*(Edited from the Proposal Brief submitted to the School of Graduate and Postdoctoral Studies. The full Brief is available upon request.)*

The proposed Master of Public Health (MPH) is an inter-faculty professional degree that is awarded for studies in areas related to public health. The MPH degree focuses on public health practice.

The proposed MPH degree will be offered as a one year full time program. The curriculum is aligned with the guidelines for MPH programs defined by the PHAC, PCPHN, ASPH and CEPH, and is designed to meet the international standards for graduate level public health training. The aim is to prepare public health practitioners, leaders and change agents who will be able to synthesize the knowledge and skills from a variety of disciplines to define, critically assess, evaluate and address public health concerns. The graduates will have a common educational grounding that will enable them to work effectively with a broad spectrum of public health issues such as prevention sciences, global health, social determinants of health, health promotion and behaviour, and health policy, management and equity, among others related to public health.

The Schulich School of Medicine & Dentistry at Western University has a long tradition of excellence, beginning with the founding of the medical school in 1881 and dental school in 1964. Schulich School of Medicine and Dentistry's reputation has been built by dedicated teachers, breakthrough discoveries, commitment to social responsibility and strong strategic partnerships. As such, the new strategic plan sets out a transformative vision for the Schulich School of Medicine & Dentistry which includes the following six strategic directions:

1. Create knowledge in the science of healthy and successful development and aging across the life span;
2. Strengthen knowledge translation to achieve health benefits for individuals and populations;
3. Become a destination choice for exceptional education and learning;
4. Develop sustainable partnerships, networks and global initiatives;
5. Lead in programs that foster the growth and success of faculty and staff; and
6. Enhance communications and profile for greater impact.

The successful launch of the MPH Program has been identified as a key milestone in the Strategic Direction #3. Hence the program is directly tied with the current strategic plan for the Schulich School of Medicine & Dentistry. Furthermore the expansion of the Schulich Interfaculty Program in Public Health to a PhD program in public health by 2021 has been identified as a long term key milestone for Strategic Direction #3. Hence, there is commitment of long term support for the program within the Schulich School of Medicine & Dentistry.

***Goals and Objectives of the Program in Relation to the Graduate Degree Level Expectations***

The overall goal of the program is to provide an academically rigorous graduate level public health education to health practitioners, managers, researchers and others engaged in public health which will prepare them as future leaders in public health at national and international levels. The MPH Program is designed to fill a novel niche at the intersection of leadership, sustainability and policy within the Canadian Health Care System as well as more globally.

Specifically, as an outcome of program learning the graduates will:

1. Demonstrate a special set of skills to better understand and assess health problems of communities, groups (particularly the marginalized) within communities and populations. In addition be able to deliver, manage and lead in developing appropriate interventions and solutions;
2. Contextualize the relationships to better understand and utilize research results as evidence for their decision making and actions;
3. Synthesize appropriate knowledge for development of policy and planning, promoting and protecting health and health equity for sustaining health security of communities;

4. Critically analyze the collaborative team building and networking roles of different partners in fostering program planning, community service delivery and capacity building;
5. Compare previous assumptions and analyzing their own increased awareness of health as a public good and basic right for all among communities and populations;
6. Strategize the means to disseminate information that is both relevant and meaningful to groups, communities, and policy makers;
7. Critically apply public health knowledge, skills, within the ethical values and strengths of local communities as well as at, national and global levels;
8. Acquire a system thinking approach to address complex public health problems; and
9. Develop leadership capacity to assist others in partnerships to address and overcome challenges to public health of communities, groups, and societies.

**a) Depth and Breadth of Knowledge**

With courses drawn from five core areas, the program is designed to provide students with a breadth of knowledge across areas that are critical to a deep understanding of public health practice. The focus of the program will be on:

- Organization of health services around people's needs and expectations
- Integrating health into all sectors
- Pursuing collaborative models of policy dialogue
- Increasing stakeholder participation
- Reducing exclusion and social disparities in health.

**b) Research and Scholarship (as appropriate for a professional master's)**

This is a professional program, but all courses will be taught by faculty who are active researchers in relevant fields. The coursework has been designed to provide graduates with the ability to undertake critical evaluation of current and advanced research in the discipline(s) required for professional competence. Courses are also designed to ensure graduates will be able to develop sustained written analysis and argument, as well as the application of research methods to resolve problems faced by public health practitioners. The students will undergo a supervised 12 week practicum in the field, which will provide them the opportunity to apply the knowledge and skills acquired during their training to real life scenarios and issues.

**c) Level of Application of Knowledge**

The mix of courses from highly analytic disciplines is specifically designed to provide students with the ability to apply existing analytical tools from those disciplines to analyze new questions and issues which arise in their regular professional activities. Graduates of the program will be able to apply the knowledge in the field of public health both at national and international levels, as advisors, managers and leaders in public health, through collaboration, coordination and partnership with relevant stakeholders.

**d) Professional Capacity/Autonomy**

The breadth of coursework required is designed to give graduates the confidence to make critical decisions in highly complex situations, such as those required in risk management as well as those required to assess systemic risk. The case method of learning will provide the students greater opportunities to share and participate in the discussions on public health issues with colleagues and peers, which will lead to greater confidence and awareness. The practicum will enable the students to focus on specific public health issues they deem important and to use the knowledge they acquired during the first two terms to address those issues. The students will learn to make critical public health decisions individually and, where needed, in coordination with stakeholders. The coursework will also emphasize the importance of behaviour consistent with both legal and ethical guidelines in public health.

**e) Level of Communication Skills**

The inclusion of courses in Health Communication will enhance the students' communication skills, enabling them to communicate with professionals, stakeholders and policy makers. The inter-disciplinary nature of the courses will enable students to develop the skills and terminology to communicate with professionals from a range of disciplines, facilitating their professionalization and broadening their career scope. Students will have an opportunity to practice their enhanced communication skills through faculty led case discussions, course specific projects as well as the practicum project.

**f) Awareness of Limits of Knowledge**

Public health is a multi-sectorial approach to improving community health. This involves separate actors trying to work together who do not necessarily know and/or understand the different strengths and weaknesses of each actor. At times there can be conflicting principals, ethos, priorities, knowledge and practices to solve public health issues. It is a challenge to bring together the different agents of change and meld practices to achieve a common goal of improving public health. A "one size fits all" approach is not beneficial when trying to enact change in multiple communities. Additionally, financial limitations can hinder the resources available to enact change. Students will confront the limitations and constraints of working in public health in real life cases studied in the classroom and then again during their practicum. In such settings they will be required to seek appropriate evidence and adopt innovative approaches to, decision making and problem resolution.

***Evidence to Support the Introduction of the Program***

Despite medical and technological advancements, the health of Canadian and world populations is not necessarily improving; the uptake and integration of these benefits are not reaching the communities that need it the most. Consequently health disparities among certain groups, populations and nations are increasing rather than decreasing. According to the Public Health Agency of Canada[1] there is a need for highly skilled public health professionals. Globally, 57 countries are facing a critical deficit of skilled health works. Nationally, there is a distinct shortage of public health providers in First Nations communities. Moreover, a significant proportion of practitioners working in public health do not have specialized training in public health. There is a need for individuals to be trained to address issues such as demographic changes, globalization and new threats to health and security. The health care system focuses mainly on treating *individuals* while public health targets entire *communities and populations*. There is a need for trained professionals who can bridge the gap between disciplines to provide the building blocks for effective public health practice.

The Schulich School of Medicine & Dentistry is a world renowned medical school and has been in existence for 131 years. As such there is the expertise at Western University to launch a world class MPH Program. Within Canada 15 universities offer a Master of Public Health. Of these 15 universities none of them offer a 12 month case method of learning professional program in public health. The proposed program provides a unique opportunity for Western University to serve a vital role in developing human resource capacities that will address key public health problems both at a national and global level. The program can be linked to existing health related degree programs such as but not limited to MD, Nursing, Family Medicine, and Health & Rehab Sciences. It will serve as a stepping stone for future expansion in public health education such as research based MPH in specialized areas of health. Therefore, there is a unique target market for this program. The program will focus on a wide spectrum of health related professionals who are seeking to acquire knowledge and accreditation to be recognized as lead individuals in health that contributes to improving people's health and equity, and thus empowers communities. These individuals desire to be agents of change at local, national and international levels.

[1] Core Competencies for Public Health in Canada, Release1.0. 2008. Public Health Agency of Canada (http://www.phac-aspc.gc.ca/php-psp/ccph-cesp/pdfs/cc-manual-eng090407.pdf).

***Special Matters and Innovative Features***

The MPH Program will be an interdisciplinary, interfaculty program with the support of the following Faculties: Education, Engineering, Information & Media Studies, Health Sciences, Ivey, Law, Science, Social Science and Brescia University College. The program will prepare students to address main public health challenges in Canada and abroad, thus opening avenues and opportunities for the students to serve not just in their local communities, but also contribute and lead in national and global public health initiatives as the change agents. International cases are embedded in each course and the practicum locations include international countries (in particular Africa), Aboriginal reserves across Canada as well as Southwestern Ontario.

The interfaculty nature of the program aims at introducing the students to public health research and knowledge through content specific to and experienced teachers in the different disciplines of public health. They will be exposed to the significance and value of the various disciplines in public health and their respective roles in public health. At the same time students will gain understanding how best to address the public health issues through research analysis, informed understanding and evidence. Truly novel is our approach *within* most of our courses to synthesize interdisciplinary definitions of public health problems, theories of causation, methods to study public health problems and approaches to intervene. The interdisciplinary teaching groups formed for each course help to ensure that the syllabi for courses reflect synthetic knowledge. Integrative workshops every six weeks throughout the first two terms and the month long integrative capstone course, Transforming Public Health, will further help students to synthesize interdisciplinary knowledge and practices.

Another unique feature is that the program will use primarily an interactive case method of learning (described under delivery method below); thus anchoring this program in an application context between theory and practice. Finally, the intersection of leadership, sustainability and policy within the public health domain specifically prepares students for the future of public health in Canada as well as internationally.

***Accreditation of the Professional Program***

The Schulich Interfaculty MPH Program will also strive to obtain accreditation from the Council for Education in Public Health (CEPH). CEPH is an independent agency recognized by the US Department of Education to accredit schools of public health and public health programs offered in settings other than schools of public health. This accreditation is necessary in establishing the MPH Program as a reputable, leading edge program in Canada. At present only two other Canadian universities have obtained CEPH accreditation; these being Simon Fraser University and Université de Montréal with the University of Alberta in the process of obtaining its CEPH accreditation.

***Delivery Method of the Professional Program***

The Schulich Interfaculty MPH Program will be a one year, case method of learning program offered on a full time basis on campus.

Case method of learning is not about textbooks and lectures, it is about the student being an active part of the learning experience; that means learning by doing. Cases are written from the perspective of a decision maker in a particular scenario (a sample Ivey case "*We Have a Terrible Tragedy Here (A)*" has been included as Exhibit 1).[2] The student takes on the role of the decision maker when preparing the case for class. Using the assigned readings for the class and knowledge from their own experiences, each student tackles an individual assessment of the case and crafting a plan of action. The second review of the case occurs when students meet with their learning team and new ideas and strategies emerge. The learning teams are pre-assigned teams ideally with 6 team members and intentionally

[2] Permission to include the Ivey case "*We Have a Terrible Tragedy Here (A)*" has been granted by Ivey Publishing with the understanding that the case not be circulated or reproduced beyond the reviewing committee.

formed for diversity of education and experience within each group. Students benefit from this diversity and collective experience of their team members. Learning teams allow for interdisciplinary learning to occur at multiple levels. After prepping a case for a course individually, the student will be able to discuss and debate the case within their team to allow for a broader and deeper understanding of the different issues and possible solutions. Learning teams will also be used for group projects and exercises. In the second term, learning teams will be reformed to ensure students benefit from multiple cultures, experiences and knowledge. The third examination of the case is in the classroom where the Professor will facilitate the class discussion intertwining the three threads of leadership, sustainability and policy.

Scheduling of classes will vary from a typical university graduate course where classes follow the pattern of the same time and day of the week. Instead, using the Ivey School of Business as a model, students will attend three back to back 90-minute classes each morning/afternoon of the week (15 classes per week). With each half course comprising 30 classes, a dynamic timetable is created for the term. This will allow for greater flexibility in accommodating faculty member's teaching load in their home unit. The class schedule, assignment questions and readings for each class are part of the syllabus for each course and available online. Students will use the syllabus to help prepare for the case discussions and prepare within their learning teams.

To help facilitate the transition of faculty members from traditional lecture classes to case method teaching, a number of workshops have been scheduled. The first is tentatively scheduled for December 2012 to address case method teaching. A second workshop series has tentatively been scheduled for April 2013. During this workshop case teaching as well as case writing will be delivered. If there is a need, an additional series of workshops will be held in early July 2013.

While the first offering in September 2013 will not have either off-campus or on-line classes, the expectation is that as the Program grows, blended onsite and distant learning as well as other alternative learning methods will be offered. The facility currently being built to house the program is planned accordingly. The Schulich School of Medicine & Dentistry has gained expertise with remote learning through its experience with the Windsor campus.

## PROGRAM REGULATIONS AND COURSES

### *The Intellectual Development and The Educational Experience of The Student*

This will be an intensive and rigorous academic program for students. The case method of learning will facilitate student/faculty interaction as class participation is a major factor in the success of this teaching methodology. In addition, students will be assigned learning teams. It is expected that students will benefit greatly from their participation with their learning teams to develop a deeper understanding of the cases assigned for each class. During the final term students will take part in a 12 week practicum (see below). In addition a number of integrative workshops and seminars will be planned throughout the academic year.

### Integrative Workshops

Approximately every six weeks, the MPH program will offer full day Integrative Workshops for all students and associated faculty. The main objective of these workshops is to pause to reflect on the learning in the past six weeks, to integrate and synthesize interdisciplinary knowledge and practices learned in the various courses, and to apply them to a particular hot issue in public health (e.g. climate change and public health; water safety, resurgence of measles, bioterrorism). The case method of learning will be augmented by real time team-based simulations during the workshops. The topics will be chosen to complement rather than duplicate the cases being used in the courses, and will reflect the expanded expertise on campus beyond the course faculty members. The integrative workshops are considered part of the Transforming Public Health course and thus participation in the workshops will be included in the evaluation process.

### Seminars

International renowned scholars and practitioners will be invited to speak to the students and affiliated faculty approximately three times per term. This provides opportunities for the students to interact and

exchange views with a diverse group of experts with different experiences in different settings. The objective is to strengthen the knowledge being provided to the students through the course work with opportunities to share and discuss the experience of different stakeholders and experts. This will facilitate and emphasize the notion of interdisciplinary approaches in public health. While the seminars will not have credits attributed to them, they will be mandatory for the students to attend.

***Recruitment Methods***

Applications will be accepted via the online application system (Ontario University Application Centre – OUAC) used by Western University. To recruit applicants, the program will develop a website and recruiting pamphlets and posters and distribute these materials to the targeted audiences. These materials will describe the MPH Program, emphasizing its distinctive interdisciplinary features, international focus as well as the case method of learning. Once the program has graduated its first cohort, the materials will also include testimonials from former students.

The MPH Manger will liaise with the School of Graduate and Postdoctoral Studies staff engaged in recruiting efforts as well as with graduate chairs and department chairs in the participating Faculties. The Schulich Graduate and Postdoctoral Office will also promote the program at a number of graduate fairs that they attend throughout the academic year. In addition a request to Western Alumni to include an announcement of the launch of the new program in the Alumni Newsletter will be put forward. The program will also engage the Communications Department in the Schulich School of Medicine & Dentistry to employ a marketing strategy to competitively position the program in the Canadian and international market.

***Admission Timeline***

The MPH Program will set an application deadline of February 1st of each year. OUAC will remain open and if the class is not filled the MPH Program will continue to process applications until such time as it reaches capacity of 60 eligible students. It is anticipated that offer letters will be sent out to students by March 1st of each year. Students will be encouraged to apply before the deadline to avoid a time management issue in processing applications.

***Admission Requirements***

The MPH Program will admit health sciences professionals who desire advancement in their knowledge in public health and/or who are preparing for leadership roles within public health. The ideal candidate will have one of several backgrounds; we will strive for maximum diversity in the cohort of students. Both health related education and health related experience are important eligibility criteria. We are interested in candidates with the following profiles:

1. Individual who has earned at least a four year undergraduate degree in a health related field (from an accredited Canadian university or equivalent) and three years of health related work experience (i.e.; health promotion, health geography, health journalism);
2. Registered or licensed health practitioner who has earned at least a four year undergraduate health degree (from an accredited Canadian university or equivalent) and at least two years of health related work experience (i.e., medical resident post PGY2).

All candidates must also meet the following admission criteria:

1. Must have a minimum average of B+ (78% or higher) on the last 10 full courses or 20 half-courses completed (approximately 2 years of full-time study);
2. Successfully completed an undergraduate statistics course with a 75% (Canadian equivalency) and/or GRE with the last five years is recommended; and
3. Proof of registration or licensure from relevant regulatory organization if applying as a health practitioner.
4. Interviews in person or via Skype may also be conducted to ensure fit between the student and the rigorous academic program

Additionally, international students must meet English language fluency requirements as outlined below.

**English Language Proficiency**
Applicants whose first language is not English must furnish evidence of their proficiency in the use of the English language by a satisfactory achievement within the last two years in one of the following:

- The Test of English as a Foreign Language (TOEFL). The minimum acceptable score is 86, with no individual score below 20 for the internet based version; 213 for the standard electronic version; or 550 for the paper and pencil version, although some programs require a higher minimum score. [Western's TOEFL ID is **0984**].
- The International English Language Testing Service (IELTS) of the British Council. The minimum acceptable score is 6 out of 9. The IELTS is offered in 6 test centres in the US and 3 in Canada.
- The Michigan English Language Assessment Battery (MELAB) of the University of Michigan. Students must have at least 80 on each of the sections and an overall score of at least 85. Arrangements to write MELAB may be made online.
- The Canadian Academic English Language Assessment (CAEL Assessment). The minimum acceptable score is 60. The CAEL Assessment is offered in several countries throughout the world as well as Canada.
- Fanshawe College's ESL Program. The requirement is graduation from Level 5, Advanced Academic Preparation, with a minimum 80% in all components.

Students who are required to present evidence of proficiency in English must make their own arrangements to write the TOEFL, IELTS, MELAB or CAEL and to have the official results sent directly to the School of Graduate and Postdoctoral Studies by the testing agency. Those graduates from Level 5 of the Fanshawe College ESL Program must provide official proof of graduation.

***Exemptions***
Other formal evidence of graduate level proficiency in English may be considered in lieu of these test scores. Students must contact the MPH Program in order to determine if test scores will not be required. A decision for exemption will then be made at the discretion of the School of Graduate and Postdoctoral Studies.

***Degree Requirements***

**Master of Public Health**
The Master of Public Health is a 3 term (12 month) program.

**Course Requirements**
All students will complete the same course requirements of 15 courses (equivalent to 8 full credits, course descriptions follow). The equivalent of six half credits will be taught in each of the Fall and Winter terms. During the last academic term, students will take their final classroom course (Transforming Public Health) and their practicum course (see below). Transforming Public Health will synthesize prior learning and have each student focus on a specific project to affect change in a particular public health setting. Transforming Public Health will be a condensed course taught in the first month of the Summer term in preparation for the practicum placement.

In order to meet CEPH guidelines the program is required to deliver a minimum of 540 teaching hours.

The current course proposal is equivalent to 630 teaching hours which results in 22.5 hours of weekly classroom hours.

1. Epidemiology (*half course*)
2. Biostatistics (*half course*)
3. Environmental Health & Sustainability (*half course*)
4. Health Promotion (*half course*)
5. Social Cultural Determinants of Health (*half course*)
6. Aboriginal Health (*half course*)
7. Health Policy and Equity (*half course*)
8. Planning and Managing for Health (*half course*)

9. Community Health (*half course*)
10. Community Health Assessment & Program Evaluation (*quarter course*)
11. Applied Research and Knowledge Translation (*half course*)
12. Leading People and Organizations in Public Health (*half course*)
13. Health Communications (*quarter course*)
14. Transforming Public Health (full course)
15. Practicum (full course)

**Sample Timetable**

| Term 1 (Fall) | Term 2 (Winter) | Term 3 (Summer) |
|---|---|---|
| 1. Epidemiology<br>2. Biostatistics<br>3. Environment Health & Sustainability<br>4. Health Promotion<br>5. Social Cultural Determinants of Health<br>6. Health Policy and Equity | 1. Aboriginal Health<br>2. Planning & Managing for Health<br>3. Community Health<br>4a. Community Health Assessment & Program Evaluation<br>4b. Health Communications<br>5. Applied Research and Knowledge Translation<br>6. Leading People and Organizations in Public Health | 1. Transforming Public Health<br>2. Practicum |

The goal is to deliver the foundational courses focusing on knowledge and comprehension in the Fall term and those with a focus on knowledge application, analysis and synthesis in the in the Winter term.

Significant consideration has been given towards the heavy academic load, the dynamic scheduling of classes and balancing the integrative workshops and seminars. During the first two academic terms the equivalent of six half courses will be taught. Each half course is equivalent to thirty 90-minute classes. Each term will require 180 90-minute classes in order to successfully deliver the six courses. During each term there is capacity for a minimum of 222 90-minute classes. Hence there is capacity in each term to host the integrative workshops and seminars. During the third academic term, the Transforming Public Health course will be delivered during the month of May (equivalent to an intercession course 60 90-minute classes) and the practicum will take place from June-August.

***Progression Requirements***

Students will be evaluated in a number of areas. Case method of learning relies heavily on class participation. Hence all courses will have a class participation component as well as a combination of exams, reports and/or projects. Students must maintain a cumulative average of at least 70% calculated each term over all courses taken for credit, with no grade less than 60%.

To ensure success in the program, the MPH Program plans to have a two “progress meetings” per term with the teaching faculty to identify any student who might be having difficulty with any aspect of the program. Students will be provided with feedback mid-term for each course on their class contribution as well as mid-term grades. Students who are struggling to meet expectations will meet with their faculty mentor to ensure the student receives guidance on how to succeed and successfully complete the program.

In its initial offering, the MPH Program will only be offered on a full-time basis. The only status change available to students is the request to withdraw from the program.

***All Graduate Courses to be Offered in the Program***

The MPH Program uses a professional case method of learning. As such, students will not be given any flexibility in the courses that they are able to take. A preset course plan will be developed and students will be admitted as a cohort and complete their courses as a cohort. All courses are required and will be offered during the first two academic terms of the program except for the practicum and Transforming Public Health which will take place during the third semester.

**TABLE 4** - **Graduate Courses to be offered by the Program**

Listed below are the positions that will teach the courses. Until due process under the Faculty Collective Agreement has been followed, the Program will refrain from listing the individuals.

| Course Catalog Number | Course Title | Faculty member(s) expected to teach the course | Frequency of Course |
|---|---|---|---|
| MPH | Epidemiology (half course) | Faculty member appointed by the **Epidemiology & Biostatistics Department** | annually |
| MPH | Biostatistics (half course) | Faculty member appointed by the **Epidemiology & Biostatistics Department** | annually |
| MPH | Environmental Health & Sustainability (half course) | **Environmental Health & Sustainability** position | annually |
| MPH | Health Promotion (half course) | **Health Promotion** position | annually |
| MPH | Social Cultural Determinants of Health (half course) | **Aboriginal Health & Marginalized Communities** position | annually |
| MPH | Aboriginal Health (half course) | **Aboriginal Health & Marginalized Communities** position | annually |
| MPH | Health Policy and Equity (half course) | **Health Law & Policy** position | annually |
| MPH | Planning & Managing for Health (half course) | **Health Services Planning and Management** position | annually |
| MPH | Community Health (half course) | **Health Promotion** position | annually |
| MPH | Community Health Assessment & Program Evaluation (quarter course) | **Health Promotion** position | annually |
| MPH | Applied Research and Knowledge Translation (half course) | **Knowledge Translation** position | annually |
| MPH | Leading People and Organizations in Public Health (half course) | **Health Systems Leadership** position | annually |
| MPH | Health Communications (quarter course) | **Knowledge Translation** position | annually |
| MPH | Transforming Public Health | **Health Systems Leadership** position | annually |
| MPH | Practicum | **Knowledge Translation** position | annually |

The MPH Program may have some courses that seemingly appear to overlap with some existing courses that are being delivered within different Faculties at Western University, for example; Health Promotion. The objectives of the courses offered in MPH are based on specific guidelines for graduate level public

health education (both Canadian and International). These guidelines outline a set of core competencies that MPH students must acquire to graduate. The MPH course is therefore specifically designed to meet those requirements. Additionally, the MPH courses will be delivered through the "case method of learning", this is a completely different style of teaching and hence would not overlap with similar programs offered by other faculties.