

## Program-Level Assessment: Annual Report

Program Name (no acronyms): Public Health Studies

Department: N/A

Degree or Certificate Level: PhD

College/School: College for Public Health and Social Justice

Date (Month/Year): October 2023

Assessment Contact: Travis Loux

In what year was the data upon which this report is based collected?

AY 2022-23

In what year was the program's assessment plan most recently reviewed/updated?

2018

Is this program accredited by an external program/disciplinary/specialized accrediting organization or subject to state/licensure requirements?

**Yes, Council on Education for Public Health (CEPH)**

If yes, please share how this affects the program's assessment process (e.g., number of learning outcomes assessed, mandated exams or other assessment methods, schedule or timing of assessment, etc.):

**CPHSJ completed self-study and re-accreditation in AY2022-23. CEPH reviewed and approved the doctoral core competencies and their assessments.**

### 1. Student Learning Outcomes

Which of the program's student learning outcomes were assessed in this annual assessment cycle? (Please provide the complete list of the program's learning outcome statements and **bold** the SLOs assessed in this cycle.)

Domain 1: Critical Thinking. Critically evaluate, integrate and challenge existing scientific knowledge. Assess gaps in research to develop research questions.

Domain 2: Analytical Skills. Plan, design and conduct research studies. Interpret the results using inferential statistical methods and methods of qualitative data analysis.

**Domain 3: Communication. Communicate clearly and effectively about scientific information for diverse audiences through scientific publications, grant applications, teaching/ training, etc. Develop partnerships in community, clinic, academic and/or governmental settings to conduct research projects collaboratively.**

**Domain 4: Collaboration. Work collaboratively to conduct research and provide peer review to colleagues.**

**\*\*Note the program has modified domain 4 since the 2018 assessment plan.\*\***

Domain 5: Ethics and Professionalism. Adopt and apply ethical principles for public health research and decisions on social justice and equity in the global environment. Conduct research that requires Institutional Review Board approval.

Domain 6: Community/Cultural Orientation. Evaluate the impact of cultural, structural, legal, political, and public health and social justice on health outcomes.

Domain 7: Translation and Dissemination. Use innovative methods to communicate scientific findings and implications to diverse audiences, ensuring appropriate strategies.

## 2. Assessment Methods: Artifacts of Student Learning

Which artifacts of student learning were used to determine if students achieved the outcome(s)? Please describe the artifacts in detail, identify the course(s) in which they were collected, and if they are from program majors/graduates and/or other students. Clarify if any such courses were offered a) online, b) at the Madrid campus, or c) at any other off-campus location.

Domain 3 (communication) is assessed through oral and written presentations throughout the program:

- PHS 6050 Final project presentation (1<sup>st</sup> year students) [On Program Evaluation Plan but course no longer assesses this domain]
- PHS 6060 Grant proposal (2<sup>nd</sup> year students)
- Comprehensive written exam (2<sup>nd</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> year students)
- Oral PhD Exam (3<sup>rd</sup>+ year students)
- Dissertation defense (4<sup>th</sup>+ year students)

Domain 4 (collaboration) is assessed in three courses:

- PHS 6040 students collaborate on research project (1<sup>st</sup> year)
- PHS 6050 students provide feedback/ informal peer review to classmate projects (1<sup>st</sup> year)
- PHS 6900 formal peer review of classmates' manuscripts (2<sup>nd</sup> year)

All courses in the doctoral program are offered in-person only. Oral exams and defenses are usually in person but can occur on Zoom at the student's request.

## 3. Assessment Methods: Evaluation Process

What process was used to evaluate the artifacts of student learning, and by whom? Please identify the tools(s) (e.g., a rubric) used in the process and **include them in/with this report document** (please do not just refer to the assessment plan).

Course-related assessments are done by the course instructor.

The comprehensive written exam is assessed by a panel of 2-3 faculty members per student.

The oral PhD exam is assessed by the student's doctoral committee plus up to two at large members (total of 5 faculty).

The dissertation defense is assessed by the student's doctoral committee (at least 3 faculty).

## 4. Data/Results

What were the results of the assessment of the learning outcome(s)? Please be specific. Does achievement differ by teaching modality (e.g., online vs. face-to-face) or on-ground location (e.g., STL campus, Madrid campus, other off-campus site)?

Domain 3 (communication):

- PHS 6050 Final project presentation: *Due to recent course-competency realignment, this domain is no longer assessed in this course.*
- PHS 6060 Grant proposal: 1-9 NIH style scores are no longer given, but all students received at least 90% on grant proposal assignment.
- Comprehensive written exam: 8 of 10 students passed the comprehensive exam
- Oral PhD Exam: 8 of 8 students passed the oral exam
- Dissertation defense: 5 of 5 students passed the defense

Domain 4 (collaboration) is assessed in three courses:

- PHS 6040 students collaborate on research project: Average project score 100%
- PHS 6050 students provide feedback/ informal peer review to classmate projects: Average score 100%
- PHS 6900 formal peer review of classmates' manuscripts: 9 of 9 students successfully completed peer review

5. Findings: Interpretations & Conclusions

What have you learned from these results? What does the data tell you? Address both a) learning gaps and possible curricular or pedagogical remedies, and b) strengths of curriculum and pedagogy.

While the comprehensive exam score met the stated goal of 80% pass, it was borderline. We should consider expectations and grading consistency across faculty members.

6. Closing the Loop: Dissemination and Use of Current Assessment Findings

A. When and how did your program faculty share and discuss the results and findings from this cycle of assessment?

Results were shared with the Doctoral Steering Committee in October 2023. We noted changes in program learning objectives since the assessment plan was developed and the need to update the program assessment plan. This will include tighter links between competencies and formal, explicit assessments as some assessments don't target the competency uniquely. We also noted the passing rate of the oral exam as the one low point. We have already implemented a grading committee that will grade all exams in hopes of more clarity regarding expectations and standards. The committee took effect with the fall 2023 exams and will meet to discuss grading prior to the spring 2024 exams.

B. How specifically have you decided to use these findings to improve teaching and learning in your program? For example, perhaps you've initiated one or more of the following:

Changes to the Curriculum or Pedagogies

- Course content
- Teaching techniques
- Improvements in technology
- Prerequisites

- Course sequence
- New courses
- Deletion of courses
- Changes in frequency or scheduling of course offerings

Changes to the Assessment Plan

- Student learning outcomes
- Artifacts of student learning
- Evaluation process

- Evaluation tools (e.g., rubrics)
- Data collection methods
- Frequency of data collection

Please describe the actions you are taking as a result of these findings.

We plan to update the Program Assessment Plan. As noted above, we have already implemented changes to the written exam grading process that we hope will more grading more consistent across faculty graders.

If no changes are being made, please explain why.

**7. Closing the Loop: Review of Previous Assessment Findings and Changes**

**A. What is at least one change your program has implemented in recent years as a result of previous assessment data?**

As noted above, the program is moving to a comprehensive exam grading committee to standardize expectations across graders and students.

**B. How has the change/have these changes identified in 7A been assessed?**

The grading committee started in August 2023, though due to contract start dates there was not a grader meeting prior to the August written exams, so there isn't much to assess at this time. We are planning to hold our first grader meeting in November or early December 2023, prior to the January 2024 exams.

**C. What were the findings of the assessment?**

TBD

**D. How do you plan to (continue to) use this information moving forward?**

TBD

**IMPORTANT: Please submit any assessment tools (e.g., artifact prompts, rubrics) with this report as separate attachments or copied and pasted/appended into this Word document. Please do not just refer to the assessment plan; the report should serve as a stand-alone document. Thank you.**

**Science, Theory and Public Health PHS6050**  
**Assignment 3: Critique and peer review assignment**

In the development of an academic product, e.g. a paper or grant proposal, your harshest critic is your best friend. This is so because once you've submitted the product for anonymous peer review, the individual who reviews it understands that they aren't doing their job unless they point out, with more or less tact, all the conceptual, methodological and writerly weaknesses in it. We rely in academia on co-authors and colleagues to first provide that critical eye so the result is the best it can be when submitted for consideration for publication or funding.

This assignment offers you the opportunity to be your colleague's best friend, in doing the hard work of providing this critical eye, to point out a paper's weaknesses, so that s/he can strengthen the paper before handing it in for a grade.

In your review, use the assignment's outline and criteria to inform your critique. I advise you to outline your comments and provide headers for each section, and then provide comments on how and how well you think the section meets the quality criteria. It's fair to say if they meet them well, and helpful to say how they do so. And if they don't it's especially helpful to detail the shortcomings, and provide guidance as best you can about how to correct them and improve the result.

This is not the time to be shy or hold back; your fresh perspective is incredibly valuable. But you want to provide constructive, not cruel, criticism.

Think about the utility of comments you get from professors on your papers. When a paper comes back with little red ink, and a simple "This is great"! you know how uninformative it is. When I share a paper for a colleague to review and it comes back covered with scribbles, I know they've put effort into it, and the paper will benefit as a result.

Let this perspective also guide your own self-critique as you write and revise your draft. Are your ideas clearly stated? Is the flow of argument sound, and appropriate and valid evidence provided? Is the paper well-organized, with appropriate subheads, summary statements and transitions? Is proportionate attention paid to each topic?

I will grade your review using the same point structure as I have the original paper. There's no page limit, as the contents will depend on the paper you review and its limitations. The final guidance offer on peer review writing is to be thoughtful, thorough, and kind.

| <b>Topic</b>   | <b>Score</b> | <b>Quality criteria</b>  |
|--|--------------|--|
| State a public health problem, including specification of a health outcome of interest | 10           | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Provides a clear statement of the problem</li> <li>• Poses a good question or problem</li> </ul>  |
| Provide a rationale  | 10           | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Explains why the problem is important and significant</li> <li>• Sets the problem in context</li> </ul>   |
| Provide an overview of factors contributing to the problem                             | 20           | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Comprehensive but not exhaustive</li> <li>• Shows critical and analytical thinking about the literature</li> <li>• Selects literature wisely and judiciously</li> <li>• Identifies and organizes analysis around themes or conceptual categories</li> </ul> |
| Provide an overview of determinants of risk factors                                    | 20           |  |
| Use theory or conceptual thinking to organize your work                                | 20           |  |
| Provide a summary of findings  | 10           | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Uses literature to build a case for research</li> <li>• Synthesizes the literature</li> </ul>   |
| Writing quality  | 10           | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Well written</li> <li>• Brief, interesting and compelling</li> <li>• Motivates the work</li> <li>• Has a hook</li> </ul>  |
| Total  |              |  |

| Topic  | Score | Quality criteria |
|--|-------|------------------|
| State a public health problem, including specification of a health outcome of interest |       |                  |
| Provide a rationale  |       |                  |
| Provide an overview of factors contributing to the problem                             |       |                  |
| Provide an overview of determinants of risk factors                                    |       |                  |
| Use theory or conceptual thinking to organize your work                                |       |                  |
| Provide a summary of findings  |       |                  |
| Writing quality  |       |                  |
| Total  |       |                  |

PHS 6900: Professional Development  
(Content copied from Canvas Assignment page)

Written Exam Peer Review

You will be emailed the practice written exams of two other students. For each of these exams, you should provide:

1. A formal, formatted peer review report as you would do as a reviewer for a journal
2. A scored written exam grading rubric

Please submit two documents (one for each exam, identifying each by the author number) in Word format. All peer review forms will be blinded before being returned to the exam author.

Below are examples of journal-ready peer review reports:

[example-review-1.docx](#)

[example-review-2.docx](#)

Below are the grader instructions and rubric for the written exam:

Grader Instructions: [Written Exam Grader Instructions.pdf](#)

Grading Rubric: [Written Exam Grading Rubric.docx](#)