



EXTERN KVALITETSGRANSKNING

ÅTGÄRDSPLAN FÖR MASTERPROGRAM I FOLKHÄLSA (MPH), 120 HÖGSKOLEPOÄNG

Utbildningskommittén för Institutionen för Medicin

*Åtgärdsplanen har föredragits och beslutats vid Sahlgrenska Akademiens Utbildningsråd
2024-11-06*

Introduction

During October 2023 the Master program in Public Health (MPH) has been externally evaluated following the procedure of external evaluations of study programmes at University of Gothenburg (*Guidance for external review of study courses and programmes at first and second cycle, Reg. no. V 2016/378*). The evaluation is part of University's quality assurance work as described in the document *Policy for Quality Assurance and Continuous Quality Improvement of Education at the University of Gothenburg* Ref. no. V 2016/378. MPH is an international two-year (120 credits) programme that was established in the fall of 2019.

The programme is hosted by the School of Public Health and Community Medicine at the Department of Medicine, Sahlgrenska Academy.

The appointed external review panel consisted of:

- Flemming Konradsen (Professor in Global Health & Director of the School of Global Health, University of Copenhagen),
- Helena Johansson (Docent vid institutionen för socialt arbete, Göteborgs Universitet),
- Elisabeth Bengtsson (Senior Advisor/regionutvecklare in Public Health/Ledningsstöd, Västra Götalandsregionen),
- Niklas Zethraeus (Committe Chair, Docent/programdirektör för Mastersprogrammet i hälsoekonomi, policy och management, LIME, Karolinska institutet).

The evaluation was based on detailed assessment of the documents provided by the program director(s), Solveig Lövestad and later Monica Hunsberger and Carl Bonander as well as interviews with the program directors and the program administrator, current and former students, faculty, members of the program working council and the leadership of the department during a site visit held on the 12 and 13 of October 2023. The evaluation report was presented by the team of assessors in October 2023 and has since been carefully reviewed by the programme administration, the members of the teacher collegium, the members of the program council as well as the student representatives. The following action plan summarises the suggestions and recommendations of the evaluation team, as well as responses and suggested actions from the MPH team. The action plan has been approved by the program working council.

PD = Programme Director

PCD = Program Co-Director

PA = Programme Administrator

AU = Programme Working Council (4 members)

CL = Course leader(s)

	Assessment criteria	Reflections, recommendations (from reviewers)	Recommended actions (from reviewers)	Agreed actions and time plan
1	Achieved study results match intended learning outcomes and the qualitative targets of the Higher Education Ordinance	<p>A strength of the program is the diversity of the program, including the international study environment, and that fact that students come from different parts of the world with different working experience, competence, and educational background, which implies a great potential to learn from one another and to share different perspectives. This can be further utilized in the teaching during the program through deliberate pedagogical efforts. The pedagogical approach of teaching in the program, including the requirement of active participation of students and group work, needs to be introduced to the students during the start of the program. (see also assessment criteria 2).</p> <p>A challenge of the current program relates to the very different prior competencies and skills students have at the start of the program in e.g., statistics, epidemiology, economics, and qualitative methods. In the future, the program needs to a greater extent to set aside time to individualize the teaching so that every student's competence is sufficiently high in different subject areas, so all students have the same possibility to reach the learning outcomes. Although students are encouraged to prepare</p>	<p>We recommend the program leadership to initiate a process to clarify the vision, goal, and specialization of the program. Clarify what methodological knowledge and skills the students are expected to gain during the program. This should be discussed in the context of other master programs given at the university and elsewhere, and should include future employers, taking into consideration the current and future needs of the labor market. The process of updating the current program may result in a full reform of the learning outcomes and vision of the program.</p> <p>We suggest the program, for each specialization, to do a mapping of how intended learning outcomes (ILOs) are reached by the teaching activities and ways of examination and to view the link of ILOs to the local goals (for each track) and global goals of a master's program in general.</p> <p>We suggest an improvement of the information about the expectations in beginning of program, and to clarify the tracks of specialization for the health</p>	<p>Action 1.1: Establish an advisory group to help align the program with market needs for public health professionals and sharpen our profile.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - How: Identify and recruit key stakeholders from potential employers and alumni. Meetings to be held twice a year. - Responsible persons: PD, PCD, AU - Implemented by: VT2025 - Priority: High. <p>Action 1.2: Improve marketing to attract high quality applicants who are most likely to succeed and complete our program.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - How: Revise the website to clarify our profile upfront, including professionally recorded videos featuring current students and alumni, help prospective students make informed decisions. Collaborate with the communications officer to attract students interested in the profile of our program. - Responsible persons: PD, PCD - Implemented by: VT2025. - Priority: High

		<p>courses before the courses start (e.g., when preparing for biostatistics), time needs to be spent during the courses as well. If time needs to be spent on repetition, which otherwise could have been spent on the course content, this may also have an impact on the possibility of reaching the learning outcomes of the program. Some students also express worries that if the requirements are set too low this will affect the quality of the program. It is also viewed as challenging by teachers on how to balance the extra time needed to improve the skill set of students to a reasonable level without having consequences on the learning outcomes in the different courses.</p> <p>Another weakness of the program is the relatively high drop-out rate (about 30%) during the first year. This negatively impacts the quality of the program. Further it affects the students' perception of the program. If there is a group of students that are not committed and motivated to continue the program this may have an impact on e.g., group work of the program, and the ability to reach the intended learning outcomes also for students not dropping out from the program. Furthermore, during lectures (not mandatory) there usually is about 40-50% attendance.</p> <p>There are also concerns expressed by teachers about the administrative burden and the need for additional support (e.g., with administration tasks in Canvas and Ladok). At the same time administrators (program and course administrators) express concern about the high administrative burden, which, e.g., can be explained by the high number of courses available for students, particular during the third semester (different internships, and</p>	<p>economics and health equality specializations. It can also be considered to add the track of specialization to the graduation certificate. The prerequisites to be eligible for the degree project course should be revised. E.g., if doing a degree project within the health economics area the two health economics courses should be mandatory and a prerequisite.</p> <p>It also needs to be further clarified the reasons for the high drop-out rate. In this process it is important to closely monitor (e.g., by scheduling meetings with students not continuing the program) and follow-up the study results during the first year (e.g., by the study counselor and program leaders). A high drop-out rate may have severe consequences on group work and program quality.</p> <p>The application process of students has to be reconsidered. The admission of students could be more selective, and it can be considered to modify this process and put more weight on the motivational letter or restrict the number of student places. Further it can be considered to use individual tests, interviews, specify eligible pre-requirements, and live language tests. This may reduce the high drop-out rate during the first year and will improve the quality of the program.</p> <p>It should be further clarified, in job descriptions, the roles of different people involved in the program to handle the administration tasks more efficiently. There is a high turnover of administrative staff and to some extent also among</p>	<p>Action 1.3: Remove electives in year one to ensure all students have the same opportunity to meet the intended learning outcomes of the program.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - How: Re-structure program content to meet the established core competencies as defined by the Associated Schools of Public Health European Region [ASPHER]. Re-map our mandatory courses learning outcomes to ensure core competencies are met. - Responsible persons: PD, PCD, AU, CL - Implemented by: HT2027 - Priority: High <p>Action 1.4: Improve student introduction</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - How: Improve first-week session(s) to introduce new students to our pedagogical philosophy and what to expect from student-teacher engagement and learning activities throughout the program. Engage second-year students in the onboarding of new student including social and educational content. - Responsible persons: PD, PCD - Implemented by: HT2024 - Priority: High. <p>Action 1.5: Improve student retention and active participation.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - How: Besides stating our profile clearly to applicants, and improving onboarding (see Actions 1.2, 1.4), we will increase student-centered learning activities to improve the value of course attendance (e.g., problem-based learning). In addition, we will implement early-warning systems to detect and act when students are at risk of dropping out (term 2 check-in, continuous updates to
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		<p>elective courses). There is a high turnover of administrative staff, program leader/coordinators, and to some extent also among teachers. This may to some extent be explained by an inadequate support system.</p> <p>Another concern relates to weaknesses in the application process. Only 10% of students applying to the program are eligible and finally assessed for admission. E.g., last year 80 out of 800 students were eligible, whereof 40 started the program. It needs to be decided by the program leadership (with the support from admission unit) what assessment criteria and the level of requirements the program should apply in the future application process.</p> <p>A weakness of the program is that there is no clear information about what is expected or required from selecting a specific track of specialization (health economics or health equality), i.e., students can choose among many different courses and internships (on third semester). Students can apply for an internship during the third semester (15 or 30 credits). Even though students gain working experience and can apply what they have learned during the first year of studies, this comes at the cost of gaining less insight and knowledge about methods, principles and theories related to the different subject areas, which may imply lowering the chances of students to reaching the learning outcomes and the objectives of the program (e.g., to critically review, evaluate and analyze).</p>	<p>teachers. This may to some extent be explained by a somewhat dysfunctional administration support system, and there is a need to improve the collaboration.</p>	<p>program leaders about grades for students who are “falling behind”. Students who are in need, are offered support from program leadership and the study counselor. Implement office hours with administrators and study counselors to create a more welcoming atmosphere for students who need help with their studies, which we also hope will improve retention by offering more individualized support and adjustments to the standard study plan.</p> <p>Note: The reviewers state that the program has a high drop-out rate, however, we are similar to, and even better than other international master’s programs at GU. This is likely because we are affected by several issues beyond our control (including immigration and payment issues). Nonetheless, we hope to improve retention with the actions shown above.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Responsible persons: PD, PCD, PA, AU, CL - Implemented by: HT2026. - Priority: High. <p>Action 1.6: Reduce unnecessary administrative burden on administrators and teachers.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - How: Monthly meetings between program leaders and administrative staff to detect and act on problems early. Documentation to clarify administrative roles in a written document (what is expected of program leaders, course coordinators, course administrators) to be updated and distributed to all parties. Implement a unified, program-wide Canvas structure to help reduce teacher administrative burden. A common
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				<p>Canvas structure has also been requested by students; creating added value.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Responsible persons: PD, PCD, PA - Implemented by: VT2025. - Priority: High. <p>Action 1.7: Enhance application process</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - How: Program leadership will collaborate with admissions officers at GU central to improve to the application process to the extent possible. Further, we will improve communications on our website (see Action 1.2). - Note: the reviewers suggest that we review the entry requirements for the program, and we have considered this, but ultimately, we disagree that it would be beneficial to change the broad admission criteria because a key strength of the program is its broad intake from different disciplines and backgrounds. Instead, we hope to work to improve the application and admissions process to attract the right applicants to our program through clear expectations of what is needed to succeed in our program. - Responsible persons: PD, PCD, PA - Implemented by: VT2026. - Priority: Medium.
2	Teaching is focused on student-centered learning	Even if the program syllabus states that pedagogy is inspired by principles of student-centered learning (page 7 education plan and homepage), it is not clear if teachers in the program have the same interpretation of student-centered learning and how it can be applied in the different courses. It is not a general understanding of the meaning of student-centered learning among teacher and students in the program. Therefore, steps need to be taken by program leadership to	Emphasize and facilitate an ongoing discussion in the pedagogical support forum where course leaders, teachers and faculty of the program can discuss different pedagogical issues, e.g., how to define and facilitate the implementation of student-centered learning. This is beneficial for all, in particular newly employed teachers and course leaders. Based on diversity of students, this process should be supported by pedagogical methods and using different	<p>Action 2.1: Initiate pedagogical seminar series to support implementation of student-centered learning.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - How: The program leaders will host seminars for teachers engaged in the program (one seminar every other month). The covers various aspects of student-centered learning (e.g., case-based learning) and other current pedagogical issues that the teachers face. The series will also cover new digital

		systematically support the implementation of student-centered learning involving the faculty and students.	pedagogical tools. The pedagogical approach should be clarified in the beginning of the program.	<p>tools and other practical skills to enable student-centered learning.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Responsible persons: PCD - Implemented by: VT2024. - Priority: Medium <p>Action 2.2: Improved onboarding for new teachers and continued education for all teachers.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - How: When program leaders meet with new core teachers, the program's pedagogical approach (student-centered learning) will be emphasized. Encourage teachers to use competence development time, paid by the program, to attend pedagogical seminars and courses offered by the program and PIL. - Responsible persons: PD, PCD - Implemented by: VT2024 - Priority: High
3	The content and form of teaching rests on scientific and proven experience.	The course literature and reading material is in line with what is expected in terms of standard scientific literature within health economics, health equality, and public health sciences. All the course leaders have relevant subject specific competence. Most of the course leaders are linked to research group environments and are active in research and have national and international collaborations.	No recommendations suggested	
4	Teachers have up-to-date and adequate competence as regards their subjects and teaching and learning in higher education, and the numbers of teachers are in proportion to the scope and content of study courses and program	A strength is that the program has very engaged teachers and faculty supporting and helping students with different issues. The study environment is friendly and open. However, teaching faculty will benefit from a continued engagement and discussion about the implementation of pedagogical strategies and use of different digital tools in the teaching to support student learning in the program. The teachers have relevant subject specific knowledge (PhDs and/or associate	Launch and implement a pedagogical educational development plan, aiming at increasing the pedagogical competence of all teachers, and where available digital pedagogical support tools are specified. The use of digital approaches in blended and integrated format needs to be considered to move towards improved learning outcomes and a more personalized approach to teaching.	Please see Action 2.1 regarding our plan to strengthen pedagogical competence and enhance the focus on student-centered learning.

		professors/professors). Most of the teachers (11/16) have formal pedagogical training courses.		
5	Study courses and programmes are relevant to the needs of the students and society	Students have highlighted the need for increasing possibilities for networking, and more engagement from teachers and administration. At a program level and in the future development of the program there is a need to identify potential future employers and to clarify the needs and requirements of employers in terms of different competences and skills from future students.	<p>We suggest that the program strengthens the alumni-network and invites previous students to share their working experiences with current students.</p> <p>Further the program should establish a reference group/sounding board of alumni, stakeholders and future employers from the Region, municipalities, and public and private sectors to incorporate current and future demands of potential employers.</p>	<p>Action 5.1: Improve alumni engagement.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - How: First, creating an alumni database, and second, invite to events with current students on a regular basis. The events will be student driven to address their needs. - Responsible persons: PD, PA - Implemented by: VT2025 - Priority: Medium <p>Action 5.2: Student union representatives of Educational Council of Public and Global Health (EcoPGH) are encouraged to collaborate with program leadership to host events with professionals and alumni.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - How: Invite professionals and alumni to address topics of interest identified by students. - Responsible persons: PD, PCA, Student representatives. - Implemented by: VT2024. - Priority: Medium <p>Regarding a reference group, see Action 1.1</p>

6	Students have influence in planning, implementing and monitoring study courses and programmes	A strength of the program is that students have an influence in the planning, implementing, and monitoring of courses. The program has established a program council where course evaluations are discussed, and students are provided feedback on the different courses.	We suggest that students and alumni participate and are involved in the planning and further development of the program vision, goals and in the marketing and recruitment of future students.	Please see Actions 1.1, 1.2, 5.1, and 5.2 for how we plan to further involve students and alumni in marketing and development of the program.
7	The study and learning environment is accessible and purpose-oriented for all students.	<p>The study and learning environment (physical and psychosocial) are accessible and purpose-oriented for all students. The working environment is considered safe, supportive and open for teachers and among students. The learning environment and atmosphere during the courses were by students assessed to be supportive and open. Notable is the high drop-out rate. It is recommended to involve students to clarify the reason for drop-out.</p> <p>Digital learning pedagogical tools could be used more. There is a need to further develop and use digital electronic pedagogical programs, support tools and devices.</p> <p>It is a need to further support students on career development opportunities. As well as strengthen the alumni network, and to invite representatives from the labor market and stakeholders to the different courses (not only the economics course).</p>	<p>Clarify the information about the program, expectations, and pedagogical style.</p> <p>All admitted students should be invited to an introduction week (before the program starts), arranged by the program. It is important that everyone is informed about what support is available.</p>	<p>Please see Actions 1.2, 1.4 for how we plan to clarify information about the program profile, expectations, and pedagogical style, and Action 1.4 for improved onboarding.</p> <p>Please see Action 2.1 regarding our plans for pedagogical development and improved student-centered learning.</p> <p>Please see Actions 1.1 and 5.2 for plans to improve career development opportunities for students.</p>
8	The study courses and programmes are continuously monitored and developed.	There is a system in place where study courses and programs are continuously monitored and developed, and for assessing courses, and to provide students with feedback on what will be modified and changed for next year. Teachers encourage open and regular feedback from students to improve their classes and develop their courses for coming cohorts of students. However, strategic development and discussions and visions could be more emphasized in the development and monitoring process.	We recommend the program to collect information from student alumni network, but also from stakeholders and potential employers, if the current program needs to be further developed and revised to better reflect the changing needs of the labor market.	Please see Actions 1.1, 5.1, and 5.2 , for details on how we plan to involve alumni and stakeholders in the development of the program.