

**DOCTOR OF PUBLIC HEALTH PROGRAMME
LONDON SCHOOL OF HYGIENE AND TROPICAL MEDICINE**

COMPULSORY TAUGHT MODULES

EVIDENCE BASED PUBLIC HEALTH POLICY AND PRACTICE

AUTUMN 2018

AIM

To enable students to locate, assess, synthesise, present and use research-based information to influence public health policy and improve the public health in a range of settings

OBJECTIVES

By the end of the module, students should be able to:

1. acquire and evaluate the quality of existing evidence (e.g. on effectiveness, acceptability and cost) related to public health policies and interventions;
2. distinguish between generating evidence, eliciting values and making decisions;
3. undertake a systematic review of existing studies, draw out the policy implications, and assess the quality and relevance to policy of such reviews;
4. make persuasive recommendations for policy and/or practice change to improve the public health based on the best evidence available;
5. demonstrate a thorough understanding of the dynamics of the relationship between the worlds of research, and policy and practice in the field of public health, and of the assumptions underpinning the concepts of 'evidence', 'policy' and 'politics';
6. use their understanding of the ways in which different groups involved in public health policy and practice use research evidence to advocate more effectively for the promotion of the public's health informed by sound evidence.

CONCEPTUAL OUTLINE: FROM EVIDENCE TO POLICY AND PRACTICE CHANGE

Leadership in public health policy and practice requires two types of skills – those concerned with leadership and management, and those relating to improving and shaping policy and practice, involving accessing, understanding, developing, disseminating and facilitating the use of the evidence base for better public health outcomes. The compulsory taught modules on the DrPH programme focus on these two types of skills. The aim of EBPHP is to develop the necessary skills for evidence-based policy and practice. Since the evidence base is constantly changing and developing, the emphasis is on practical, generic skills rather than substantive findings in particular areas of public health.

The advent of electronic databases allows easier and cheaper methods to identify the relevant scientific studies on a public health issue, and it is important to understand how best to do this. It is also important to understand the limitations of such evidence, especially as there is often very useful information and experience that remains outside the more formal, peer reviewed literature. It is essential to be able to discriminate between evidence of different standards, and to weigh appropriately the evidence from different types of research and study designs.

Decision making in public health policy and practice involves many different groups, some scientific, some managerial and some representing political and group interests. Better public health policy and practice requires that evidence to inform policy be accessible in the different forms needed to inform each of the groups involved in the decision process. For example, to influence political decision-makers it is usually necessary for the arguments to be presented very concisely. For scientific users, the emphasis is more on completeness and fully referenced reviews, and, for the general public, the need is to ensure that the presentation is clear and free from unnecessary jargon. An important skill is to be able to present the evidence to each of these user groups in ways that make them useful for decision making, and which ensure that the essence of the argument remains intact.

Public health leaders are often involved in commissioning and managing applied research, and it is important to develop skills in ensuring that the research undertaken is appropriate to meeting the needs of policy and practice. It is also important to ensure that it uses rigorous methods, and has the best chance of providing robust and useful answers. The ability to develop and undertake primary research is taken forward in the Organisational and Policy Analysis (OPA) and in the Thesis components later in the programme. As preparation for these, the current module aims to teach students how to appraise the quality and relevance of existing research so that they can better design and carry out their own projects in the future.

The emphasis in this module is less on teaching skills in methods of hands-on, primary research (though there is some of this, especially in relation to the OPA), than on skills in identifying how best to synthesise and use existing research in a policy environment, and helping students to become more effective evidence-based public health practitioners.

TEACHING STRATEGY

The module is taught over 10 weeks in the main through three-hour sessions usually on either Mondays or Tuesdays, with two sessions taking place on Wednesdays (31 October and 14 November). Most sessions involve a mixture of more formal presentations and less formal interactive, practical sessions (e.g. appraising the quality and relevance to public health practice and policy of different types of research evidence), usually in small groups. The presentation of generic skills and overarching principles is reinforced and made relevant through the use of case studies and practical examples.

In addition to acquainting themselves with the essential readings for each session, some extra preparation will be required before specific sessions (please read the details of each session ahead of time), in addition to the work towards the two assessed assignments. A detailed timetable and outline of each session will be available at the start of the autumn term.

Assignment I

This assignment ties in particularly with the series of sessions devoted to Getting Research Evidence into Policy and Practice, and Understanding the Policy Process. Students are asked to prepare an 'agenda setting' or influencing strategy designed to get a research-driven issue onto the policy agenda of a Ministry of Health. They can choose any topic and/or policy area in the field of public health, and any setting.

This assignment is due to be submitted to the DrPH administrator by 7 January 2019, 4pm.

Assignment II

This assignment consists of an overview of systematic reviews and builds on the series of sessions devoted to Critical Evaluation of Published Evidence. This is accompanied by a short policy briefing for a minister of health with recommendations based on the findings of the overview.

This assignment is due to be submitted to the DrPH administrator by 14 January 2019, 4pm.

Late submissions, extensions and extenuating circumstances

Students are reminded that those who hand in assignments late will be penalised unless an 'Extension' has been granted. The mark for any assignment submitted up to one week late without an agreed extension will be lowered by one grade. Assignments submitted more than one week late without an agreed extension will be considered a failure and students will have to resubmit the assignment at the next opportunity to be able to complete the Taught Component of the DrPH and move on to the next stage.

Extensions can only be granted in circumstances that are unforeseen, exceptional, short-term events, which are outside of a student's control and have a negative impact on their ability to prepare for or take an assessment. They cannot be claimed for circumstances that are not deemed exceptional or which could have been prevented or foreseen by the student. Requests for extension must be submitted prior to the deadline for submitting the assessed work.

Students can claim 'Extenuating Circumstances' if the assignment has been submitted but they feel that extenuating circumstances have put them at a disadvantage. Requests for 'Extenuating Circumstances' have to be submitted within 3 calendar weeks of the assignment deadline.

The LSHTM Extenuating Circumstances Policy is set out in full at https://www.lshtm.ac.uk/sites/default/files/2017-10/extenuating_circumstances_policy.pdf

Students who want to request an 'Extension' or claim 'Extenuating Circumstances' must submit a completed Extenuating Circumstances Form and provide relevant documentary evidence in support of the claim to the LSHTM Registry, via assessments@lshtm.ac.uk. The email header should contain 'EXTENSION_firstname_surname' or 'ECs_firstname_surname', respectively. Please consult the Extenuating Circumstances Policy (see link above) for a list of circumstances that are likely to be acceptable or unacceptable and for the standard of evidence required.

The Extenuating Circumstances Form can be accessed through the 'Regulations, policies and procedures' page on the School's intranet: <https://www.lshtm.ac.uk/study/new-students/starting-your-course-london/regulations-policies-and-procedures>

The request will then be considered by the Extenuating Circumstances Committee for a decision.

ORGANISATIONAL AND POLICY ANALYSIS PREPARATION

The timetable for EBPHP and the other compulsory module (Understanding Leadership, Management and Organisation, ULMO) incorporates sessions specifically intended to help DrPH students prepare for the data collection and analytical aspects of their Organisational

and Policy Analyses (OPAs), undertaken later in the first year for full-time students. Called Understanding the Policy Process, and Research on Actors and Organisations, these sessions in the EBPHP module have the aim and objectives described below.

AIM

To provide students with an overview of policy theory and research methods useful for understanding and analysing health sector organisations acting within their policy environments

OBJECTIVES

By the end of these sessions, students should:

1. Be familiar with the main theories of public policy making appropriate to the study of the operation of public health organisations within a particular policy environment (these complement the organisational and managerial theories introduced in the other Term 1 compulsory module Understanding Leadership, Management and Organisations (ULMO));
2. Understand some of the research methods likely to be helpful for conducting the organisational assessment and policy analysis aspects of their OPA;
3. Be able to plan the main elements of their OPA in conjunction with using their learning from the ULMO module.

PREPARATORY READING

The following books and papers are recommended for those who wish to do preparatory reading before the start of the module and will be helpful throughout the term:

Buse K, Mays N, Walt G. *Making health policy*. Maidenhead: Open University Press, second edition, 2012 (available from the School supplies department at a discount since part of the LSHTM series 'Understanding Public Health')

Peters BG. *Advanced introduction to public policy*. Edward Elgar, 2015

Petticrew M, Roberts H. *Systematic reviews in the social sciences: a practical guide*. Oxford: Blackwell, 2006.

and/or

Gough D, Oliver S, Thomas J, eds. *An introduction to systematic reviews*. London: Sage, 2012

and/or

Booth A, Sutton A, Papaioannou D. (2016) *Systematic approaches to a successful literature review*. London: Sage.

Smith K. (2013) *Beyond evidence-based policy in public health. The interplay of ideas*. Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan. (Chapters 1 and 2).

Nutley SM, Walker I, Davies HTO (2007) *Using evidence. How research can inform public services*. Bristol: The Policy Press.

Killoran A, Kelly MP, eds. *Evidence-based public health: effectiveness and efficiency*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010, especially Chapters 2, 4, 8, 9, 12, 21, 22, 28, 30 and 31.

Oliver K, Lorenc T, Innvaer S. *New directions in evidence-based policy research: a critical analysis of the literature*. *Health Research Policy and Systems* 2014; 12:34.

Students may find the following a useful introductory overview of some of the areas covered in the module:

Jones L, Douglas J, eds. (2012) *Public health: building innovative practice*. London: Open University Press/Sage, especially Chapters 5-9, 11, 13-15

For those who have not studied much epidemiology and research study design, or who wish to refresh their knowledge, the following are also recommended as preparatory reading:

Gray M. (2009) *Evidence-based healthcare and public health*. Third edition. Edinburgh: Churchill Livingstone/Elsevier

Bowling A. (2009) *Research methods in health: investigating health and health services*. Third edition. Maidenhead: Open University Press, particularly Chapters 4, 9, 10, 15, 16 and 17

Bowling A, Ebrahim S, eds. (2005) *Handbook of health research methods: investigation, measurement and analysis*. Maidenhead: Open University Press, particularly Chapters 3-6, 9-11 and 14

For those wishing to brush up their health economic evaluation, the following is recommended as the classic text in the field:

Drummond M, Sculpher MJ, Claxton K, Stoddart GL, Torrance GW. *Methods for the Economic Evaluation of Health Care Programmes*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2015. (Chapter 1)

Other specific articles on economic evaluation that you may care to read are:

Weatherly H, Drummond M, Claxton K, Cookson R, Ferguson B, Godfrey C, Rice N, Schulpher M, Sowden A. *Methods for assessing the cost-effectiveness of public health interventions: key challenges and recommendations*. *Health Policy* 2009; 93: 85–92

Module Organisers

Nicholas Mays has been Professor of Health Policy in the Department of Health Services Research and Policy in the Faculty of Public Health & Policy since May 2003. He has almost 40 years' experience in health policy and health systems analysis.

He has directed the Policy Innovation Research (PIRU) funded by the English Department of Health and Social Care (DHSC) since its inception in January 2011. The Unit is primarily devoted to providing advice on the development of pilots of innovative policies and programmes in health services, social care and wider public health, and then undertaking robust evaluations of these initiatives. The Unit works closely with policy advisers in DHSC and other national bodies such as NHS England and Public Health England.

His main interests relate to health care system reform in high income countries, the evaluation of complex policy change in health care systems and the health policy making process. Current and recent research includes evaluations in England of the implementation of the UK Antimicrobial Resistance Strategy, the integrated health and care Pioneer programme, and the Public Health Responsibility Deal (a public-private partnership to encourage business and public sector organisations to pursue health-promoting activities).

Before joining the School he worked in the Social Policy Branch of the NZ Treasury, at the King's Fund in London where he was director of health services research, at the Queen's University of Belfast, at the United Medical and Dental Schools of Guy's and St Thomas' Hospitals, University of London, and in the NHS.

Further details of his interests and activities can be found at:

<http://www.lshtm.ac.uk/people/mays.nicholas>

He is based at Tavistock Place, room 122

Stefanie Ettelt is Associate Professor in Health Policy in the Department of Health Services Research and Policy where she has worked since 2005. She also has direct experience of the DrPH programme since she completed the Doctorate while at the School.

Her interests are in health policy, political decision-making, health system comparisons, and the relationship between evidence, policy and politics.

She is a senior member of the Policy Innovation Research Unit (PIRU) and has led or co-led work on policy piloting, the evaluation of the Direct Payments in Residential Care Trailblazers and its follow-on study on personalisation in residential care. She was a contributor to the Getting Research into Health Policy programme and has published a number of papers and book chapters on the relationship between evidence and policy, mostly from an institutional perspective (covering political institutions, law and public administration). She is especially interested in better understanding the role of experimentation and evaluation in informing policy decisions.

Stefanie has a first degree in Political Science and Literature from the University of Bonn and spent several years working as a senior media officer in an international development organisation before changing career direction after graduating from LSE with an MSc in Health, Population and Society.

Further details of her teaching and publications can be found at:

<http://www.lshtm.ac.uk/aboutus/people/ettelt.stefanie>

She is based at Tavistock Place, room 114

Module Administrator

Anne-Marie Sue-Patt works in the Teaching Support Office and can be found on the ground floor in the Keppel Street building, or on extension 2332.

31 August 2018