MODULE SPECIFICATION

Academic Year (student cohort covered by specification)	2026-27
Module Code	GHM201
Module Title	Health Systems
Module Organiser(s)	Fred Martineau
Contact email	For students studying University of London Awards (initial registration 2025/2026 and prior years): Enquiries may be made via their Student Advice Centre at: Student Advice Centre. For students studying LSHTM awards (registration in 2026/2027 and onwards): Enquiries should be emailed to: GHPsupport@lshtm.ac.uk
Faculty	Public Health & Policy
FHEQ Level	Level 7
Credit Value	**CATS** 15 **ECTS** 7.5
Mode of Delivery	Distance Learning
Mode of Study	Directed self-study, through online materials via the Virtual Learning Environment
Language of Study	English
Pre-Requisites	PGDip/MSc Global Health Policy students taking this module need to have successfully completed at least three of the core GHP modules – GHM 101, 102, 103 or 104. No pre-requisites for individual module students, DL students from other programmes taking this module as cross-programme elective, LSHTM intensive MSc or research degree students wishing to take this module.
Accreditation by Professional Statutory and Regulatory Body	None
Module Cap (Maximum number of students)	None
Target Audience	Elective module for students on the DL MSc/PGDip Global Health Policy programme, DL MSc/PGDip Clinical Trials and DL MSc/PGDip Public Health programmes. The module is also

	available as a stand-alone individual module for anyone interested in global health and health systems.
Module Description	Well-functioning health systems are increasingly recognised as essential for improving health outcomes and facilitating access to services, health equity and social protection. Across settings, they are vital to achieving the Sustainable Development Goals. Health systems guided by effective governance, and responsive policies that can meet the dynamic health needs of a population, while fostering accountability, are seen as central to the global public health agenda. This module prepares students for work or research in health systems. For example: in strategic planning, policy design, or programme implementation, at the national, regional, and district level; in international organisations; NGOs; or academic institutions. The module introduces students to key health systems concepts, illustrated through case studies that highlight ongoing debates on national and international agendas. It seeks to equip students with the language and understanding to critique health systems and to engage in high level debates.
Duration	Moodle is open to access from 1st October. Students then plan their own studies between October and June.
Last Revised (e.g. year changes approved)	June 2025

For students studying UoL awards (initial registration in 2025/2026 and prior years)

Programme(s) This module is linked to the following programme(s)	**Status**
PGDip/MSc Global Health Policy (Distance Learning - University of London Worldwide)	Elective
PGDip/MSc Public Health (Distance Learning – University of London Worldwide)	Elective

For students studying LSHTM awards (registration in 2026/2027 and onwards)

Programme(s) This module is linked to the following programme(s)	**Status**
PGDip Global Health Policy (Distance Learning)	Elective
MSc Global Health Policy (Distance Learning)	Elective
PGDip Public Health (Distance Learning)	Elective
MSc Public Health (Distance Learning)	Elective

Module Aim and Intended Learning Outcomes

Overall aim of the module
To demonstrate understanding of the functioning of health systems, drawing on relevant disciplinary perspectives to enable students to undertake analysis of health systems globally. This module will involve understanding the core building blocks of health care systems, their modes of operation and the implications of different approaches to system design for access, quality, and broader outcomes. Throughout, the impact of equity on different health system features is highlighted.
Module Intended Learning Outcomes
Upon successful completion of the module a student should be able to: 1. Define the concept of a 'health system', and its core objectives, elements and functions; 2. Explain key debates, theories and conceptual approaches related to understanding health systems and their boundaries; 3. Apply a range of approaches and models to analyse the historical and contemporary social, economic, political and environmental factors which influence health systems; 4. Analyse how different health system actors, institutions and configurations both shape and are shaped by wider health outcomes and societal relations—in particular gender, equity and climate change; 5. Critically appraise and apply key concepts and approaches to health systems evaluation and performance measurement, including analysing the roles of local and global policy actors; 6. Apply health systems approaches to major health challenges in a range of different contexts.

Indicative Syllabus

Session Content
The module is expected to cover the following topics: • What is a health system? • What makes up a health system? Governance function • Health systems functions: financing • Health system functions: creating resources • Health system functions: provision • Assessing health systems and their performance • Universality in health systems • Health systems: a relational view • Pluralism in health systems: public-private engagement • Transforming health systems

Teaching and Learning

Notional Learning Hours

Type of Learning Time	Number of Hours	Expressed as Percentage (%)
Directed self-study	60	40
Self-directed learning	40	27
Assessment, review and revision	50	33
Total	**150**	**100**

Teaching and Learning Strategy
Learning is self-directed against a detailed set of learning objectives using the materials provided. Module tutors provide asynchronous support for students by replying to students' questions in open online discussion forums and facilitating discussion. Students are also strongly encouraged to participate in live webinars available on Moodle to obtain tutor support, and to make use of LSHTM online library resources.

Assessment

Assessment Strategy
Formal assessment of this module includes an essay that answers one of three set questions (Assessed Assignment 1 - 50%) and an 'editorial' assignment where students write an academic journal-style editorial on any relevant health systems topic of their choice (Assessed Assignment 2 - 50%). The two assessment tasks require students to demonstrate: the ability to critically appraise particular programmes or interventions; application of a 'systems thinking' approach to analysing the interplay of health system features and the political and institutional context in which they are situated; and critical and analytical skills when applying a health systems approach and/or a conceptual analysis to a specific health systems topic. The assessment tasks give students an opportunity to consolidate their learning by applying key concepts from across the whole of the module to specific health system contexts. Along with constructive feedback given after each assessed assignment, assessment preparation exercises and review sessions are run before both assessments to strengthen critical analysis and writing skills.

Summative Assessment

Assessment Type	**Assessment Length (i.e. Word Count, Length of presentation in minutes)**	**Weighting** (%)	**Intended Module Learning Outcomes Tested**
Assessed Assignment 1 Essay	2000 words	50	1, 2, 3 & 4
Assessed Assignment 2 Editorial	1500 words	50	5 & 6

Assignments for this module can be submitted only once annually.

The submission deadline for the Assessed Assignment 1 is **14 February**.

The submission deadline for the Assessed Assignment 2 is **12 May**.

All assignments must be submitted via the online Assignment Management System.

Resitting assessment

Resits will accord with Chapter 8b of the LSHTM Academic Manual.

The Resit assessment will be the same assessment type as the first attempt (see previous table).

Where a module is assessed by two or more elements of time-limited assessment and/or one or more assessed assignment(s), each element will require a minimum mark of 1.00 to pass the module. If you fail both elements you may have to resit one or both elements depending on whether the elements are compensatable or not (see Chapter 2 of the LSHTM Academic Manual). If you pass one element but not the other, you may only resit the failed element.

Resources

Indicative reading list

- de Savigny D and Adam T (eds) (2009). Systems Thinking for Health Systems Strengthening. [online] *Geneva: Alliance for Health Policy and Systems Research*, WHO.
- Balabanova D, McKee M and Mills A (2011). 'Good health at low cost' 25 years on. What makes a successful health system? London: LSHTM.
- McPake B (2012). Human resources and the health sector. In: Smith R & Hanson K, eds (2012). *Health Systems in Low- and Middle-income Countries: An Economic Policy Perspective*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- World Health Organization (2008*). The World Health Report 2008. Primary Health Care (Now More Than Ever)*. Geneva: WHO
- Smith R & Hanson K (Editors) (2012). *Health systems in low and middle-income countries. An economic and policy perspective*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Papanicolas I, Rajan D, Karanikolos M, Soucat A, Figueras J, World Health Organization. (2022) Health system performance assessment: a framework for policy analysis. Geneva: World Health Organization
- Gilson L (2003). Trust and the development of health care as a social institution. *Social Science and Medicine* 56(7): 1453-1468.
- Witter S, Palmer N, Balabanova D, Mounier-Jack S, Martineau T, Kilcpera A, et al (2019). Health system strengthening–reflections on its meaning, assessment, and our state of knowledge. *International Journal of Health Planning and Management*; doi: 10.1002/hpm.2882

Other resources

A full list of essential, recommended and further reading is given for each session.

Teaching for Disabilities and Learning Differences

The module-specific site on Moodle provides students with access to the majority of the module learning materials, including a study guide and online reading list (detailing both essential and recommended readings), and additional resources including supplementary exercises and optional lecture recordings. In some cases, module materials include a text book that is made available to students in e-format. All materials posted up on Moodle areas, including computer-based sessions, have been made accessible where possible. The LSHTM Moodle has been made accessible to the widest possible audience, using a VLE that allows for up to 300% zoom, permits navigation via keyboard and use of speech recognition software, and that allows listening through a screen reader. All students have access to "SensusAccess" software which allows conversion of files into alternative formats.

For Students studying University of London Awards (initial registration 2025/2026 and prior years):
For students with special needs, reasonable adjustments and support can be arranged – details and how to request support can be found on the University of London Worldwide website at: Inclusive practice and Access arrangements | University of London

For Students Studying LSHTM awards (registration 2026/2027 and onwards):
For students who require learning or assessment adjustments and support this can be arranged through the Student Support Services – details and how to request support can be found on the LSHTM Disability Support pages.