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(MPH - HSMP)

*Formerly "International
Course in Health
Development" (ICHD)*

1. GENERAL INFORMATION

Public health is the resultant of many forces. At the department of public health (ITM-Antwerp) we have specialised on the role health care providers can play in promoting individuals' and populations' health. How to improve the organisation and management of health services and how to influence policies and politics for health systems' development are the main focuses of our departments' work and of this course.

"System" is understood as the grounds on which all players (professionals, government institutions, public and private oriented non-governmental organisations, the public ...) that have a stake in the provision of health care act, as well as the relations and agreements they develop. Whether this ensemble of actors evolves towards achieving better population's health depends upon the inner-system's strengths and weaknesses and the opportunities and threads from outside. A system however should be capable of continuously adapting to the changing environment. New policies like liberalisation and decentralisation, emerging health problems like obesity, specific challenges like generalising treatment for AIDS patients are but three examples of current evolutions.

2. OBJECTIVES

The aim of the course is to empower participants to develop more integrated and better adapted health systems. At the end of the course the participants should be able to present a clear vision on the problems their health system faces and to spell out alternatives for action.

The course is experience based. This means that via lectures, seminars, group work and discussions, review of literature and individual assignments, participants are invited to review the organization and functioning of a system they have been working in. Their thesis work is the result of this analytical process and includes an argued and realistic action or research plan.

3. COURSE STRUCTURE AND PROGRAMME

The MPH-HSMP is a master-after-master programme with a study load of 1.800 hours equivalent to 60 ECTS credits, spread over 10 months. The core takes 35 credits, the options 10 and the synthesis and thesis work accounts for 15 credits. The common core spreads over 25 weeks, the option - an advanced course of choice in "management" or "policy" - over 8 weeks and the coached thesis work over 9 weeks.

The core comprises three learning components:

- 1 “Developing local health systems in their national and international environment”. This component provides the main theoretical frameworks for analyzing performance of health systems. In the central assignment participants learn to apply them on their own organisation or service and on their system and its context.
- 2 “Integrating health problem management and disease control”. In this component frameworks and methods for dealing with specific disease programs are studied. The main learning method is group work with participants of the sister course MPH - Disease Control (MPH - DC).
- 3 “Analytical perspectives” and “Research, evaluation, decision making and planning”. Participants are taught the basics of epidemiology, demography, medical anthropology and sociology, health economics and learn how to use research and evaluation approaches and techniques for decision making and planning.

In the option the participant chooses an advanced course in “strategic management” or “health policy” (both also organised as short course: see ITM course overview). Choosing the first option, the participant deepens her/his understanding of the ‘inside’ of the system and of the factors that influence its performance taking into account the environment. She/he learns specific skills and techniques of financial, human resources and quality management. In the latter option the participant deepens her/his insights in the policy process and the political environment of health systems, learns to analyze performance of national health systems and learns to master skills and techniques for analysing and dealing with different stakeholders.

In the third part of the course, participants should get to a synthesis on their own organisation or service as an actor in the health system. During this period they are coached individually for writing a thesis on a managerial, organisational or policy problem. They defend their analyses and ideas orally before an international jury.

4. SUPPORT TO PARTICIPANTS

Next to the teaching staff, participants get support from the tutor and the course coordinator for academic and programmatic aspects of the course. Regular information sessions about the programme activities and assignments and, when needed, individualised support are provided.

5. EVALUATION AND DEGREE

The student evaluation consists of four elements. The average weight of each element as a percentage of the final mark is as follows: Tests: 50%; Assignments: 10% (seminars, presentations, paper ...); Thesis text: 20%; Final examination: 20% (oral presentation of the thesis and overall exam at the end of the year with an international jury). Participants who do not meet the requirements for the Degree receive a Certificate of Attendance.

¹This course is also organised as a short course for MPH holders (for details please contact the secretariat).

6. DURATION OF THE COURSE

The MPH starts at the beginning of September and finishes at the end of June (42 weeks). For exact dates please consult the ITM course overview, the course secretariat or the website.

7. ADMISSION REQUIREMENTS

The HSMP targets health professionals with a relevant university degree (min. 4 years). A minimum of four years of relevant field experience in health care delivery, health services management and/or health policy formulation and implementation in a developing country is required.

The course is alternatively organised in English and French (academic year 2009-10: English, 2010-11 French, etc.). Good knowledge of the course language (French or English) is essential. For candidates from countries where the course language is not the official language, a certificate based on an officially recognized test is required (eg TOEFL, IELTS, embassy...). All participants to the French course should provide a certificate showing competence in reading scientific English.

The main instrument the Academic Selection Committee uses for short listing candidates is the application form. The comprehensiveness, quality and accuracy of its content therefore are of utmost importance. Candidates should complete the application form and return it latest on January 31st . Applicants will be notified of the decision of the Selection Committee as soon as possible. Accepted candidates will receive a Notice of Admission. Application forms are available from the course secretariat or can be downloaded from our website www.itg.be. Electronic registration is also possible.

8. ACCREDITATION

The MPH is internationally accredited through the Dutch-Flemish Accreditation Organisation (www.nvao.net).

9. TUITION FEE AND SCHOLARSHIPS

You will find information on the exact fee and scholarships in the ITM course overview and on our website or you can contact the ITM Student Service at education@itg.be. Participants from developing countries and the European Union can apply for a scholarship through the ITM. For more information: see the web site or contact the course secretariat.

Your registration fee should be paid into the ITM's account nr. 220-0531111-72 (Fortis Bank, Warandeberg 3, 1000 Brussel), BIC/SWIFT: GEBABEBB, IBAN BE 38 2200 5311 1172. Bank charges are at the expense of the applicant.

Note: For this course the increased tuition fee includes a portable computer (wireless technology; market value approx. 1.300 Euro; remains the property of the participant). This initiative of the ITM promotes ICT compatibility between participants and with the Institute's hotspots and e-environment. All ITM fellowships provide this feature and we advise other funding agencies to do the same.

10. INFI: INTERNATIONAL NETWORK OF FORMER ICHD/HSMP PARTICIPANTS

The alumni association INFI stimulates contacts between the former participants and the Institute, produces two newsletters per year and offers a book service. The lecturers of the ITM remain available for academic advice. The association also supports national and regional meetings of local alumni associations.