

Master in Public Health - Health Systems Management and Policy

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The Master in Public Health, orientation “Health Systems Management and Policy” (MPH - HSMP) is a ten-month international course for health professionals working as managers or policy makers/ implementers in low and middle-income countries. Within the domain of public and international health it aims at strengthening the capacity of these health professionals in analysing national and local health systems as well as developing context-specific improvement strategies. A further aim is to improve individual and/or entire populations’ health through better management of health systems, formulation and implementation of health policies.

Health systems are analysed from a number of perspectives ie. clinical, epidemiological, managerial, organisational, policy and socio-economical. The focus of the course is on strategies for improving access of individuals and populations to quality curative, preventive and promotional care. Part of the course modules is organised in conjunction with the MPH in Disease Control (NB: see course overview on our website for details). The training is based on the following principles:

- “Reflective Practice”: embedding action in theoretical and scientific arguments.
- “Actor-orientation”: performance of local or national health systems is the resultant of interactions between multiple stakeholders.
- Solidarity, participation and respect for autonomy and commitment to contribute to health and well-being as basic public health values.

This HSMP draws on ITM’s unique expertise and benefits from the rich exchange of experience between students from many different regions. The course is organised in English and French, alternating years.

1. LEARNING OBJECTIVES

The main learning objectives stem from an analysis of the core competences professionals involved in management and/or policy of health systems, need. During the course participants will acquire:

- Full competence in performance assessment of local and national health systems and policies as well as be able to formulate evidence-based strategies for health systems strengthening.
- Leadership and change management skills such as communication, negotiation skills, team work, conflict resolution, ...
- Insight in ways and means to translate public health values into personal and collective actions for improving health and health care.

2. COURSE PROGRAMME

This 60 credits course is divided into five course components over three periods for table of contents: see box). The core program (25 weeks) consists of four course components, providing students with competences for developing local and national health systems (cc-1), and for integrating specific health problems and diseases (cc-3). A third component teaches analytical insights and methodological inputs (cc-4). Course component (cc-2) is dedicated to coached personal work assisted with lecture on communication, writing and reading skills.

The second period (8 weeks) is dedicated to one of two options (cc-5): a) "strategic management of health systems"; and b) "health policy". Both options are also available to external participants as individual short courses. Information and application forms are available from the course administrator and/or the website.

During the last term the students will write a thesis on a problem that is relevant for health systems development in his/her own professional context. Also during a 7-day study visit, participants explore a regional health system in Europe enabling them to synthesise the course contents and gain self-confidence in applying this knowledge.

1 "Developing Health Systems" (11 credits)

- Basic concepts in public health *
- Local health systems: first line and referral health services
- National Health Systems, health policies and the international environment
- Study visit to Belgian local health systems

2 "Personal assignment and skills development" (5 credits)

- Personal assignment: analysis of a managerial or policy problem
- Communication, writing and reading skills

3 "Integrating health problem management and disease control" (5 credits)

- Determinants of health and disease
- Nutrition and health promotion
- Methods for analysing health problems (group work) *

4 "Analytical perspectives and methods" (14 credits)

- Epidemiology and Statistics, Demography *
- Socio-Anthropology: perspectives and methods
- Economics: perspectives and methods
- Decision Making
- Research in public health & research methods
- Planning and evaluation of projects and programmes

5 "Options" (10 credits) (also available as individual short courses)

A. *Strategic management of health systems*

- Framework for analysis of performance of health organisations and their contribution to public health and analysis of organisational configurations, culture, context and stakeholders
- Leadership and resource management (finances, human resources, quality, information)

B. *Health Policy*

- Framework, tools and methods for analysis of health policies and a model for descriptive analysis of national health systems
- Role of the state, governance, regulation and financing in the health sector, the international community and health aid, and disease control and health policies *

6 "Synthesis" (15 credits)

- A 1-week study visit to a regional health system in Europe
- A thesis (in document form) and its' defence

NB: * flagged modules are taught together with MPH-DC students

3. TEACHING METHODS AND SUPPORT TO PARTICIPANTS

The course is experience-based, using an explicit model for professional development. This means that with lectures, seminars, group work, discussions, review of literature and individual assignments, participants are invited to review the organization and functioning of a system they have been working in. The rich exchange of experience between students from different regions and the teaching staff with their extensive field experience stimulates this learning process. The participants' thesis work is the result of this analytical process and includes an argued and realistic action or research plan. Participants receive academic support from the course co-ordinator throughout the training. Regular information sessions on programme activities and assignments are provided and where needed individual support is given. Each participant is assigned a staff member for guidance on thesis work.

4. EVALUATION AND DEGREE

The student evaluation consists of four elements. The importance of each element represents a percentage of the final mark. Tests: 50%; Professional Competences: 10%; Thesis document and final examination (verbal presentation of the thesis and overall exam before an international jury, at the end of the year) both represent an equal 20%. The Degree of Master of Public Health orientation Health Systems Management and Policy is awarded to participants who have successfully achieved each of the four elements. Participants who have not, will receive a Certificate of Attendance.

5. DURATION OF THE COURSE

The HSMP starts at the beginning of September and finishes at the end of June (42 weeks/10 months). It has a study load of 1.800 hours, equivalent to 60 ECTS credits.

6. ADMISSION REQUIREMENTS

The HSMP is an international master-upon-master programme intended for health professionals working as managers or policy makers/ implementers in low and middle-income countries. A primary university degree (min. 4 years) AND more than four years of relevant experience (related to management or policy of health systems) are required to be eligible for admission. A certified official translation of the relevant diploma is required.

The course is organised in English and French (alternating years, ie 2010-11 is in French, 2011-12 in English, and so on). A good knowledge of the course language is essential. For candidates from countries where the course language is different from their mother tongue, an officially recognised proficiency certificate is mandatory (eg TOEFL/IELTS/British Council/Alliance Française). Also all participants of the French course need to provide a certificate to prove their ability to read scientific English.

The main tool the Academic Selection Committee has for short-listing candidates is the application form. The comprehensiveness, quality and accuracy of its content therefore are of utmost importance. Electronic registration is favoured. However, application forms are available from the course administrator or can be downloaded from our website (www.itg.be).

Prospective candidates should complete & return the application form no later than 15th January. Applicants will be notified of the Selection Committee's decision by the end of February. Conditionally accepted candidates will receive a Notice of Admission.

Anyone interested in attending either one of the individual short courses only ie. a) "strategic management" or b) "health policy" is requested to contact the course administrator direct or consult our website for further information.

7. ACCREDITATION

The Master in Public Health, orientation Health Systems Management and Policy (HSMP) is internationally accredited through the Dutch-Flemish Accreditation Organisation (www.nvao.net). Credits are calculated according to the European Credit Transfer System (ECTS).

8. TUITION FEE AND SCHOLARSHIPS

All information relating to the fees and scholarships is available in the general ITM course overview on the website or by contacting the course administrator. ITM may facilitate with scholarships for participants from developing countries and/or the European Union.

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

Note: For this international Master course the tuition fee includes a subsidised laptop

computer fitted with wireless technology (market value approx. 1.300 euro) which will remain the property of the participant. With this initiative ITM promotes ICT compatibility between participants and the Institute's hotspots and e-environment. All ITM scholarships include this item and we advise other funding agencies to do the same.

9. ALUMNI

The International Network of former HSMP and MDC participants stimulates contact between former participants and the Institute and encourages national and regional meetings of alumni. The Network produces a newsletter twice a year and has a free book service available.