

Graduate-level Criteria Revision FAQ: Updated February 2016

The goal of this revision process is the development of a set of standards that focus primarily on quality of student learning and reflect the dynamic, ongoing discussions in public health and higher education. Each criterion is being considered based on the question, “Does this requirement ensure quality of student learning or the student experience?” The new criteria will likely look very different from the current version in terms of format and structure; however, the elements that contribute to quality will have greater prominence.

Why is CEPH revising the criteria?

As a recognized accrediting agency by the US Department of Education, CEPH is required to conduct a review of its criteria at least every five years. The last review was completed in 2011.

It is also generally good practice to consider changes occurring in the field of public health and in higher education to ensure that the criteria are in alignment with the needs and goals of our stakeholders. The last major criteria revision occurred in 2005 (the 2011 changes were not considered substantive) and CEPH has identified strengths and weaknesses in the current criteria based on feedback from site visitors, school and program leaders, students and other stakeholders, as well as developments in the field informed by the work of the Framing the Future Task Force Expert Panels, the Job Task Analysis performed by the National Board of Public Health Examiners and the revised competencies from the Council on Linkages. All of these efforts will inform the revision process.

What is the timeline that CEPH is anticipating for this revision process?

The timeline is subject to change based on stakeholder feedback and Council progress, but below is a general overview of the upcoming steps:

- June 2016: CEPH will accept comments on the current criteria draft. This is the fourth round of comments.
- October 2016: CEPH will consider comments received during the fourth comment period, incorporate them where appropriate and adopt revised criteria. CEPH will develop an implementation schedule, which will include training site visitors, providing technical assistance to schools and programs and developing new templates and guidance documents.

What are the goals for this revision process?

CEPH seeks to *ensure quality of student learning*, which is its charge from the US Department of Education. In addition, CEPH's priorities are to *simplify and reduce the reporting burden on schools and programs*, *increase flexibility and opportunities for innovation* and *preserve the school distinction/designation*, which was a priority articulated by ASPPH.

When would we need to start implementing changes based on the new criteria?

When criteria are revised, CEPH always follows one major principle: CEPH notifies institutions two years in advance of a site visit and confirms the criteria against which the institution will be evaluated. This statement about the criteria governing your review remains binding in order to allow you to plan and conduct your self-study process without worrying about additional changes to criteria. You will not have to adapt to new criteria while you are in the process of writing your self-study.

However, if you are eager to start responding to the new criteria in a shorter timeframe, CEPH is happy to discuss this with you and potentially develop a review plan that reflects revised criteria. Such discussions are voluntary and would occur on a case-by-case basis.

When the criteria are adopted, CEPH will develop an implementation schedule, which will include training site visitors, providing technical assistance to schools and programs and developing new templates and guidance documents.

While we await comments on Round 4, there are pieces of the implementation plan that have been confirmed.

- Schools and programs with site visits scheduled for fall 2018 and spring 2019 (accreditation terms expiring December 31, 2018 & later) will use the new criteria.
- Schools and programs who have a preliminary self-study due BEFORE January 2018 **and have not scheduled their site visits** will have the option for review under the new criteria. CEPH staff will be in contact with these programs to aide in determining which criteria will apply to their self-study and site visit.
- All schools and program are encouraged to attend the Criteria Rollout Meeting on October 30, 2016 in Denver, CO. Learn more details about and register for the event [here](#).

What happened to the five core knowledge areas?

While we anticipate that the traditional five core areas will not be explicitly referenced in the new criteria, fundamental knowledge and skills required of public health practitioners will still be a curricular requirement. In working through the proposal for curricular standards that align with the needs of current and future public health practitioners in all settings, the Council carefully considered the work done by the Framing the Future Task Force Expert Panels, the NBPHE Job Task Analysis and the Council on Linkages.

Participants in each of those efforts, practitioners in multiple sectors and academics, were asked to consider the needs of the current and future public health workforce. None of those efforts categorized those needs in terms of the current five core areas. The new criteria will identify the basic skills and knowledge expected of all graduates, including knowledge and skills traditionally gained through the five core areas, but also skills in high demand from employers such as communication, professionalism and leadership.

A number of schools and programs have already begun to innovate, addressing core knowledge in interdisciplinary formats that do not require a class in each of the five core knowledge areas, while maintaining compliance with existing criteria. We hope that criteria revisions will advance and support additional innovation.

Is it possible that increased flexibility in criteria will contribute to diminishing rigor or to loss of identity for the profession?

To be a member of a profession involves specialized knowledge, which is applied from a theoretical basis, and usually requires intensive academic preparation. Preparation of a professional requires hands on, supervised practice, which results in the professional having significant autonomy over his or her own work. Professions have standards and ethics. More practically, recognized professions often have accreditation and credentialing bodies. Public health assuredly identifies as a profession, and updating the required knowledge and skills to better match the needs of employers and the communities it serves will not change that.

The new criteria will continue to require a structured foundational curriculum with explicit expectations about student learning; however, schools and programs will have increased flexibility in how they deliver the skills and knowledge to students and the ability to tailor instruction around foundational knowledge and skills to

the institution's specific mission and goals. Students will still be required to take public health coursework in addition to the core requirements; achieve additional, often specialized, knowledge and skills; demonstrate practical applications of skills; and complete an integrative experience.

CEPH is conscious of the delicate balance required to honor each school and program's context-specific needs and strengths with standards that ensure a certain level of proficiency among all graduates of accredited schools and programs.

Is CEPH considering changing the minimum number of credits from 42? We face pressure to get students through the program quickly and cost is always a concern to our students.

At this point, the Council has not discussed a change to the minimum number of credits. This standard was implemented in the 2005 criteria revision and is regarded to be working well in most cases. Prior to 2005, schools and programs continued to offer the MPH for fewer and fewer credits, and a minimum had to be set to ensure quality and comparability. CEPH is discussing alternative methods for "earning" credits, however, based on continuing developments in higher education.

Is CEPH in contact with ASPPH and other organizations about this process to ensure a coordinated effort?

Yes, CEPH staff and Councilors are regularly in contact with other public health organizations and workgroups to inform this effort. In fact, staff members and Councilors have served on the task forces and workgroups that developed the following resources, which are being considered in the development of the new criteria:

- [Framing the Future Task Force](#)
- [An MPH Degree for the 21st Century](#)
- [DrPH Degree Report](#)
- [NBPHE Job Task Analysis](#)
- [Undergraduate Baccalaureate Critical Component Elements Report](#)
- [Council on Linkages Core Competencies for Public Health Professionals](#)

Is CEPH considering writing different standards for online schools/programs and other alternative delivery programs?

No, CEPH is focused on the quality of the curriculum and program offerings regardless of delivery method. The US Department of Education requires that there be a specific standard about distance education, and CEPH uses this standard to ensure that the curriculum has the same rigor and depth as a curriculum delivered in a more traditional format.

Is CEPH hoping to attract new school or program applicants by revising the criteria?

CEPH's responsibility is to ensure the quality of those schools and programs that exist and choose to pursue accreditation; it is not our role to initiate relationships with schools and programs. Therefore, the number of accredited schools and programs is not a consideration for CEPH.

How do these criteria relate to CEPH's criteria for standalone baccalaureate programs (SBP)?

The SBP criteria were developed in 2013 through a process of engaging with stakeholders and CEPH considers their content to be current best practice. The curricular component (Criterion 4.0) of these criteria will likely be adopted in large part in the new criteria for those graduate-level schools and programs that have associated baccalaureate programs. In fact, many schools and programs with undergraduate public

health degrees in their unit of accreditation already have chosen to use the new curricular standards prescribed in the SBP criteria in current reviews. CEPH has encouraged this on a case-by-case basis. If your school or program would like to use these standards, please contact your CEPH staff liaison.

I have ideas to share. How can I submit my feedback?

- Use the comment form to submit comments by September 7, 2016.
- If you have comments about the CEPH criteria or procedures at ANY time, you may email them to [Laura](#) or [Mollie](#). Many revisions to both criteria and procedures originate directly from our stakeholders.

CEPH will continue to solicit feedback throughout this process and will advertise these opportunities through email, the CEPH newsletter, the CEPH website, our Facebook and LinkedIn pages and during workshops, trainings and technical assistance sessions.

CEPH believes that engaging with stakeholders at every step of the process will produce the best product and has made an effort to keep our constituents involved from the beginning of this latest effort: