

# MPH Competency Examination

## Purpose

The purpose of the Competency Exam is to assess students' substantive and integrative knowledge of the field of Public Health. The exam draws from students' previous studies thereby eliciting the broad and comprehensive knowledge and understanding required in transitioning to practical experiences. The exam is meant to be a bridge between the concepts, theories, and skills presented in program coursework and the critical analysis demanded in the field for a successful practicum experience.

## Enrollment

Students are expected to undertake the Competency Exam after completion of the first five core courses in the Master's program (15 hours). It may be taken concurrently with HLTH 511 provided the other five courses have been passed. Ideally the test should be taken within the first 25 hours of the MPH program. To officially begin the Competency Exam the student must request enrollment in the exam by means of email to the Practicum Coordinator for the Department of Public and Community Health. Students who are inadvertently enrolled in HLTH 698 without having passed the Competency Exam must pass the exam during the first week of the exam or will be dismissed from the course until the Competency Exam is successfully completed.

## Examination Procedures

The Competency Exam is comprised of foundational public health information and the 22 CEPH prescribed public health competencies. The test is presented in the Blackboard environment. The entire examination contains 50 multiple choice or true/false questions worth two points each. Students have a maximum of two hours to complete the test.

The student must receive a passing grade of at least 70% to be successful. Students who successfully complete the Competency Exam, all portfolio assignments, and concentration courses can subsequently email the Practicum Coordinator for directions regarding enrollment into HLTH 698.

If the initial attempt at the Competency Exam results in a failing grade, the student will have a second chance to retake the entire examination and earn a passing grade. If the student receives a failing grade on the second attempt, the student will be given the opportunity to retake the exam a third time. If this attempt results in a failing grade, an analysis of the student weakness will be completed by a faculty panel and the student will be required to retake core courses focused on the competencies in the area in which they failed to demonstrate acquisition of knowledge and/or other remedial activities. After completing the core courses and/or remedial activities the student will then be

given a final attempt to retake the exam. If this attempt results in failure, the student will be dismissed from the graduate program.

## Technical Difficulties

If you should be locked out of any portion of the exam, please email the Practicum Coordinator or Program Director and request that portion to be reset.

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## Answers to Frequently Asked Questions

- The competency exam has been a part of the Practicum course (HLTH 698) since inception of the MPH program in 2011. The policies and procedures for the exam were changed to the current format in Fall 2018 semester to better assess student readiness for the practicum experience.
- Students are required to complete the comprehensive exam in order to graduate. This requirement will not be waived for any student.
- Students are expected to undertake the comprehensive examination once the five core courses (501, 503, 505, 507, and 509) in the master's program (15 hours) are completed.
- Students are strongly advised to keep their textbooks for all 500 level courses. The exam is open-book. Students who do not keep their textbooks are strongly advised to repurchase their books for completion of their exam. The department does not have textbooks for lending.
- Students who are inadvertently enrolled in HLTH 698 without having passed the competency exam will be dismissed from the course if the competency exam is not successfully completed in the first week of the term. The student will be unable to request enrollment in HLTH 698 until the following semester provided the exam has been successfully completed.
- The competency exam requirement will not be waived for any student.
- Students are advised to enroll in the Competency Exam as soon as possible after the completion of their core courses. Students are advised to give themselves ample time to pass the exam before they need to enroll in their practicum course (do not wait until the last week or days before the course enrollment deadline for the sub term).

- No course requirements override will be given for the comprehensive exam to meet deadlines for course enrollment.
- The exam consists of 50, true/false and/or multiple choice questions and is taken online through Blackboard. A study guide of suggested study areas is available online. Students are given two hours to complete the exam and are encouraged to utilize the entire allotted time. The exam is open-book; however, students are cautioned that the allotted 2-hour time period may not be adequate to research each question.
- To request enrollment into the Competency Exam e-mail [gmorales11@liberty.edu](mailto:gmorales11@liberty.edu). Remember to include your name and student ID number in your message.