

**Graduate School of Public Health
Educational Policies and Curriculum Committee
Meeting Minutes | October 3, 2019**

Present: Matt Borkowski, Cindy Bryce, Jessica Burke, Mary Derkach, Ying Ding, Patricia Documet, Jim Fabisiak, Eleanor Feingold, David Finegold, Nancy Glynn, Robin Leaf, Karrie Lukin, Noble Maseru, Josh Mattila, Susanna Qiao, Giovanna Rappocciolo, Kimberly Rehak, John Shaffer, Martha Terry, and Yi-Chuan Yu.

The meeting was called to order at 1:30PM by Dr. Patricia Documet, chair.

Welcome new student members, Patricia Documet

Dr. Patricia Documet, EPCC chair, welcomed the new student representatives to the committee:

- Doctoral-level primary representative: Susanna Qiao, earning a PhD in Epidemiology
- Master's-level primary representative: Yi-Chuan Yu, earning an MS in Epidemiology

ACTION: No action necessary.

GRE discussion and next steps, All

Dr. Patricia Documet recapped the EPCC committee's past discussions on whether to eliminate the GRE requirement at the school-level. The main arguments for eliminating the requirement were to diversify the student applicant pool and to remain competitive with other schools of public health. The committee voted in favor of keeping the GRE requirement at the school level but to revisit the conversation if any of those conditions changed.

As Boston University School of Public Health has dropped the GRE requirement on a three-year probational period and as student enrollment at Pitt Public Health was lower this year than in previous years, the EPCC committee decided to reopen the discussion of the GRE requirement. Committee members were to discuss the issue with their departments and report their findings.

Dr. Noble Maseru, from the Center for Health Equity, reported that 60-80% of minority candidates decline admission to Pitt Public Health. He said he suspects that lack of resources is a big reason for that.

Dr. Martha Terry said that, as the BCHS MPH program director, she finds GRE scores helpful for predicting performance for MPH core courses in biostatistics and epidemiology. For doctoral students, there were some BCHS faculty who thought that the school could drop the GRE, as they use a holistic admissions process. However, whether the department would vote to keep the GRE as a requirement was unclear.

Dr. Ying Ding reported that Biostatistics thinks that the quantitative GREs are important for establishing a threshold for admissions, especially for doctoral applicants. For master's-level students, Biostatistics faculty were not averse to dropping the requirement at the school-level. However, if the school decided to drop the GRE requirement, Biostatistics thought it was pertinent to find some other way to assess student quantitative ability and support students who may struggle with more quantitatively rigorous core courses.

Dr. James Fabisiak said that EOH faculty thought that the GRE's were useful for showing quantitative abilities for master's-level students, especially those with foreign education or those who attended smaller institutions in the US. For PhD students, the EOH department could be more flexible with requiring GRE quantitative scores.

Dr. Nancy Glynn stated that the Epidemiology department would retain the GRE regardless of whether the school keeps the requirement. Also, she mentioned that the number of students in

her department are not down and suggested that financial aid packages might help with regaining numbers at the school-level.

The HPM department wanted to market holistic admissions but keep the GRE requirement, with 70% of faculty voting in favor.

Dr. John Shaffer reported that faculty in the Human Genetics department were split as to whether to require the GRE. There was some ambivalence about forcing the requirement at the school level and at the program-level.

The IDM department thought that the GRE test was a good resource for evaluating international applicants but realize that test scores do not correlate with success in departmental programs and can sometimes be a hindrance for recruitment.

Student committee members said that they thought the GRE requirement could be kept but without a strict threshold. Additionally, keeping the requirement for international students but not domestic applicants raises the question about whether the requirement would be waived for international applicants with an American education. Karrie Lukin, Pitt Public Health's admissions and recruitment manager, said that it would be difficult for her office to manage multiple GRE requirements and that certain candidates can already have conditions where, if met, the GRE can be waived.

ACTION: Pitt Public Health faculty will discuss the GRE requirement at the faculty retreat on October 21, 2019, and EPCC representatives will report back with a summary of the discussion. Additionally, the committee will review how financial incentives and recruitment efforts pan out with the next admissions cycle.

Accelerated bachelor's/master's degree program credit limit, Cindy Bryce

Dr. Cindy Bryce, associate dean for student affairs, presented concerns regarding the accelerated bachelor's + master's degree program, for which the most recent cohort of students totals 7. In August 2019, the accelerated program switched from a 3+2 to a 4+1 program, providing a nice tuition discount for students, but complicating issues with regards to credit limits as undergraduate students can take up to 18 credits per term. One student in the current cohort will earn the necessary credits for the MPH degree in three semesters. The main concern with allowing accelerated students to take more than the 15 credits allowed for Pitt Public Health graduate students is that accelerated students will lose out on the graduate student experience, including opportunities to network, participate in leadership roles in student groups, and certificate programs. Pitt Public Health would need to come up with a credit limit policy for these students and pass it to the undergraduate institution for implementation.

ACTION: The committee voted to approve a policy in accelerated students are limited to 15 credits per term (with a 16th credit permitted if approved by the program director of the student's graduate degree program) for their fourth year of undergraduate study.

Modified Course – IDM 2040: *Scientific Communication*, Josh Mattila

Dr. Josh Mattila presented an application for a major course modification for the IDM 2040: Scientific Communication course. Suggested modifications were based on feedback received after two iterations of the course and scheduling conflicts that IDM students experienced at the School of Medicine. Moving forwards, the course will be offered in the spring term as opposed to the summer. Ethics content will be added to the scientific communication syllabus, changing the course from 1 credit to 2—which raised concern from EPCC committee members regarding program credit and scheduling requirements.

ACTION: The committee members agreed that the changes submitted in the proposal were significant enough to constitute a new course. Dr. Mattila should submit a new course

application and present at a future EPCC meeting. Additionally, he should talk to IDM program directors to gauge whether the extra credit requirement will limit options for students.

Preview Epidemiology Course Restructuring, Samar El Khoundary and Maria Brooks

Drs. Samar El Khoundary and Maria Brooks presented a preview of and explanation for an upcoming restructuring of the epidemiology methods courses and course progression/sequencing, motivated in large part by the restructuring of the biostatistics' curricula as well as changes to EPIDEM 2187. Gaps in the EPI methods sequences, particularly in parametric longitudinal analysis and survival data analysis topics.

Upcoming curricular changes are, as follows: change the name to EPIDEM 2180—from Epidemiological Methods 1 to Epidemiological Methods 1/ Intermediate Epidemiological Methods—and make minor content changes; remove EPIDEM 2187: Epidemiological Methods 2 and replace it with two new 3-credit courses—Epidemiological Methods 2/ Epidemiological Methods of Longitudinal and Time-to- Event Analysis (Primary instructor: Samar El Khoundary) and EPIDEM 2191: Epidemiological Methods 3/ Advanced Theory and Methods for the Analysis of Epidemiological Data (Primary instructor: Ashley Naimi); change the title of EPIDEM 2230 from Advanced Topics in Epidemiological Methods to Secondary Data Analysis and make a minor change in emphasis.

ACTION: The committee approved the pre-proposal.

Modified Course – EPIDEM 2220: *Introduction to Environmental Epidemiology*, Evelyn Talbott (at 3:15pm)

Dr. Evelyn Talbott presented an application for a modified course motivated by the implementation of changes to its companion course (EPIDEM 2221). Geospatial analysis has been removed from the syllabus, which changed the total number of credits from 3 to 2. However, some introductory lectures on ArcMap will be included in the syllabus for EPIDEM 2220 along with the main course content that involves the association between environmental risk factors and disease.

ACTION: The committee members voted to approve the changes provided they list Ravi K. Sharma as Adjunct Assistant Professor, remove “be able to” from Learning Objective #1 and “At the end of class, the students should be able to” from Learning Objective #6, and delete the departmental information for the instructor and co-instructor from the semester schedule. Additionally, the change in credits requires that this course receive a new number.

Approval of September Meeting Minutes, All

The committee members voted to approve the minutes, provided that a typo in Dr. Patrica Documet's last name was fixed.

The meeting was adjourned at 3:30pm.

Upcoming Meeting(s):

November 7, 2019 – 1:30-3:30 p.m. (1149 Public Health) | *Set spring term meeting schedule*

December 5, 2019 – 1:30-3:30 p.m. (1149 Public Health)