



APHEA

Agency for Public Health
Education Accreditation

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY FOR THE ACCREDITATION REVIEW OF

Master of Public Health



School of Public Health in Bytom,
Medical University of Silesia in Katowice,
Poland.

Accreditation Granted February 2020 to February 2026

AGENCY FOR PUBLIC HEALTH EDUCATION ACCREDITATION
SITE VISIT DATES: Monday 9th to Wednesday 11th December 2019

SITE VISIT TEAM:
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Executive Summary

The site visit Team (hereafter referred to as "the Team") would like to thank all those involved with the site visit and for the preparation of the self-evaluation documentation (SED), the Curriculum Validation process and the logistical preparations and hospitality during the visit. The carefully prepared and detailed documentation provided the Team with a clear understanding of the Programme and a baseline from which to verify, clarify and engage in discussion and debate with various internal and external partners and stakeholders during the site visit.

Criterion I: Governance and Organisation of the Programme

The team recognise that the programme exists inside a University centric environment with a top down decision making which perhaps offers limitations in the areas that the programme and school wish to pursue. The team also note that there is a transition to the new law in Poland, which occurs against a back drop of a lack of understanding in the wider community as to the role and purpose of modern public health. The programme has witnessed a fall in the number of students over recent years but against this background the team noted that the programme has very supportive stakeholders and alumni. There were a number of areas identified that the team felt the school and programme could lead innovation within the university. The school and programme have an evidently clear identity internally but are encouraged to project this identity more widely externally.

Criterion II: Aims and Objectives of the Public Health Programme

The programme aims are evidentially shared between the school, the university and external stakeholders. However, the international aims and intentions were rather less clear. The programme is richly embedded locally but there was an awareness by the team that the programme wished to increase its international exposure. As a result, the recommendation is that the programme reflect on its present internationalisation strategy and what it could bring to the programme, in terms of student mobility, shared classes of international and Polish students.

Both at the level of the School and the programme, the team felt there could be improvements in visibility especially against a national background where public health is not clearly understood. One area would be to rethink the programme and school's unique selling points (value propositions), such as the solid regional embeddedness and the (post-renovation) facilities. At the same time, the programme needs to make more use of stakeholder partnerships and take the lead in self-promotion and not be constrained by the University. For example, it may wish to explore recent initiatives to promote public health understanding in the University and region for example, the "This is Public Health" initiative run by ASPHER.

The team felt that there were building blocks already in place concerning who is propelling the school and programme and a recommendation would be to think about the introduction of CPD (Continuous Professional Development) courses to engage stakeholders and alumni more regularly into the school. The team found that the implementation and monitoring of the learning outcomes was clearly attained and transparent.

Criterion III: The Curriculum

The learning outcomes evidently demonstrated a range of theoretical, practical and social competences which were highly appreciated locally by stakeholders, students and alumni and gave the programme a practical outlook. The evolution of the programme at the school exhibited the transition from a bio-medical programme into a more holistic public health programme incorporating the more social aspects of public health. However, there were still some gaps that, according to the panel, needs to be filled, such as integration of sociology and qualitative methods which would further enhance the direction towards a holistic programme. The programme presently has several pathways available which were not being taken by students which may be seen to detract from what is a very good programme. During transition the school will need to make decisions about which pathways to keep, which new ones to develop but also be aware that they may need to withdraw some to keep the programme relevant to the region and student base. What was clearly noted was that the alumni and stakeholders had clear ideas about the future direction of pathways which

included, amongst others, digitalisation and Health Economics which aren't currently explored.

There are a range of teaching methods employed in the programme but the team felt it would benefit by embracing a more holistic pedagogical approach which is shared across the teaching staff and which might be imbedded within the programme and staff training albeit within the remits of the new state law. As such the programme may consider initially bringing in external pedagogic experts to identify the range of pedagogy available to teach particular subjects and provide training for the staff on the process and theory of pedagogical methodology and concepts. In this respect the programme may wish to look at the formulation of a teacher training course embedded within human resource planning.

The team recognised the quick turnaround of marking on the final exam which was set at three days but would emphasise the need to produce meaningful feedback for the students and therefore the programme may consider a more formalised mechanism of feedback. It was felt that the onus was on the students to ask the faculty for feedback and the programme would be encouraged to ensure that there is an automatic provision of feedback by the faculty.

Thesis marking was found to be an internal exercise conducted by one person which may pose a risk for the student, the programme and the faculty. Therefore, the team would encourage the programme to consider exploring alternative measures, such as double blind marking by anonymising the scripts. The team would also emphasise the need to calibrate marking between departments to ensure that there is consistency in the marking process. An area worth exploring in this regard would be to conduct staff group exercises and training.

The international office deserves special praise for being proactive with the Erasmus project and the programme should look to engage this department more as they pursue their international agenda. Although it was apparent that local students were not overly keen to take on courses in English, the programme is encouraged to continue to pursue the provision of English courses for all students and engage local students.

Criterion IV: Students and Graduates

The admission process at the school is determined by the University statutes but appear to be rather quantitative. Prospective students have to submit a broad range of documents which is then checked against a list of required paperwork rather than assessing the suitability of the student. Faculty at the school are expected to review the documentation which, through discussion in the meetings, did not appear to be an appropriate use of staff time. As such the team would recommend the school consider using administration to check through the quantitative depositions with oversight by the faculty. The team also wondered whether the bureaucratic collection of data was potentially off-putting to future students and would encourage the programme to pursue a routine follow-up of applicants who had shown an interest. Although the admissions process is determined at a university level the team would encourage the programme to look at the qualitative elements contained within the paperwork such as work experience. Evidently the University establishes the minimum requirement of a bachelor degree but the school should strive to capture the best possible students and therefore may require discussion with the University regarding the acceptance of work experience as a valid entry requirement on to the programme.

Part of the historical tradition mentioned above, along with the top-down nature of the admission process, requires that potential students obtain a medical certificate as part of the admission process. It is the duty of education to ensure equitable access and this aspect, determined by the University and government, seems rather anachronistic and the programme is encouraged to take the lead and challenge this University's requirement. Having noted this, an example of a student with visual impairment was given during the meetings and how across the programme, attempts were made for their inclusion in the learning processes. Commending this, the review team would encourage that the school look to introduce school-wide policies to ensure inclusion as a constant rather than on an individual or ad hoc basis.

The programme monitored student workload informally and were urged to think about how to formalise this monitoring to include both classroom and home-based workloads. To reduce workload burdens, the programme may wish to further explore how much of the programme may be delivered in alternative online formats. This was seen as especially important given that the student body was also working alongside their studies. The

programme equally applied an informal monitoring of career progression. It was evident from the interviews with alumni and faculty that the programme was very aware of what careers the alumni were following and were in contact with them regularly. However, this was seen to be based on individual and personal connections rather than through a formal monitoring system. Formally there was monitoring at a University level but covered the entire student body and did not allow for the analysis of trends within the public health graduate body. As such, the programme is encouraged once again to take the lead and to investigate ways to formally monitor the career progression of their graduate population. This monitoring can then be recycled into marketing for the programme which could include website testimonials from their graduates who were evidently enthusiastic and willing to help the school and programme. Increased interaction with the alumni could help to promote the programme within different communities, including high-schools (an alumni suggestion). Alumni could also be invited to give guest lectures based on their use of their learning from the programme and their practice.

The master programme clearly fits in between the school's bachelor and PhD provision and the bachelor programme was seen to provide a stream of students for the master programme, As such the programme's recruitment should consider how to bring in more potential students through the bachelor route. At the same time the programme is evidently aware of the challenges of teaching together the bachelor graduates and new students with limited public health knowledge. As a suggestion the team would recommend the programme explore the possibility of introducing a short non-credit bearing foundation course to equalise the knowledge of the student body at the beginning of the cohort to reduce knowledge gaps. The introduction of more non-bachelor students from the working population also offers great opportunities for the programme to introduce student led discussion or flipped classrooms to draw upon the knowledge of this group of students.

Criterion V: Human Resources and Staffing

The programme and the school were clearly multi-disciplinary and contained a diverse background of faculty which was reflected in the teaching experiences of students and

alumni. However, the programme is encouraged to continue to survey the potential HR gaps, for example, to increase sociology and qualitative methods specialities.

The staff of the programme were clearly research driven and presented high quality research publications to the team. The programme might wish to consider the integration of more inter departmental sharing of research which could be used to enhance profile of the school and the programme.

The team met with a range of devoted teaching staff and as part of discussions understood that due to the new law changes to promotion criteria now included didactics (teaching) along with research. However, there appeared to be limited coordinated pedagogic exposure to alternative practices and methods amongst the faculty body. As a recommendation, the programme may wish to look to bring in outside trainers to help with fostering a holistic theoretical understanding to pedagogic philosophies and improve on the present range of pedagogic practices. The focus could be to look at generating a core group in the school to act as pedagogical champions to share new ideas throughout the different departments to intensify communication, cooperation and synchronization. This would be something quite new for the region and the school and programme may wish to take the lead in establishing a short-certificated course which could be integrated into new innovative faculty practices which could be used as a selling point to potential students. The team also noted that the programme uses external and international lecturers which is to be commended and continued.

Criterion VI: Supportive Services, Budgeting and Facilities

The school in Bytom is presently undergoing major renovations and the team had the opportunity to visit some of the new facilities which are of an extremely high quality. This also included an array of modern equipment which the team felt might be utilised further through potentially commercialising some of the facilities and offering them to the external community, for example environmental laboratories.

The team noted that the programme drew a heavy reliance on the website to communicate with the students and all students and alumni referenced how much they used the website.

However, the programme may also wish to consider using a modular level handbook which could bring together the programme and include, module aims, learning outcomes, pedagogic methods, reference to reading materials, assessment, syllabus etc. All of these details were housed within the programme's previously submitted and successful Curriculum Validation application and would require only a small adjustment.

Criterion VII: Internal Quality Management

There exists faculty and university quality management systems which feed into each other and were seen as good practice. Clearly processes at the programme level existed for monitoring the aims and competences but it remained slightly unclear how the central University monitoring related to the programme and how this is used within a quality improvement cycle. As a consequence, the team would encourage the programme and school to focus on outcomes and how the data is used and interpreted. This could be achieved on a cohort basis to enable inter-cohort interpretation with the aim to improve the programme as a whole.

The programme demonstrated that large parts of an internal quality system are in place but there appeared to be too much reliance on the students volunteering feedback and the focus of this feedback being too narrowly concentrated on teacher evaluation and not on an overall programme content evaluation. This included a potential lack of feedback at a modular level which was seen to potentially restrict the ability of the programme to create and innovate within cohort cycles. Equally, the team noted that there were insufficient feedback loops as students were not informed why they were expected to give feedback, what happened to their feedback, what actions were implemented as a result and how those actions were monitored. As a result, the team recommended that the programme should adopt a quality cycle synonymous with a public health problem solving paradigm which is well understood by the staff on the programme and in the school. Informal feedback mechanisms were evident and as the programme strives to integrate more formalisation they should take care not to lose the closeness associated with informality but to ensure processes are clear and transparent (i.e. to formalise existing processes without losing the personal touch).

Furthermore, the programme should strive to develop module level evaluations with focus on module content and not just the teacher and to think about the mechanisms needed to increase student feedback and ownership of the process. For example, the programme may wish to use the feedback in introducing a faculty “best practice” award to reward faculty and demonstrate use of student feedback. The programme is also encouraged to investigate training on providing, receiving and interpreting feedback. An example given was the “you said we did” processes abundant through many Universities. Finally, the programme is recommended to ensure they close their quality loops. Data is being routinely collected but this needs to be interpreted and implemented in to action and then monitored.

The programme has an enviable and enthusiastic set of stakeholders and alumni but it was felt that the potential contribution these groups could make to the programme and school were not being sufficiently taken advantage of. The recommendations were that the programme should aim to formalise their collaborations through (inexhaustive) vehicles such as, advisory boards, MoUs, guest lecturing, practicums, conducting needs assessment with regard to their service needs, contacting the networks of their networks or research collaborations. The programme could also think about providing CPD requirements and servicing needs of stakeholders which would increase the trainer traffic through school and ultimately increase promotion and institutional awareness raising.

As previously mentioned, the programme had introduced pathways in a drive to attract greater student numbers but some of these had not received any prospective applications. However, it was clear that stakeholders and alumni had strong ideas about what pathways were needed and both groups forwarded ideas to the review team including digitalisation, law, economics and demography. The programme therefore needs to elucidate a mechanism to discuss this routinely with stakeholders which will require interactivity but not over formality, for example a social event which students could also attend. The programme should also challenge the top down nature of activities prescribed by the University by creating and developing new traditions of communications, collaboration and partnerships.

Summary of Conclusions

Criterion I: Governance and Organisation of the Programme	
Sub – Criterion 1.1	Met
Sub – Criterion 1.2	Met
Sub – Criterion 1.3	Met
Sub – Criterion 1.4	Met
Criterion II: Aims and Objectives of the Public Health Programme	
Sub – Criterion 2.1	Met with comments
Sub – Criterion 2.2	Met
Sub – Criterion 2.3	Met
Sub – Criterion 2.4	Met
Criterion III: The Curriculum	
Sub – Criterion 3.1	Met
Sub – Criterion 3.2	Met
Sub – Criterion 3.3	Met
Sub – Criterion 3.4	Met with comments
Sub – Criterion 3.5	Met with comments
Sub – Criterion 3.6	Met
Sub – Criterion 3.7	Met
Sub – Criterion 3.8	Met
Criterion IV: Students and Graduates	
Sub – Criterion 4.1	Met with comments
Sub – Criterion 4.2	Met
Sub – Criterion 4.3	Met
Sub – Criterion 4.4	Met with comments
Sub – Criterion 4.5	Met
Criterion V: Human Resources and Staffing	
Sub – Criterion 5.1	Met
Sub – Criterion 5.2	Met
Criterion VI: Supportive Services, Budgeting and Facilities	
Sub – Criterion 6.1	Met
Sub – Criterion 6.2	Met
Sub – Criterion 6.3	Met
Sub – Criterion 6.4	Met
Criterion VII: Internal Quality Management	
Sub – Criterion 7.1	Met with comments
Sub – Criterion 7.2	Met with comments
Sub – Criterion 7.3	Met with comments
Sub – Criterion 7.4	Met