

Programme doctoral « Santé, Médecine et Société »

Doctoral Program “Santé, Médecine et Société” (Health, Medicine and Society)

“Benchmarking” and comparison with similar existing programs

The doctoral program “Santé, médecine et société” [“Health, Medicine and Society”], coordinated by the Institute of Health Law (IDS) at the University of Neuchâtel (Switzerland), seeks to approach and understand contemporary health conditions through the lens of social sciences and humanities. This specialization in social sciences and humanities is the signature strength of the program, and constitutes an original and unique offer in the academic landscape of the French-speaking part of Western Switzerland. Also in an international perspective, this program constitutes one of the few doctoral programs in Health Studies and Public Health worldwide with this specific specialization, and is presumably the only such program taught in French.

Indeed, the majority of, and most longstanding doctoral programs in public health, are proposed at universities located in North America (see the selection of the 10 most representative programs in annexed table). They follow North American standards of graduate schools, granting a Master degree and a PhD in one curriculum and engaged in after receiving the Bachelor degree, with a duration of between 4 to 5 years. In Europe, the only comparable doctoral program is the “PHOENIX Erasmus + Joint Doctoral Program on Dynamics of Health and Welfare” that is proposed since 2011. Financed by an Erasmus Mundus fund, PHOENIX is a joint project of the University of Evora (Portugal), the Ecole des Hautes Etudes en Sciences Sociales (EHESS, France), the University of Linköping (Sweden) and the National School of Public Health of the Nova University of Lisbon (Portugal). Also, an annually week-long module entitled “Social Sciences in Public Health” has been organized since last year by the Institute of Social and Preventive Medicine (ISPM) at the University of Bern (Switzerland) in collaboration with other Swiss academic partners within the frame of the “PhD Program in Public Health” of the Swiss School of Public Health (SSPH+). The teaching language of both these programs is English and, to our knowledge, there is no doctoral program of this kind taught in French or in German.

This report aims at outlining the most salient aspects of the 10 most representative International doctoral programs with a social sciences and humanities orientation. We will concentrate here on offers in English, German and French, as these are the three languages that are relevant for our program. Some key questions that we will address include:

1. What is the appellation of the program? Which terms and categories are used to qualify a social sciences- and humanities-informed doctoral program in public health and health sciences?
2. What is the overall structure of the program and the corresponding curriculum (courses and overall teaching, duration, presence or absence of a required core of courses)?

3. What is the target audience?
4. In which department(s) are the programs hosted?
5. Are they the fruit of an interfaculty or interuniversity collaboration?

The tables annexed at the end of this report summarize these main aspects. In what follows, the main conclusions that can be drawn from this comparison will be outlined, with the intention of successfully conceptualizing the SMS with its signature strength in social sciences and humanities, and designing a good communion with the targeted public (both the PhD students and their professors).

1. Appellations of programs

First, with regard to the appellations of the existing programs, it should be noted that the name of the North American programs very often include the term “Behavioral and Social Sciences”, which is commonly used in the Anglo-Saxon tradition as Behavioral Sciences, as conceived of in the Anglo-Saxon tradition, encompass disciplines that are considered social sciences and humanities in the French-speaking tradition, such as psychology for example, as well as disciplines generally associated with so-called “hard” sciences in the French-speaking tradition, such as neurosciences for example. This terminology is often combined with the keyword “health.” Interestingly, the term “public health” is seldom used in the appellations of the programs, presumably to clearly signal the specificity of their orientation in social sciences and humanities (and social and behavioral sciences) compared to the vast offer of doctoral programs in public health. Hence also terms such as “Community Health Sciences” or “Population Health Sciences” are used. The appellation of the doctoral program of the University of Columbia stands as an exception here with its use of the term “Socio-medical sciences” that has been conceptualized within the walls of the university and confers the signature and specificity of the program. The European program “PHOENIX Erasmus + Joint Doctoral Program on Dynamics of Health and Welfare” can be seen as another exception to the usual appellation rule as it is the only one that conveys the term “welfare” juxtaposed with “health.”

2. Overall structure of the program and the corresponding curriculum

The structure of the curriculums (duration, periodization and content) vary significantly among the programs, and even more so between the North American programs and the European ones. Indeed, the North American programs generally begin at the undergraduate level / Bachelor degree and cover both the Master and the doctoral degrees, with a duration lasting from 2 to 5 years full-time. The educational aim of all North American programs is the defense of the dissertation by the students.

The structure and the content of the courses and the teaching, and the repartition among disciplines, topics and subdomains vary significantly among the programs, too. This is an important aspect, as no standard regarding the content of the courses and the programs seems to emerge. All North American programs include a core of required courses. But they vary considerably in number (from 5 to 12) and content. However, it should be noted that to all programs’ core courses contain epidemiology and methods in social sciences (mainly quantitative and statistics, but to a lesser extent qualitative as well, in red in table 2), and that most of them contain an introduction to public health. As for the topics covered (in blue in table 2), health communication seems to be one of the only recurring course, as it is proposed by 2 of the 10 programs.

Finally, we would like to highlight some of the additional requirements some of the programs demand. Most of the North American programs demand (1) **teaching assistantship** and in one case also a research assistantship. Concerning (2) **online teaching**, the program at Brown University is to be mentioned as it requires two online courses to be taken. The University of Pittsburg leaves the choice between university teaching or five online workshops. Concerning (3) **student mobility** – and this can be explained by the structure of the program (see below) –, it is only the European programs that do require it. The European program Phoenix settles itself apart from the other programs as it is the only one that requires an (4) **internship**.

3. Collaborations

A clear difference between North American and European doctoral programs can be seen in terms of collaborations. Whereas North American programs rely solely and mostly on interfaculty collaborations within their universities, their European pendants inscribe themselves in larger collaboration networks that span over a city (UC London), a nation (SSPH+) or more than one country (Phoenix Erasmus +). This is surely explained by the larger taskforce at North American universities and thus longer standing research and teaching traditions, especially with regard to public health.

4. Target Audience

The target audience of the programs differs considerably but two transversal criteria can be outlined. First, most universities address students holding a Master's degree (or an equivalent as an MD or JD). The Phoenix Erasmus+ constitutes an exception as it also addresses students with a public or private professional background. Second, the disciplinary background of the target audience can be roughly said to be either from (a) public health or (b) social sciences, behavioral sciences and humanities (in the case of the European Phoenix program). Whereas the first category also includes in one case medicine, the latter category includes in its majority students with a disciplinary academic background in (listed here in order of their occurrence): Anthropology (3), Psychology (2), Sociology (2), History (1), Political Science (1), Social Work (1).

5. Modes of assessment

The modes of assessment of most programs function with credits, and require a total ranging between 48 credits (Semester Credit Hours) (George Washington) and 180 credits ECTS (PHOENIX) (see annexed tables). On this matter, one should note that European credits ECTS (European Credit Transfer System), following the Bologna Directives, are not equal to the North American SCH (Semester Credit Hour). ECTS credits represent hours of work load (between 25 and 30 hours of work load per credit), while North American credits are calculated based on contact hours. In this second system, one credit (semester credit hour) corresponds to one contact hour and two hours of preparatory work each week for a term; most courses grant 3 SCH, which represents 45-48 contact hours and circa 90-96 hours of preparatory work. Following this calculation, 1 SCH corresponds to circa 45-48 hours of work load, which equals to between 1.92 and 1.5 ECTS (it is generally the standard 1.67 ECTS = 1 SCH that is used).

However, two of the 10 programs constitute an exception and use milestones, either in addition to credits (Harvard) or as the only system to monitor the progression of the students (Toronto).

Annex 1: Tables – Table 1: Programs comparison (overview)

	Name of the program	Host Department	Collaborations	Target Audience	Duration (yrs)	Assessment
NORTH AMERICA						
Brown	Behavioral and Social Health Sciences	PH	—	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Master’s degree in Public Health or in a behavioral or social science field (e.g., psychology, sociology, anthropology, education, communication). – Research experience relevant to public health is highly desirable 	2 (3 without MA)	Tuition units
Columbia	The Sociomedical Sciences PhD program	Arts and Sciences & PH	Interfaculty (w/ PH)	Students in Psychology, Sociology, Anthropology, History, or Political Science	2, max. 7	Credits
George Washington	Social and Behavioral Sciences in Public Health – PhD	PH	—	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – MPH degree from a Council of Education for Public Health (CEPH) accredited Program – Master’s degree in social, behavioral, or quantitative field 	max. 5	Credits
Harvard	PhD Program Population Health Sciences	Graduate School of Arts and Sciences (before: PH)	Interfaculty (w/ PH)	N/A	4	Credits & Milestones
Johns Hopkins Bloomberg	Doctor of Philosophy (PhD) in Social & Behavioral Sciences	PH	—	Students seeking training for careers in social and behavioral sciences, health education, and health communication	2	Credits
Pittsburg	Doctor of Philosophy in Behavioral and Community Health Sciences	PH	Interfaculty (w/ PH)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Master of science degree in a discipline relevant to public health such as social work or anthropology – MD or JD 	min. 1	Credits
Toronto	PhD: Social and Behavioural Health Sciences	PH	Interfaculty	N/A	4-5	Milestones
EUROPE						
UCLondon	Health & Wellbeing Route 1: The Health Economics and the Social Science Approaches in Public Health & Health	London School of Hygiene & Tropical Medicine (LSHTM) [under the supervision of UCL]	Interuniversity <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – UCL Bloomsbury – University of East London – Birkbeck University of London – London School of Hygiene & Tropical Medicine (LSHTM) 	N/A	1+3 (MA+Phd) 3-4 (PhD)	N/A
CH	SSPH+	PH	All Swiss universities except University of Fribourg, EPFL et ETHZ	N/A	varies	Credits or No Credits
PHOENIX Erasmus +	Joint Doctoral Program on Dynamics of Health and Welfare	—	Interuniversity (Europe-wide) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – University of Evora (Portugal), – Ecole des Hautes Etudes en Sciences Sociales (EHESS, France), – University of Linköping (Sweden) – National School of Public Health of the Nova University of Lisbon (Portugal) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Students with diversified academic backgrounds (social sciences, humanities, public health, medicine, etc.) – and professional (public or private) backgrounds 	3	Credits

Annex 1: Tables – Table 2: Programs comparison (detail) / Part 1

	Curriculum Structure Required Courses	Core (Required)	Content	Additional Requirements
NORTH AMERICA				
Brown	<p>16 tuition units (16 courses total) 5 BSHScore courses (5 required) 4 Methods (Quali & Quanti) courses (3 required + 1 elective) 3 Health Behavior Content Courses (1 required + 2 elective) 3 Statistics courses (2 required + 1 elective) 1 Diversity & Culture course (1 elective)</p>	<p>BHSHCore (5 courses) 1. Research Methods in BS 2. Behavioral and Social Science Theory for Health Promotion 3. PH Interventions 4. Health Communication 5. Proseminar: Intervention Research</p>	<p>(among others) Alcohol, tobacco, substance abuse, obesity, HIV, intervention</p>	<p>– 2x online courses: a) Public Health 101: An Online Course b) Responsible Conduct in Research Training – Weekly Doctoral Seminar – Teaching Assistantship (20h/week) – Teaching Experience (10h week) – Thesis Preparation</p>
Columbia	<p>60 credits (20 courses) 10 courses Public Health (30 credits) 10 courses in chosen discipline (30 credits) [Anthropology, History, Political Science, Psychology, or Sociology]</p>	<p>Public Health (10 courses) 1. Biostatistics (3 credits) 2. Epidemiology (3 credits) 3. Doctoral Seminar: Theoretical Foundations (3 credits) 4. Doctoral Seminar: Contemporary Debates (3 credits) 5. Core Requirements (2 of 5 courses; 1 course = 3 credits) (Medical Sociology, Medical Anthropology, Health Psychology, Social History of Public Health, Introduction to Health Economics) 6. Qualitative Methods (3 credits) 7. Quantitative Methods (3 credits) 8. 2x elective (6 credits)</p>	<p>Depends on chosen discipline (Medical Sociology, Medical Anthropology, Health Psychology, Social history of Health Economics)</p>	<p>– Methods Essay – Theme Essay – Proposal Defense</p>
George Washington	<p>48 credits – Foundational Courses & Research Courses (18 credits [4 required courses à 3 credits + 6 credits elective]) – 3 Required Specialty Field Courses (9 credits) – Dissertation Prep & Dissertation (7 credits) – Specialty Field Electives (14 credits)</p>	<p>Required Foundational Courses (4 courses) 1. Doctoral Research Methods 1: Study Design and Evaluation 2. Qualitative Research Methods and Analysis 3. Doctoral Research Methods 2: Applications 4. Doctoral Seminar: Measurements in Public Health and Health Services Research Required Specialty Field Courses (3 courses) 5. Doctoral Seminar: Advanced Topics in Health Behavior Research & Practice 6. Doctoral Seminar: Advanced Topics: Health Communication Research 7. Behavioral Medicine and Public Health</p>	<p><i>Elective sub-topics</i> 1. Advanced Research Methods and Statistics 2. Social and Behavioral Science (e.g. Social Cognition; Health, Cross Cultural and Community Psychology; Biological Bases of Behavior) 3. Global Health Issues (e.g. Global Health Frameworks, Comparative Global Health Systems, Ethical and Cultural Issues in Global Health Research and Programs) 4. Current Issues in Public Health (e.g. Emerging Infectious Diseases; Law, Medicine & Ethics, Community Organization; Media Advocacy; Health Economics)</p>	<p>– Dissertation Preparation and Dissertation – 8 professional enhancement hours in research ethics topic areas.</p>

Annex 1: Tables – Table 2: Programs comparison (detail) / Part 2

	Curriculum Structure Required Courses	Core (Required)	Content	Additional Requirements
Harvard	<p>68.75 chan credits (18.75 credits core + 35 credits field of study + 15 in specialization)</p> <p>Five fields of study (à 35 credits)</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Environmental Health (EH) 2. Epidemiology (EPI) 3. Global Health and Population (GHP) 4. Nutrition (NUT) <p>5. Social and Behavioral Sciences (SBS)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Specialisation 1: Social Determinants of Health (15 credits) OR – Specialisation 2: Planned Social Change (15 credits) <p>* Chan= Harvard T.H. Chan School of Public Health * FAS= Faculty of Arts and Sciences</p>	<p>Program-wide required courses (4 courses)</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Quantitative Research Methods in Population Health Sciences (10 Chan credits/ 8 FAS credits) 2. Introduction to Epidemiology and Elements of Epidemiological Research, (5 Chan credits/ 4 FAS credits) 3. Introduction to Public Health (2.5 Chan credits/ 2 FAS credits) 4. Responsible Conduct of Research (1.25 credits) <p>Social and Behavioral Sciences (11 courses + 3 in specialisation)</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Society and Health, 2.5 credits* 2. SBS Theory course (2.5 credits) 3. Social and Behavioral Research Methods (Part 1) (5 credits) 4. Multilevel Statistical Methods: Concept & Application, (5 credits) 5. Doctoral Seminar on SBS, (2x1.25 credits) 6. Doctoral Seminar on SBS, (2x1.25 credits) 7. Developing a Research Protocol (2.5 credits) 8. An Introduction to Theories of Disease Distribution & Health Inequities: History, Politics & Public Health (2.5 credits) 9. An Advanced Seminar in Theories of Disease Distribution & Health Inequities: History, Politics & Public Health (2.5 credits) 10. Epidemiologic Methods 2: Elements of Epidemiologic Research, (2.5 credits) 11. Course of choice (2.5 credits) 	<p>Themes of overall program:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - conceptual foundations of population health; - research methods; - ethics of scientific research; - scientific communication and pedagogy (in writing, speaking, visual presentation, and teaching) <p>Required courses in area of specialisation of Social and Behavioral Sciences A: Social Determinants of Health</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Sociology or Policy Course (2.5) 2. Courses in area of expertise (7.5) 3. Human Physiology (5) <p>Required courses in area of specialisation of Social and Behavioral Sciences B: Policy Change</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Community Intervention Research Methods (2.5) 2. Social Science course (2.5) 3. Courses in Area of Expertise (7.5) 4. Courses in Area of Expertise (7.5) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Participation in research assistantships and teaching fellowships – Completion of Study Assessments (e.g. qualifying exam) – Dissertation prospectus – Dissertation / Oral Defense
Johns Hopkins Bloomberg	<p>128 credits 18 credits outside the student's primary department (among these 18 credit units, 9 credits must be satisfactorily completed in two or more departments of the Bloomberg School of Public Health)</p>	<p>Required courses - chronologically (12 courses)</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Statistical Methods in Public Health I (4 credits) 2. Principles of Epidemiology (5 credits) 3. Graduate Seminar (3 credits) 4. Statistical Methods in Public Health II (4 credits) 5. Research Design in the Social and Behavioral Sciences (Graduate Seminar) (3 credits) 6. Statistical Methods in Public Health III (4 credits) 7. Graduate Seminar in Social and Behavioral Sciences (3 credits) 8. Statistical Methods in Public Health IV (4 credits) 9. Graduate Seminar in Social and Behavioral Sciences (3 credits) 10. Research and Proposal Writing Process for Doctoral Students I (2 credits) 11. Public Health Perspectives on Research (2 credits) 12. Research and Proposal Writing Process for Doctoral Students II (2 credits) 13. Research Ethics and Integrity (3 credits) 	<p>(among others)</p> <p>Tobacco, Alcohol, Sexual Orientation & Gender Identity, Sexual Risk Reduction, Poverty, Homelessness, Psychosocial Factors, Latino Health, Popular Diets & Dietary Supplements, Children & Media, Chronic Conditions, Ethical, Legal and Social Implications in Genetics and Genomics</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Advisor Meetings – Dissertation / Oral Defense

Annex 1: Tables – Table 2: Programs comparison (detail) / Part 3

	Curriculum Structure Required Courses	Core (Required)	Content	Additional Requirements
Pittsburg	<p>72 credits and independent research.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Statistical analysis (12 credits) – Research design and methods (10 credits) – Integration of public health research and practice (7 credits) – Theories of behavior and community (6 credits) – Interventions (6 credits) – Milestones (4 credits) – Elective theory and methods (3 credits) <p><i>24 credits may be awarded for a previously earned master's degree toward the 72 credit total.</i></p>	<p>Courses required for the Preliminary Examination</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Intro to Community Health (3 credits) 2. Doctoral Seminar in BCHS [Behavior and Community Health Sciences] Theories and Models (3 credits) 3. Principles of Epidemiology (3 credits) 4. Introduction to Applied Research (3 credits) 5. Ethnographic & Qualitative Methods (3 credits) 6. Intro to Stats 1 (3 credits) 7. Intro to Stats 2 (3 credits) 8. Health Program Evaluation (3 credits) 	<p>Areas</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Theories of behavior and community (6 credits) 2. Research design and methods (10 credits) 3. Elective theory and methods (3 credits) 4. Statistical analysis (12 credits) 5. Interventions (6 credits) 6. Integration of public health research and practice (7 credits) 7. Milestones (4 credits) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – University Teaching OR 5 Workshops at Center for Instructional Development and Distance Education + Course: Teaching Pract. Ind Study [Independent Study] – Preliminary Examination – Comprehensive Examination - Dissertation
Toronto	<p>4 Milestones</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Coursework 2. Qualifying Exam 3. Thesis proposal 4. Thesis defense 	<p>7 required courses</p> <p>1x Introduction to Public Health Research</p> <p>2x Required theory courses</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Social Theory and Health 2. Theories for Health Promotion and Public Health Intervention OR Social and Political Forces in Health Care <p>2x Required methods courses (qualitative and/or quantitative)</p> <p>2x Electives</p>	N/A	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Thesis Proposal/Dissertation
EUROPE				
UCLondon	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
CH	Depends on host institution/program	Depends on host institution/program	Thematic Summer Schools	N/A
PHOENIX Erasmus +	<p>180 ECTS</p> <p><u>Semester 1 (30 ECTS)</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Summer school 1 for all (3 ECTS) – Course(s)/research seminars on relevant theories and/or methods (12 ECTS) – Language course(s) (local and/or mobility university languages (6 ECTS) – Presentation and approval of thesis project proposal (9 ECTS) <p><u>Semester 2 (30 ECTS)</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – First mandatory mobility period (3 months) to consortium university (12 ECTS) – Thesis work, introductory phase (15 ECTS) – Summer school 2 for all (3 ECTS) <p><u>Semester 3-4 (60 ECTS)</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Internship (18 ECTS). – Courses/research seminars (6 ECTS) – Thesis work (36 ECTS) <p><u>Semester 5-6 (60 ECTS)</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Thesis work, presenting results and article at workshops/conferences (60 ECTS) 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. <u>Skill's school week (6 days in Linköping, Sweden)</u> 2. <u>1st Specialization week (6 days in Paris, France)</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – International databases in the field: presentation of management and uses by professionals (5 days) – Evaluation (1 day) 3. <u>2nd Specialization week (5 days in Evora or Lisbon, Portugal)</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Managing Health systems (.); Population Empowerment strategies (patients, users, actors...); Health information and media 4. <u>3rd Specialization week (6 days in Paris, France)</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Social and sanitary intervention, knowledge transfers, evaluation questions (3 days) – Professionalizing workshop (2 days): How to present a CV, job posting, deal with applications, organizing a career. – Evaluation (1 day) 	<p>Can be chosen from courses in related areas and topics of all partner universities</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Internship – Academic Mobility

Annex 2: Links of mentioned programs

North America:

Brown School of Public Health (Providence, Rhode Island, USA)

The School of Public Health at Brown University

Doctoral program in Behavioral and Social Health Sciences

<https://www.brown.edu/academics/public-health/behavioral-and-social-sciences/graduate-programs-behavioral-and-social-science/doctoral-program-behavioral-and-social-health-scienc>

Columbia University

Mailman School of Public Health

The Sociomedical Sciences PhD program

<https://www.mailman.columbia.edu/research/sms-doctoral-programs>

The George Washington University, Washington USA

Milken Institute School of Public Health

Social and Behavioral Sciences in Public Health –PhD

<http://publichealth.gwu.edu/programs/social-and-behavioral-sciences-phd>

Johns Hopkins Bloomberg School of Public Health (Baltimore, USA)

Doctor of Philosophy (PhD) in Social & Behavioral Sciences

<http://www.jhsph.edu/departments/health-behavior-and-society/degree-programs/phd-in-social-and-behavioral-sciences/>

Harvard

Harvard Graduate School of Arts and Sciences (GSAS)

PhD Program Population Health Sciences

<https://www.hsph.harvard.edu/phdphs/>

University of Pittsburg

Pitt Public Health

Doctor of Philosophy in Behavioral and Community Health Sciences

<http://www.publichealth.pitt.edu/behavioral-and-community-health-sciences/academics/phd>

University of Toronto

Dalla Lana School of Public Health

PhD: Social and Behavioural Health Sciences

<http://www.dlsph.utoronto.ca/program/phd-social-and-behavioural-health-sciences/>

Europe:

The UCL, Bloomsbury and East London Doctoral Training Partnership

<http://www.bbk.ac.uk/student-services/financial-support/ucl-doctoral-training-partnership>

Université d'Evora (PT), EHES (FR), Université de Linköping (SE), Université Nova de Lisbonne (PT)

PHOENIX Erasmus +: Erasmus Mundus

Joint Doctoral Program on Dynamics of Health and Welfare

<http://www.phoenix-jdp.eu/>

<http://mundushealthwelfare.ehess.fr/>