2.13 JOINT DEGREES

If the school offers joint degree programs, the required curriculum for the professional public health degree shall be equivalent to that required for a separate public health degree.

2.13.a Identification of joint degree programs. The instructional matrix may be referenced.

The college offers two joint degree programs: the MD/MPH in collaboration with the Quillen College of Medicine, and the PharmD/MPH in collaboration with the Gatton College of Pharmacy.

2.13.b A list and description of how each joint degree program differs from the standard degree program. The school must explain the rationale for any credit sharing or substitution as well as the process for validating that the joint degree curriculum is equivalent.

For each of the joint degree programs, there are no modifications to the MPH curriculum. All joint degree students must complete the 43-hour curriculum, take comprehensive exams, and perform a field practicum that is non-clinical in nature and directly relevant to their concentration. Validation of competency is assured through regular programmatic assessment procedures as outlined in Criterion 2.7.

Applicant students must gain acceptance to each college and admission to one program does not guarantee admission to another. The MPH admissions procedure for the joint programs has been modified to preclude the need for SOPHAS application and to allow for use of the American Medical College Application Service and Pharmacy College Application Service packets for each applicant. These are submitted to the admissions committee and School of Graduate Studies, along with an essay about their interest in and intended use of the MPH degree.

The sponsoring colleges’ student and academic procedures remain their own. The associate deans for academic affairs in each respective college meet every other month to address this program (and other issues). Changes to the program are based on consensus between the two colleges, and when needed are put forward to each respective curriculum committee. Each student has an MPH academic advisor assigned through the usual practices of the program. Advising for course sequencing, logistics, payment and other issues is handled by the MPH coordinator in consultation with the respective academic affairs personnel in each college.

MD/MPH Joint Degree

The MD/MPH program is an articulated joint-degree program wherein students complete the MD requirements at the Quillen College of Medicine and the MPH requirements at the COPH over the course of five years. This program builds, in part, on the experience of ETSU’s “Community Partnerships for Health Professions Education” program, also known as “the rural track” where, to date, more than 700 medical, nursing and public health students have participated in rural community-based inter-disciplinary courses. Medical students can choose this highly inter-professional track in their first year, and these courses are co-listed in each college and counted for credit by each college.

For the MD/MPH in Community Health, 22 credit hours are counted toward both degrees:

1) All students must take the MPH Biostatistics course [BSTA 5310] which counts in lieu of the 1-credit medical school biostatistics and epidemiology course [MEDU 1311],

2) Nine credit hours for the Rural Track “trilogy” coursework, counted as:
   a) COBH 5110 Community Health Assessment Research [listed in medicine as IDMD 1940],
   b) COBH 5120 Health Promotion Planning and Evaluation [IDMD 2950], and
c) COBH 5130 Consulting and Implementation of Health Programs and Services [RPCT 3301 & 3302].

3) Three credit hours are taken for COBH 5377 Health Communications [CSHP 1321],

4) Three credit hours for elective credit are subject to approval by the MPH Coordinator and advisor upon examination of course competencies, and,

5) Six credit hours are earned for the COBH 5850 Public Health Field Experience that is used in place of the medical student’s 8-week senior elective. The number of contact hours in this 8-week rotation is the same as the number of contact hours in the semester-long field placement.

For the remaining concentrations in the MD/MPH program, Epidemiology, Biostatistics and Health Services Administration, up to 13 credit hours are counted toward both degrees:

1) All students must take the MPH Biostatistics course [BSTA 5310] which counts in lieu of the 1-credit medical school course on biostatistics and epidemiology, MEDU 1311,

2) Up to six credit hours of elective credit are subject to approval by the MPH Coordinator and advisor upon examination of course competencies. Examples of courses that could be requested for review include:
   a. COBH 5377 [CSHP 1321] Health Communications (3 cr. hours)
   b. IDMD 8900 Special Studies (variable)
   c. PMPR 7105 Inter-professional End of Life Care (3 cr. hours)

3) Six credit hours are earned for the EPID/HSMP/BSTA 5850 Public Health Field Experience that is used in place of the medical student’s 8-week senior elective. The number of contact hours in this 8-week rotation is the same as the number of contact hours in the field experience.

Since potential electives are not part of the required MPH curricula, delivery of competencies is assessed by the MPH coordinator and student’s advisor. Otherwise, all coursework is jointly listed as public health coursework, with public health course numbers, and as such the courses contain the core and concentration competencies as required. (See Resource File for appropriate syllabi.)

**PharmD/MPH Joint Degree**

The PharmD/MPH program is an articulated joint-degree program wherein students complete the requirements for both degrees in the Gatton College of Pharmacy and the COPH over the course of five years. The articulation agreement allows students to pursue both degrees with redundant content eliminated. Joint PharmD/MPH-degree students are allowed to count:

1) Ten credit hours [four of the six MPH core courses] as elective credit toward their PharmD degree:
   a) COBH 5020 Philosophy of Public Health [1 cr.]
   b) ENVH 5100 Environmental Health Practice I [3 cr.]
   c) HSMP 5500 Health Services Administration [3 cr.] and
   d) COBH 5200 Social and Behavioral Foundations of Public Health [3 cr.]

2) With mutual permission by both colleges, students may also be allowed to count the public health field experience (6 cr. hours) as an Advanced Practice Pharmacy Elective.

3) Up to six additional hours of pharmacy classes may count as electives in the MPH program upon consent of the student’s MPH advisor and the coordinator. These courses are to be selected in consultation with their advisor and shall be judged to be appropriate for the plan of study and to
contain competencies for the concentration. Examples of graduate courses that could be chosen as electives include the following:

a) PMPR 7101 Folk Medicine and Remedies of Southern Appalachia (2 cr.)
b) PMPR 7104 Relationship of Pharmacy and Health Disparities in Appalachia (2 cr.)
c) PMPR 7105 Inter-professional End-of-Life Clinical Care (3 cr.)
d) PMPR 7107 Drug-Induced Diseases (2 cr.)
e) PMPR 7118 Substance Abuse and Addiction in Appalachia (2 cr.)
f) PMSC 7203 Non-Medicinal Drug Use (2 cr.)

Hence, the minimum amount of articulation in the program is 10 hours (four of six MPH core courses only, counting as pharmacy electives), and the maximum is 22 hours (10 MPH core credits counting for pharmacy electives, 6 field/APPE credits counting for both programs, and 6 elective MPH credits).

**Institutional Support**
The university does not charge graduate school tuition to the joint degree students while they are in their respective clinical training colleges. During their MPH year, regular graduate tuition and fees are collected, or the students may elect to compete for a graduate assistantship.

2.13.c Assessment of the extent to which this criterion is met and an analysis of the school’s strengths, weaknesses and plans relating to this criterion.

This criterion is met.

**Strengths:**

1) Highly collaborative programming in an environment that values inter-professional training.
2) High value to the student, with up to 22 hours of duplicative courses avoided, for relatively low cost.

**Weaknesses:**
The joint degree programs are new, and relatively few students have enrolled to date. For the MD/MPH joint degree, program leaders have learned that the desire to graduate with their entering cohort plays a significant role in decision making for MD students to pursue the MPH.

**Plans:**
The exploration of a “fast-track” program for community health concentration students in the MD/MPH program who are also in the “rural track” of the medical school. This would allow completion of the joint MD/MPH in 4 years.