PhD IN POPULATION HEALTH

POP8940: POPULATION HEALTH POLICY PRACTICUM (3 cr)

Three-month practicum providing opportunities for interactions and class discussions with policy makers in a national policy setting, usually with co-mentors, one being a university-based researcher, the other a policy maker. Examination of prerequisites and processes for formulating, implementing and evaluating population health policies. Analysis and distillation of research findings and communication of relevant conclusions to key policy makers. Preparation and critique of briefing notes, presentation of a seminar and submission of a report to be evaluated by the university-based researcher. Prerequisites: POP8910, POP8920 and POP8930.

In the context of tight time pressures (the usual policy environment) the objectives are:

1. To examine the prerequisite conditions for and contextual influences on the implementation of policy;
2. To critique the extent to which evidence is used to formulate or amend different types of public policy (e.g. regulatory programs, legislation);
3. To examine the implications of using a specific set of research findings in policy formulation from the viewpoint of various stakeholders;
4. To analyze, distill and communicate relevant research findings to senior policy makers;
5. To interact with various levels of decision makers on cross-cutting population health policy issues;
6. To examine mechanisms for, and the process of monitoring and evaluating population health policy initiatives;
7. To critically appraise current approaches to formulating health policy in Canada.

The practicum may be spent with a government agency or with an association that has close relations with the government. Students will be assigned co-mentors for the duration of their practicum. The co-mentors, normally a university-based researcher and a government policy maker will meet with the student on a regular basis during the practicum. For a portion of their practicum (minimum of 3 months and 15 hours per week or a minimum of 180 hours), students will be based in the work environment of the policy maker. Each student is expected to develop a learning contract for the practicum. An initial learning contract is to be drafted and discussed by the co-mentors in advance of the practicum start date. Proposed learning activities are to be jointly agreed upon by the student’s co-mentors.

Proposed evaluation mechanisms:
- Preparation and self-critique of briefing notes on a population health issue;
- Student led seminar on a population health policy issue. The forum and audience for this seminar to be negotiated with co-mentors;
- Preparation of a monograph describing involvement in a specific policy development process for a population health issue. The paper will describe the population health issue under consideration and the policy levers that may be used to address the issue, describe the contextual environment (including historical perspectives) for the policy development process, examine factors influencing the policy development process, critique the type of evidence considered in the policy development process, examine the communication strategies used by various stakeholders to present research evidence to policy makers and examine implications of using a specific set of research findings in policy formulation.

The course will be graded as Satisfactory (S) or Not Satisfactory (NS) by the two mentors.

Last updated: March 2014