



# Graduate Diploma in Community and Public Health

Program Handbook

**2024-2025**

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## 1. Introduction

### 1.1 Greetings

Welcome to the Graduate Diploma in Community and Public Health (GDCPH) Program at McMaster University.

This guide outlines the policies and procedures followed by the GDCPH Program, which operates within McMaster University's Faculty of Health Sciences Department of Health Research Methods, Evidence and Impact. The program is governed by the policies and procedures, as described in the current **SCHOOL OF GRADUATE STUDIES CALENDAR**, supplemented by the program-specific policies and procedures that are described in this handbook. As the GDCPH handbook is a supplement to the SGS Calendar, it **does not provide a comprehensive set of binding regulations** or replicate or modify the information found in the School of Graduate Studies (SGS) Calendar (available at <https://academiccalendars.romcmaster.ca/index.php?catoid=55>)

**If there is any discrepancy between this handbook and the SGS Calendar, then the School of Graduate Studies Calendar shall prevail.**

Students and faculty are encouraged to look at the SGS Calendar for information about:

- Graduate study at McMaster
- School of Graduate Studies general regulations
- University regulations
- Graduate fees
- University regulations affecting graduate students
- University services
- University governing bodies
- Student appeals
- Degree programs (including degree requirements)

### 1.2 Contacts

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### 1.3 Department History

A Note on the Historical Development of the Department of Health Research Methods, Evidence, and Impact (formerly the Department of Clinical Epidemiology & Biostatistics)

*Prepared for the Departmental Ad Hoc Committee by Dr. D.L. Sackett September 1987 and revised January 1988*

The Department of Clinical Epidemiology and Biostatistics was formed in November 1967 for the purpose of developing a focus of applied research methodological expertise that would carry out independent and collaborative research, education and methodological services in the new Faculty of Medicine (later the FHS) of McMaster University. Its formation drew upon the definition of clinical epidemiology and biostatistics developed by its first chair: the application of epidemiological and biometric methods to the study of the diagnostic and therapeutic process in order to effect improvement in health. Its initial manpower plan (3 members – 2 clinical epidemiologists and 1 biostatistician, for the period of 1967-1975) was based on its anticipated impact and the projected calls on its expertise by the programs under development at that time.

The subsequent growth and development of the Department have demonstrated that these initial plans required major quantitative and qualitative changes if the Department (and the FHS) were to achieve their mission.

In quantitative terms, within 18 months of its formation, it became clear that both the Department's opportunities for independent research and education and the calls on the Department's expertise were far greater than anticipated at the time of its inception, and at the direction of Faculty Council, its growth has proceeded at ten times the original estimate. [The Design, Measurement and Evaluation Program, the forerunner to the Health Research Methodology Program, was designed and initiated in 1969.]

In qualitative terms, it became clear that the achievement of the ultimate mission, "to effect an improvement in health", required expertise in areas beyond clinical epidemiology and biostatistics. Although these initial disciplines continue to be highly successful in research, education and methodological service related to the validation of the clinical examination and other diagnostic tests and the determination of the efficacy of preventive, therapeutic and rehabilitative regimens, programs, and health professionals, it has become apparent that additional areas of expertise are essential to this ultimate mission, and these areas have been added to the Department. These areas are described in terms of functions, rather than people, since most departmental members wear several hats and contribute to more than one area (e.g., the biostatisticians contribute to all).

1. **Health Economics:** recognized as essential for quantifying the cost-effectiveness and cost-utility of validated, efficacious maneuver (and thus justifying their application to patients on economic grounds), and for analyzing the efficiency of alternative methods of financing and organizing health care systems as well as delivering specific services, this area has both flourished and has pointed out the need for additional developments in the Department (see #3).
2. **Public Health (class big “E”) Epidemiology and Public Health:** recognized as essential for determining the distribution and determinants of disease (including occupational and environmental causes of human illness), this area has flourished and has added a key dimension to the graduate programs as the latter has attracted a broader array of applicants. The Public Health and Preventive Medicine Residency Program has existed in the Department since the early 1980s and a Master of Public Health (MPH) Program was developed by the Department in 2015.
3. **Medical Informatics and Knowledge Transfer:** recognized as essential for making the validated, efficacious intervention accessible to, and adopted by, the frontline clinician, this new area has in part developed as a natural extension of the Department’s long-standing involvement in educational research (including collaboration with the Program for Educational Development) and is rapidly developing both local and international programs. The EHealth and Health Education master’s programs have grown out of this expertise and interest.
4. **Health Services Research and Policy:** recognized as essential for understanding health service delivery and effecting the translation of validated, effective findings into professional and governmental policy, this area of the Department is seen as an essential element in the sequence of events that can most successfully be achieved if this information is to reach those who can benefit from it.

The Department has displayed the awareness, openness, and inventiveness necessary to identify and act upon the need for these quantitative and qualitative changes, and the Faculty of Health Sciences (FHS) has provided the encouragement and support for this growth and maturation. There is no doubt that the future will call for additional change, and the Department therefore must ensure the continuation of the awareness, openness, and inventiveness that brought it to its present level of maturity.

### ***Editorial Note***

Dave Sackett left McMaster in 1994 to found the international Centre for Evidence-Based Medicine at the University of Oxford in England. He officially retired from academia and clinical practice in 1999 and returned to Canada to establish a research and education centre about clinical trials. Dr. Sackett died at the age of 80 in the spring of 2015.

As a professor emeritus, he remained closely connected to McMaster's Department of Clinical Epidemiology and Biostatistics, teaching seminars and courses and participating in the research symposia established in his honour.

Recognizing that the CE&B name captured only some of the depth and breadth of disciplines and expertise now in the department, in January 2017 the Department of Clinical Epidemiology and Biostatistics was renamed the Department of Health Research Methods, Evidence, and Impact.

## 2. Program Information

### 2.1 About the Graduate Diploma in Community and Public Health (GDCPH) Program

The 2021 Public Health Agency of Canada Chief Public Health Officer Report entitled: "Strengthening Community Connections-- The Future of Public Health is at the Neighbourhood Scale" sheds light on the fact that more community level action is needed in public health to improve health outcomes. The importance of community in public health was emphasized again in the 2023 Public Health Agency of Canada Chief Public Health Officer Report entitled: "Creating the Conditions for Resilient Communities: A Public Health Approach to Emergencies". Established in 2023, the Graduate Diploma in Community and Public Health is a novel online, course-based program offered by the department of Health Research Methods, Evidence, and Impact (HEI), that offers learners the unique opportunity to strengthen their understanding of the intersection of community and public health.

The GDCPH program builds on the strengths of HEI's faculty expertise and internationally respected Master of Public Health (MPH) Program in the Faculty of Health Sciences at McMaster University. The four online courses comprising the GDCPH program are ideal for applicants with an interest in public health training without the commitment of an entire MPH degree completed on site.

The GDCPH program attracts candidates from many different backgrounds and aims to provide students with a core knowledge set in Community and Public Health, which includes an understanding of the determinants of health, epidemiology, research methods, and how to involve community in the development and implementation of public health interventions. The program curriculum was developed with consideration of the Public Health Agency of Canada's Core Competencies for effective public health practice.

## 2.2 GDCPH Program Leadership

The Department of Health Research Methods, Evidence, and Impact is the administrative and intellectual home of the Graduate Diploma in Community and Public Health program, although the GDCPH faculty come from across the Faculty of Health Sciences and the McMaster campus.

The GDCPH Program Director is a faculty member in the Department of Health Research Methods, Evidence, and Impact who provides faculty-level leadership and oversight of the GDCPH program.

The GDCPH Program Manager oversees the management of the GDCPH program, the Program Committees and the selection process.

The GDCPH Program Coordinator works with the Program Manager in supporting the Program Director, the faculty and courses.

### *Getting Help.*

- Questions about policies and procedures are best directed to the GDCPH Program Admin Team ([gdcph@mcmaster.ca](mailto:gdcph@mcmaster.ca)). The GDCPH admin team will sometimes direct inquiries to the Program Director. GDCPH policies and procedures are summarized in this handbook and in the SGS Graduate Calendar.
- Forms and additional materials are available in Avenue to Learn and on the School of Graduate Studies website. Contacts for specific inquiries can be found on the GDCPH website, or students can contact [gdcph@mcmaster.ca](mailto:gdcph@mcmaster.ca) for guidance.
- Students may consult the Program Director regarding a variety of matters beyond routine procedural inquiries. These may include interpreting the applicability of regulations and policies, concerns about personal problems affecting work, or if the student wishes to deviate from regulations in consideration of a particular circumstance. In such cases of petitions for special consideration, the Program Director is normally required to approve the student's request, which is then adjudicated by the Vice Dean, Faculty of Health Sciences and Associate Dean of Graduate Studies (Health Sciences). As such, the support of the Program Director does not guarantee that a request for special consideration will be approved.
- Students are encouraged to contact the admin team, course instructors, tutors, or the program director at any time if they require guidance.

### 2.3 Program Requirements

Admissions Requirements are provided in the [School of Graduate Studies Calendar](#).

The program consists of 4 courses, to be studied consecutively over four terms; 1 course in the Fall term (Sep-Dec), 1 course in the Winter term (Jan-Apr), 1 course in the Spring/Summer term (May-Aug) and the final course the following Fall term. Under exceptional circumstances, the courses may be taken over a longer term in consultation with the Program Director. The total amount of time a student will invest will be 4 terms, approximately 16 months. Upon completion, a formal graduate diploma will be awarded to students.

| Fall Term                          | Winter Term  | Summer Term  | Fall Term (Year 2) |
|------------------------------------|--------------|--------------|--------------------|
| PUBHLTH *717<br>SGS 101<br>SGS 201 | PUBHLTH *718 | PUBHLTH *719 | PUBHLTH *720       |

All graduate students at McMaster University are also required to successfully complete SGS 101 Academic Research Integrity and Ethics and SGS 201 Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act (AODA).

### 2.4 Learning Goals

Upon completion of the Graduate Diploma, students will demonstrate a comprehensive understanding of public and community health systems in Canada, public health theories, social determinants of health, fundamental epidemiological principles, research methods, foundations of knowledge translation and program planning and evaluation. Students will be able to critically analyze current problems at the community level and think of innovative solutions using cutting-edge research, evidence, and best practices.

### 2.5 Courses

**PUBHLTH \*717 — Foundations of Community Health and Policy (Fall Term – Year One)**

Foundations of Community Health and Policy is a mandatory course in the online GDCPH program. Through this course, students will be introduced to the foundations of public and community health with a strong focus on the determinants of health, and how they influence



community health outcomes. Students will become familiar with the major actors and organizations that are involved in developing health policy in Canada, and understand the steps undertaken to create policy recommendations.

Learning objectives:

1. Discuss the determinants of health and their relationship with community health outcomes.
2. Identify major actors, organizations, and policies in Public Health and related systems.
3. Describe how policies are made.
4. Apply steps to create policy recommendations.

*Prerequisites — Enrollment in GDCPH or special permission from GDCPH Director; antirequisite PUBHLTH \*700, \*703.*

### **PUBHLTH \*718 — Epidemiology & Research Methods in Community Health (Winter Term – Year One)**

Epidemiology and Research Methods in Public Health is a mandatory course in the online GDCPH program. Through this course, students will be introduced to fundamental epidemiology concepts and research methods that will allow them to read and understand research studies and interpret community health data. Students will develop the skills to describe and explain disease occurrence in the community and gain an understanding of methods for evaluating public health programs.

Learning objectives:

1. Understand key concepts in epidemiology, including observational and experimental study designs
2. Introduce additional health research methods, including qualitative studies, mixed methods designs, and systematic reviews
3. Develop skills in the critical appraisal of health research studies
4. Distinguish ethical practices in research methods such as OCAP

*Prerequisites — Enrollment in GDCPH or special permission from GDCPH Director; prerequisite PUBHLTH \*717; antirequisite PUBHLTH \*701 & \*704, HTHRSM \*721 & \*771*

### **PUBHLTH \*719 — Knowledge translation for Community Health (Spring/Summer Term – Year One)**

Knowledge translation in community health is a mandatory course in the online GDCPH program. This online course is about how to find and use the best available evidence to inform decision-making in community and public health. Through online learning modules, faculty-led presentations, required readings, online tutorials, discussion boards and a culminating project, students will learn and practice each of the 7 steps in the evidence-informed decision-making process. Students will identify a relevant practice problem, define a research question, and work through evidence-informed decision-making online learning modules through the

National Collaborating Centre for Methods and Tools (NCCMT) and the NCCMT's Rapid Review guidebook to answer their question and present a recommendation for policy or practice.

Learning Objectives:

1. Recognize why community engagement is important in public health and community health
2. Identify databases, sources of information, and peer-reviewed literature that provides health status indicators for communities
3. Describe effective communication principles for community health intervention
4. Describe the 7 steps of evidence-informed decision-making in public health
5. Critically appraise literature using critical appraisal tools

*Prerequisites— Enrollment in GDCPH or special permission from GDCPH Director; prerequisites PUBHLTH \*717 & PUBHLTH \*718; antirequisite PUBHLTH \*716*

### **PUBHLTH \*720 — Planning and evaluation for population and Community Health (Fall Term – Year Two)**

Planning and evaluation for public and community health is a mandatory course in the online GDCPH program. Through this course, students will understand the steps involved in planning community and public health initiatives and the importance of involving appropriate stakeholders in the planning process. Students will work with a community organization while learning approaches to evaluating public and community health programs to understand whether a public health program is causing the intended changes, for whom, and why or why not. Program evaluation helps decision-makers to ensure the effectiveness, equity, and continuous improvement of public health interventions.

Learning objectives:

1. Describe the various steps in commonly used planning and evaluation models
2. Develop stakeholder engagement plan that can be use in the planning process
3. Differentiate between types of evaluation
4. Apply principles of community-based research and participatory action research

*Prerequisites — Enrollment in GDCPH or special permission from GDCPH Director; prerequisites PUBHLTH \*717, PUBHLTH \*718 & PUBHLTH \*719; antirequisite PUBHLTH \*711, HSC EDUC 710*

### **SGS 101 — Academic Research Integrity and Ethics ([See School of Graduate Studies Calendar](#))**

This course will introduce incoming graduate students to the standards of academic integrity expected at McMaster. It will provide examples of acceptable and unacceptable practices and will clarify the responsibility and expectations of graduate students with respect to academic integrity. Students will be exposed to the Academic Integrity Policy of McMaster and best practices will be described that will minimize the likelihood of incorrectly attributed work from appearing in their assignments and research records. Students may not graduate or register for

subsequent years in a graduate program at McMaster unless they have received a passing grade in SGS 101.

### **SGS 201 — Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act (AODA) ([See School of Graduate Studies Calendar](#))**

All graduate students are required to complete training on the Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act (AODA). Having an understanding of how we can identify and reduce attitudinal, structural, information, technological, and systemic barriers to persons with disabilities is core to McMaster University's commitment to supporting an inclusive community in which all persons are treated with dignity and equality, and completion of AODA training is critical as McMaster's graduates move forward in their varied, chosen professions. Students may not graduate or register for subsequent years in their program until they have completed their required training.

### **2.6 Format**

The Graduate Diploma in Community and Public Health is a completely online program. All course content, assignments, and discussion boards will be available for students in McMaster's online course management system, [Avenue to Learn](#). For each course students will be assigned to a tutorial group that is led by an experienced tutor, who will guide a small group of students in weekly interactive learning modules. These modules are designed to connect students to faculty and other GDCPH students, and have the following content:

#### Asynchronous content

'Asynchronous' content refers to tasks and assignments students will need to complete by a specific date and time, but do not require attendance at specific times. These include:

- Reading required literature for each unit
- Watching a pre-recorded lecture for each unit
- Leading ('facilitating') at least one tutorial per course, including preparation of slides
- Preparing your active participation in other tutorials
- Active participation in online discussion boards
- Assignments (as appropriate for each course)
- Course paper / final assignment (as appropriate for each course)

#### Synchronous content

Classes are divided into tutorial groups of up to nine students. Each tutorial group meets in real-time for a one-hour session at a set time weekly or bi-weekly. Tutorials are led by an experienced tutor who will be available to answer students' questions about the weekly content, readings, assignments or final paper. Online tutorial sessions are conducted using Zoom. The connection information for tutorial groups will be provided in Avenue to Learn. There may also be timed online quizzes as part of some courses.

## 2.7 Registration and Enrollment

Prior to the beginning of the Fall term in September, students must enroll for the upcoming academic year. Please review the enrollment guide available on the School of Graduate Studies website: <https://gs.mcmaster.ca/ive-accepted-my-offer/how-to-enroll/>

You are required to enroll in all terms in an academic year. GDCPH students should **enroll in the following courses** in Year 1:

- PUBHLTH \*717 Fall term (September – December)
- SGS-101 and SGS-201 Fall term (Mandatory courses for all Graduate Students)
- PUBHLTH \*718 Winter term (January – April)
- PUBHLTH \*719 Spring/Summer term (May – August)

GDCPH students should **enroll in the following course in Year 2:**

- *PUBHLTH \*720 Fall term (September – December)*

## 2.8 Student Evaluation

Mastery of GDCPH material is evaluated using several aspects, which can differ slightly from course to course. Students should check each course's outline to be aware of the specific requirements and the weight given to each aspect for determining their final grade.

Components that can be included in course evaluations, depending on the course:

- Tutorial participation
- Tutorial facilitation
- Discussion board participation
- Weekly assignments
- Hand-in assignments that evaluate your knowledge and ability to consolidate learning across units
- Course evaluation, including tests
- A final paper on issues covered during the course

Consistent with McMaster University School of Graduate Studies policy, you must earn a minimum of **70%** to pass a course. The grading system is outlined below:

|    |   |               |
|----|---|---------------|
| A+ | = | 90 to 100     |
| A  | = | 85 to 89      |
| A- | = | 80 to 84      |
| B+ | = | 77 to 79      |
| B  | = | 73 to 76      |
| B- | = | 70 to 72      |
| F  | = | <70 (failure) |

## GDCPH GRADUATE DIPLOMA IN COMMUNITY & PUBLIC HEALTH

If a student receives a course grade below B-, remediation may be required and a recommendation may be made for the student to withdraw from the program. Please see the [School of Graduate Studies Calendar](#) for the policy on failing and incomplete grades.

In the GDCPH program, students submit written assignments on Avenue to Learn, which uses a web-based service (Turnitin.com) to check for plagiarism. Students who do not wish to submit their work to Turnitin.com must still submit an electronic copy to the instructor. No penalty will be assigned to a student who does not submit work to Turnitin.com. All submitted work is subject to normal verification that standards of academic integrity have been upheld (e.g., on-line search, etc.). To review McMaster University's policy regarding Turnitin.com, please visit: <http://www.mcmaster.ca/academicintegrity/turnitin/students/>

### 2.9 GDCPH Program Instructions for Online Communication

The following section includes instructions and guidance directed at students to optimize their online learning experience.

#### **Overview**

As GDCPH is a completely online program, proper use of online programs is essential to optimize your learning experience. For each GDCPH course, you will be using Avenue to Learn and Zoom for online teaching and communication. Avenue to Learn is McMaster's learning management system, and Zoom is a paid video conferencing service. The first unit of PUBHLTH \*717 will be an orientation session to help you get familiar with these programs, and to discuss any questions and concerns you might have. We advise you to read this entire document and start exploring these programs before the start of the program, and to use this document as a reference throughout the entire GDCPH program. Please note that you are responsible for ensuring that your computer and any other devices you use for the course meet the minimal requirements to use these online programs. Contact the GDCPH Admin Team any time for assistance.

#### **Avenue to Learn**

Avenue to Learn is the learning management system for McMaster University. Useful support documents can be found at: <https://avenuehelp.mcmaster.ca/exec/>

## Access

Go to <http://avenue.mcmaster.ca/> and log in using your McMaster Office 365 login and password, select the relevant course name from the drop down list at the top of the screen (“select a course”), and get familiar with the course resources before starting.

## Most frequently used components in Avenue to Learn

The following components will be used most often in GDCPH courses. Check the specific course outline to be sure you are aware of all components that will be used.

### 1. Content

- a. *Essentials*: here you will find important information relevant to the complete course, such as the course outline.
- b. *Units*: each week in a course you will work through a ‘unit’, also sometimes called a ‘module’. This section will contain required readings, one or more online lectures, and any other documents that pertain to the relevant unit/module.
- c. *Assignment Supporting Documents*: for courses with a required final paper (or other final assignment), here you will find documents for guidance and previous papers as examples.

### 2. Resources

- a. *Calendar*: you will find here important course dates, such as deadlines for assignments.
- b. *Surveys*: here you can find surveys to provide feedback on certain aspects of the course.
- c. *Attendance*: here you can track your attendance for the online tutorials.

### 3. Communication

- a. *Class list*: this contains all students and instructors, and their contact information.
- b. *Discussions*: here you will find the discussion boards for each group and each weekly unit. Active participation in these discussion boards is required and counts towards your final score.

### 4. Assessments

- a. *Assignments (previously called “drop box”)*: here you can upload documents for your assignments.
- b. *Quizzes*: some courses may have quizzes to be completed within a certain timeframe. You will find them here (see individual course outlines as not all courses use quizzes).
- c. *Grades*: here you can find your grades for the different required components. Overall course grade is published at the beginning of the following term on Mosaic.

## Zoom

- Zoom is the video conferencing tool that will be used for the online tutorials.
- To access Zoom, you can just click on the link provided for your group, but for full functionality, McMaster provides all current students with a zoom account. Please go to <https://uts.mcmaster.ca/services/computers-printers-and-software/zoom/> to find out more.
- As we are using Zoom for synchronous communication in tutorials, you should also use this for all other live group discussions you might want to set up with your fellow students.
- You can request the GDCPH Admin team to schedule a time to try a Zoom call and help you work through any issues.
- Please see Zoom best practices from Office of the AVP & CTO here: <https://cto.mcmaster.ca/zoom-video-conferencing-best-practices-for-privacy-and-security/>.

## Note that:

- For the synchronous tutorial sessions, we require that everyone joins the tutorial sessions by video, so ensure you have a webcam.
- It is recommended to log in to Zoom early (10-15 minutes in advance), to ensure that all students are present at the time the tutorial is scheduled to start.
- We require you to use a device with a large screen that can use the full functionality of Zoom. A mobile telephone using the Zoom app is not appropriate.
- Tutorial sessions may be recorded.

## Joining tutorial sessions

1. Before the start of the first online tutorial session, a link to the Zoom call for your tutorial group will be posted on the course homepage on Avenue to Learn. By clicking on this link, you will be able to join your tutorial. Please save the link as it will be the same each week unless an instructor or GDCPH team member indicates otherwise.
2. When you first use Zoom on your device, you will need to install the plug-in and possibly set up your webcam and microphone, so we recommend that you log in ahead of time to do this.
3. Please note that Zoom has been known to experience issues with the Firefox web browser. Students should use a different browser (e.g., Microsoft Edge or Google Chrome) if they are having trouble with connecting to calls.
4. To minimize any background noise interference, mute your microphone when not speaking and ensure you are using headphones.

### Connection issues in Tutorials

1. Students should always use the Zoom link provided to them. The link for each tutorial group will be posted in Avenue.
2. If you are unable to connect to the Zoom call using the link provided for the session, please email your tutor and the Program Admin Team ([gdcph@mcmaster.ca](mailto:gdcph@mcmaster.ca)) to let them know.
3. The tutor is responsible for monitoring which group members are connected, please ensure that you communicate directly with the tutor if you are experiencing issues, not with other group members.
4. If the Zoom link is not working or several people are unable to connect, the tutor will connect with the Program Admin Team by email to ask for assistance. Group members should not do this unless the tutor specifically asks someone to.

### **Communication Expectations & Netiquette**

Netiquette: social conventions to facilitate communication in a polite and respectful manner in electronic networks (derived from 'net etiquette'). See:

<http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Netiquette>.

What you can expect from us:

1. We will respect you and take your questions and concerns seriously.
2. We will respond to your requests for assistance in a timely fashion. For important personal matters please email individuals directly (using the contact information above) and we will respond within 24 hours during the week or 48 hours over the weekend.
3. Interaction among students is important for building a learning community and to make the course a success. Consequently, we will not respond to every post on a discussion board. We will be monitoring the discussion forums at least every 48 hours and will intervene when potential problems arise. If an issue arises that needs immediate attention of the tutor, please follow-up with a personal email.
4. You will receive feedback on your assignments within 2 weeks of submission. If this is not possible, we will let you know within this time when you can expect your mark and feedback.

What we expect from you:

1. We expect everyone to communicate in a pleasant and efficient manner that respects all persons involved.



## **Online Discussion Guidelines**

Participation in discussions with fellow students and instructors is critical to developing a successful and effective learning environment. Therefore, your participation in online discussion boards will be assessed in each course and this will contribute to your final grade. Below are some guidelines for successful participation in online discussion boards, to help you enhance your learning experience:

1. Contribute at least one original post each week.
2. Ensure any message you post is relevant to the course.
3. Post information that is relevant to the discussion thread.
4. Post information that teaches others something new.
5. Properly cite message content when necessary.
6. The most valuable messages are written in your own words. If you copy/paste or closely rephrase any information from any other source (e.g., papers, websites etc.), you must provide the citations.
7. Include a subject line in your message that conveys the main teaching point in the message. It is not enough to use a keyword or phrase as your subject. You should create a short sentence that states the main point of your message and provides the reader with enough information to determine the essence of your message.

## **3. Program and University Policies**

### **3.1 Academic Integrity Policy**

The Office of Academic Integrity at McMaster University supports students and faculty members in dealing with issues of academic integrity. They have an excellent website (<https://www.mcmaster.ca/academicintegrity/>) that includes: McMaster's policy on 'Academic Integrity'; services to assist students in avoiding dishonesty (including definitions, quizzes, online services to check their work for plagiarism); and the consequences of violating the University policies on academic integrity.

Students must make themselves aware of these policies. Although instances of plagiarism may occur without intent, they are still considered plagiarism. Plagiarism in this context is defined by the University's policy as: to "submit academic work that has been, entirely or in part, copied from or written by another person without proper acknowledgement, or, for which previous credit has been obtained" (McMaster University, Academic Integrity Policy, Section 18.a). The Academic Integrity website has tips for avoiding unintentional plagiarism. Violations of academic integrity will not be tolerated and will be penalized.

### 3.2 Use of Generative Artificial Intelligence (AI)

While we acknowledge that the use of Generative AI, such as ChatGPT, may be helpful to your learning, we require you to act with [academic integrity](#) when being assessed. Currently, GDCPH assessments have not been designed with Generative AI tools in mind and using them threatens the integrity of the assessment.

The main purpose of a university is the pursuit of knowledge and scholarship. As a student at McMaster University, you are expected to practice intellectual honesty and to fully acknowledge the work of others by providing appropriate references in your scholarly work. You must not take credit for work that is not your own. Please note that the McMaster University Academic Integrity policy states under item 18(c) that “It shall be an offence knowingly to ... submit academic work for assessment that was purchased or acquired from another source”.

Please check with your course coordinator and the course outline for each GDCPH course, as course coordinators will provide additional guidance for specific assessments. In general, the direct use of text originating from a Generative AI tool, beyond using the tool to correct grammar/spelling, should be included in quotation marks or equivalent and cited using a citation style appropriate for the context. Should the use of an AI assistant like ChatGPT be permitted for a particular assessment, you must be transparent by including a Generative AI statement as an appendix. This statement needs to declare the specific Generative AI tool used, the prompts used to create the submitted content, and for which sections/tasks in the assessment you used the tool. If you use Generative AI but do not declare this, the Course Coordinator will refer the case to the Office of Academic Integrity.

### 3.3 Plagiarism

Do not submit work for which you have previously gained credit. This includes assignments in other courses (irrespective of the academic institution), posters, manuscripts and other forms of academic work.

For final assignments you are expected to present new work that was developed during the course, as it should reflect the knowledge and skills you learned in the course. If you are uncertain about whether your proposal or analysis will constitute plagiarism, please consult the course coordinator early on.

In the GDCPH program, students submit written assignments on Avenue to Learn, which uses a web-based service (Turnitin.com) to check for plagiarism. Please see [section 2.8 Student Evaluation](#) for information on submission of assignments and originality checking.

### 3.4 Absenteeism from Tutorials

Students are allowed up to 2 absences during each course, based on unforeseen or unavoidable and exceptional circumstances (e.g., sickness, accident, death of a family member or close friend, or professional exams).

A student's attendance is taken into account in the portion of their grade allocated for tutorial participation. Please note that participating in clinic is not an acceptable reason for being absent. For this or any other unacceptable absenteeism, a student's grade will reflect their attendance record.

If a student is absent on more than 2 occasions, they will be asked to discuss their situation with the GDCPH Director before continuing in the course. If a student needs to miss a class for some reason, they should inform the GDCPH Program Admin Team beforehand if possible.

The GDCPH program is designed to be flexible and in exceptional circumstances can accommodate students to attend at another tutorial time than their usual group. Permission must be sought from the tutors of both groups ahead of time, and the course coordinator needs to be notified. Students who switch groups without advance approval from both tutors will receive a grade deduction regarding participation. Please note that this accommodation is limited to a maximum of two occasions per course as frequent switches are disruptive to group dynamics and learning. Students who want to switch tutorials more than twice during a course need to contact the Course Coordinator and GDCPH Program Manager.

### 3.5 Policy on Late Assignments

Apart from exceptional circumstances, late assignments will not be accepted. Extensions may be considered due to illness or other exceptional circumstances but learners who are requesting an extension must contact the course instructor prior to the deadline.

Penalties for late assignments without pre-authorized extension are as follows:

- 10% for 1-6 hours late
- 20% for 6-24 hours late
- 30% for 24-48 hours late
- 50% for >48 hours late

### 3.6 GDCPH Remediation Policy

In order to be successful in the GDCPH Program, students must achieve at least a grade B- on the total of the individual evaluative components of each of the four GDCPH courses. Students who do not achieve a minimum of a B- on the total individual components for a course will be referred to the Program Director and may be withdrawn from the program.

At the discretion of the Course Coordinator and Program Director, the student may be allowed to informally remediate a course by resubmitting an assignment. This must be completed within two weeks of the course coordinator releasing assignment grades.

If the course coordinator and student agree to informal remediation as above, the maximum grade possible for the course is a B-.

A student is allowed to undertake informal remediation only once during the GDCPH program.

### 3.7 Temporary Leave from GDCPH

The GDCPH Program consists of four courses, to be taken in order per the schedule above in section 2.5. Each course is only offered once per year. Some students (e.g., those who need to repeat a course, or students who need to take a Leave of Absence for less than a full year), may need to request a “no course offered leave” until the course needed is offered again.

The *“Petitions for Special Consideration to the Committee on Graduate Admissions and Study”* form should be completed and emailed to [gdcph@mcmaster.ca](mailto:gdcph@mcmaster.ca), citing reason for leave and type of leave as “no course offered”. The Program Manager can assist you with this.

Please note that in order not to incur fees, you must complete this process before the current course’s drop date.

### 3.8 Recording of Online Classes

Students are not permitted to record tutorials or lectures using Zoom or their own third-party applications. All lectures and any tutorial recordings are the property of the GDCPH Program. Please note that lecture recordings are confidential and should not be shared with anyone outside of the program.

### 4. Resources for Students

GDCPH students have access to all the McMaster resources available to other graduate students. We highly recommend that you explore and take advantage of any services that will support you as a graduate student.

#### **Student Accessibility Services**

Student Accessibility Services (SAS) provides academic accommodation assistance and related supports to students with disabilities at McMaster. This support is available to students who have been diagnosed with a disability or disorder.

Contact information: <http://sas.mcmaster.ca/>; [sas@mcmaster.ca](mailto:sas@mcmaster.ca)

#### **Student Wellness**

The Student Wellness Centre offers various services to address your wellness needs. They provide a range of counselling options, medical services and wellness programs so that you can get the most out of your McMaster experience, academically and personally.

Contact information: <http://wellness.mcmaster.ca>

#### **Student Success Centre**

Provides support in the areas of student orientation, academic skills, leadership, service-learning, volunteerism, educational planning, employment and career transition. This includes access to the following services and programs:

- Writing and Academic Skills
- Career Counselling and Job Search
- Financial wellness

Contact information: <http://studentsuccess.mcmaster.ca>; [studentsuccess@mcmaster.ca](mailto:studentsuccess@mcmaster.ca)

#### **FHS Office of Respectful Conduct in Clinical and Academic Environments (ORCCA)**

The ORCCA works with campus and community partners to ensure that the Faculty of Health Sciences at McMaster University is a place where all students, staff and faculty are treated equitably and respectfully in all areas of campus life. FHS students seeking help on matters of equity, inclusion, and professionalism, including advice about the pursuit of grievances should connect with ORCCA at <https://orcca.healthsci.mcmaster.ca/>

#### **Academic Grievances**

Students who have academic grievances and wish to make an appeal should see the Senate Policy Statement: Student Appeal Procedures, available here: [Policies, Procedures & Guidelines Directory - University Secretariat \(mcmaster.ca\)](#)

**Websites:**

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| <p style="text-align: center;"><b>The Graduate Diploma in Community and Public Health</b></p> <p>Information for students, faculty and staff, including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• GDCPH FAQs</li> <li>• Course Listing</li> </ul> <p><a href="https://gdcph.healthsci.mcmaster.ca/">https://gdcph.healthsci.mcmaster.ca/</a></p>                                      | <p style="text-align: center;"><b>Health Sciences Graduate Programs</b></p> <p>Information for students, faculty and staff, including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• student resources</li> </ul> <p><a href="https://grad.healthsci.mcmaster.ca/">https://grad.healthsci.mcmaster.ca/</a></p>                |
| <p style="text-align: center;"><b>Department of Health Research Methods, Evidence, and Impact</b></p> <p>Information for students, faculty and staff, including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• faculty listing, research groups</li> <li>• key contact people in HEI</li> </ul> <p><a href="https://hei.healthsci.mcmaster.ca/">https://hei.healthsci.mcmaster.ca/</a></p> | <p style="text-align: center;"><b>The School of Graduate Studies</b></p> <p>Information for current students including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• forms, guidelines, graduate calendars</li> <li>• university regulations</li> </ul> <p><a href="https://gs.mcmaster.ca/">https://gs.mcmaster.ca/</a></p> |