



Faculty of Medicine

MPHP92, Public Health: Planetary Health, 7.5 credits

Folkhälsovetenskap: Planetär hälsa, 7,5 högskolepoäng

Second Cycle / Avancerad nivå

Details of approval

The syllabus was approved by The Master's Programmes Board on 2026-03-10 and was last revised on 2026-03-11. The revised syllabus comes into effect 2026-03-11 and is valid from the autumn semester 2026.

General information

An elective course within the Master's programme in Public Health.

Language of instruction: English

Main field of study Specialisation

Public Health A1N, Second cycle, has only first-cycle course/s as entry
Science requirements

Learning outcomes

Knowledge and understanding

On completion of the course, the student shall be able to:

- describe the links between the nine planetary boundaries and human health, and how these links are studied,
- define the main driving forces affecting the planet's boundaries,
- explain methods and strategies for deriving the health effects of planetary challenges,
- explain how standards and limit values to protect health, policies, and legislation are used to enable planetary health,
- describe how different political processes relate to planetary health,
- explain key concepts related to planetary health.

Competence and skills

On completion of the course, the student shall be able to:

- use measurement equipment and relevant geographic information systems in planetary health,
- argue for appropriate methods to analyse the relationship between planetary and environmental boundaries and health,
- propose methods for influencing legislation on the health of the planet.

Judgement and approach

On completion of the course, the student shall be able to:

- reflect analytically about how planetary boundaries related to health interact and how they are affected by social, cultural, political, and economic factors,
- critically evaluate planetary health challenges through analysis of various data sources.

Course content

Planetary health is an old concept but a new academic field that builds on global health, environmental health and environmental science. The course deals with increased environmental change, climate change, loss of biodiversity and their consequences for health and well-being. Social and environmental justice are emphasised as central perspectives.

The course is interdisciplinary and covers health, epidemiology, physical geography, technology, chemistry, law and communication. The focus is on the role of public health in planetary health, including health risk assessment, policy processes and scientific decision support.

Course design

The course consists of lectures, compulsory seminars and practical exercises and is conducted in four modules:

Module 1: Fundamentals of planetary health, key concepts and current research

The introductory module lays the foundation for understanding and introduces common terms, concepts, frameworks, standards and ways of looking at action. It establishes a picture of where the world stands today in terms of planetary health, boundaries and pollution. This module also provides an overview of ecosystem services and different concepts for viewing planetary health and ecosystems. Important ethical frameworks and concepts are discussed, as well as vulnerability in the context of global environmental change, with a focus on factors such as age, gender, poverty and the global North-South divide. Intergenerational and interspecies justice are also discussed.

Module 2: Exposure assessments in planetary health

Module 2 deals with the quantification of environmental challenges, including pollution, and how this relates to the health of the planet. The practical exercises focus on measuring and monitoring environmental impact, and how data is taken from discovery to analysis and quantification. Students assess and quantify important environmental factors and exposures related to health and climate, and analyse how these are linked to human activities, including the application of measurement methods and geographic information tools. Students learn about various tools for reviewing exposure data, including geographic information systems (GIS), air pollution tools, monitoring and interpretation, and how to equate data from emissions to exposure.

Module 3: Linking planetary overshoot and environmental risks to public health

Module 3 builds on the skills developed in Module 2. Using the skills, data, and techniques developed, the student learns theory, methods, and practical application of an environmental health impact assessment. The student learns basic statistical programming to derive a health impact assessment. The student develops knowledge and understanding of planetary health science and the interlinkages and effects that affect public health, including both broad expertise in the field and significant in-depth knowledge in certain parts of the field, as well as in-depth insight into current research and development.

Module 4: Politics and communication in planetary health

Module 4 builds on the data analysis stage of the course and focuses on implementing change. The module focuses on issues of justice, access to justice, legal tools, and political tools. Policy frameworks are evaluated based on planetary boundaries, environmental pollution, justice, vulnerability, and health to evaluate how legal and political measures can be used to protect against exposure to environmental change and pollution. The global perspective and cross-cultural understanding of planetary health challenges are applied, taking into account socio-cultural, political, and economic factors, and contribute effectively to global and national initiatives for planetary health. Focus on critical communication skills by translating complex socio-legal and ecological issues into accessible formats is used. Critically examining how law can be used in planetary health is also a core theme of this module. The student learns to effectively communicate concepts related to planetary health, research findings and policy recommendations both orally and in writing.

In the event of absence from compulsory components, the examiner may decide to offer a supplementary assignment in connection with the course.

Assessment

The course is examined through three assessed components:

- Written exam: 2.5 credits
Fail/Pass/Pass with distinction
Assesses the student's knowledge and understanding of key concepts and theories.

- Course portfolio: 2.5 credits
Fail/Pass
Assesses the student's active reflections, contributions to discussions and application of methods.
- Individual oral assignment
Fail/Pass/Pass with distinction
Assesses the ability to analyse a planetary health challenge and relate it to the theories covered in the course.

The examiner, in consultation with Disability Support Services, may deviate from the regular form of examination in order to provide a permanently disabled student with a form of examination equivalent to that of a student without a disability.

Grades

Grading scale includes the grades: Fail, Pass, Pass with distinction

To receive a grade of Pass with distinction (VG) for the entire course, students must receive a VG grade on the written exam and the individual oral assignment, and their course portfolio must be passed.

To receive a Pass (G) grade for the entire course, the student must receive a G grade on all assessment components.

Entry requirements

A bachelor's degree comprising at least 180 ECTS credits, and English B/English 6.