Transitioning from a Public Health Program to a School of Public Health

What process must an accredited program go through if it wishes to transform to an accredited school of public health?

CEPH’s Accreditation Procedures for Schools of Public Health and Public Health Programs, amended June 2010 discuss “seeking change in category,” when a CEPH-accredited program wishes to become a CEPH-accredited school, on page 8. In brief, you will complete an application, full self-study process using the appropriate criteria, an on-site visit and a full Council review.

How long will it take? When should I plan to make the transition?

The timeline for such transitions will vary based on a number of factors. Before a timeline can be established, it is important to answer the following questions:

- When will you amass the required faculty resources?
- When will you admit students into each required MPH concentration area, ie, into MPH programs in each of the five core public health knowledge areas?
- When will MPH students graduate from all five areas?
- When will you admit students into each required doctoral area? (See CEPH’s Technical Assistance paper on Characteristics of Doctoral Programs for more information.)
- When will doctoral students graduate?

You should contact CEPH staff as soon as possible. They can help you determine a timeline, based on your answers to the questions above. The following sample timeline illustrates a possible scenario:

May-June 2014: submit application for change in accreditation category
April-June 2016: SPH preliminary self-study due
September-November 2016: SPH site visit
June 2017: accreditation decision for SPH

What formal steps must I take to begin the process?

The first formal step toward a change in category is submission of an application. Your application must be prepared according to the format presented in the procedures manual on pp. 4-5. In particular, your application must present evidence that you will be eligible for accreditation as a school of public health within two years of the application’s acceptance. “Eligible” in this context refers to the fact that, within two years, you must have graduates from all five core MPH areas and from at least one public health doctoral program, and you must have students enrolled in and progressing through at least two other doctoral programs. “Eligible” also refers to possessing adequate faculty resources to mount the degrees offered. Thus, you must not make an application until you can document that you are prepared to meet all eligibility criteria within two years.

How will this process relate to my program’s accreditation?

If your program accreditation expires before the projected date of the SPH site visit, you must either: 1) undergo a full program accreditation review as scheduled, using the program criteria, regardless of future plans, or 2) accept a loss of accreditation until such time as you undergo a full successful review as either a school or a program.

When can I change my program’s name to School or College of Public Health?

It is vital that you represent your accreditation status accurately at all times. You may not change your name to use the words school of public health or college of public health until after your application for change in category has been accepted by the Council. Until acceptance of the application, an accredited program must
not promulgate web pages, logos, letterhead or advertisements, for example, which suggest that the accredited program is a school or college of public health. Such misrepresentations by an accredited program may jeopardize the program's continuing accreditation.

**What if my university acted to change the program’s name to School or College of Public Health?**

Again, you must publicly portray your accreditation status accurately at all times. Representing your program publicly as a school or college of public health, unless the Council has already accepted a change in category application, will jeopardize your program's continuing accreditation.

**When should I call the CEPH office to discuss plans for such a transition?**

Because of the complexity of transitions in accreditation category, it is important to work closely with CEPH staff. They are available for consultation by e-mail or phone, and consultation with staff can often clarify the complexities in light of your program’s unique circumstances.

We look forward to working with you!