Module Introduction

The London School of Hygiene & Tropical Medicine welcomes you to:

EPM103 Practical Epidemiology

We hope you enjoy studying this module.

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Finding out about the module

Before you start going through the module material, we recommend you get an overview of this module and how it is run. To do this, we suggest you first read the Module Specification document which is provided with your course materials and may also be downloaded from the course website. It provides an at-a-glance source of key information about the module such as:

- The title and course code for the module (sections 1 and 2).
- The overall aim of the module and its learning objectives (sections 10 and 11).
- The module content (section 12).
- The learning methods used (section 13).
- The study resources provided (e.g. LSHTM materials, software, textbooks) you will need to complete the module (section 14).
- How learning is assessed (section 15).

The Module Specification should be read alongside this Module Introduction which gives guidance on how to go about studying this module. We recommend that you spend some time acquainting yourself with both these documents before you start working through the computer-based sessions. It is also important to
check the messages posted on the EPM103 NoticeBoard conference for key information (see under Web conferencing).

**The module in context**

The issues covered in this module are crucial to the success of epidemiological research in all areas of application. It applies many of the concepts of basic epidemiology and statistics to real situations. The module is designed to provide a step-by-step guide to stages involved in the planning and conduct of an epidemiological study. This module won’t provide specific solutions for problems at your workplace but will get most out of this module if you try to apply theories and concepts in a flexible and thoughtful way.

**Module calendar**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Event</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>October</td>
<td>Tutoring support begins (web conferencing, email queries, Formative Assignment (FA) marking).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1 November</td>
<td>Deadline for registration for Virtual Ethics Committee (VEC) exercise.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nov-mid Dec</td>
<td>Available timeslots for VEC exercise. (participate in only one)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Jan-mid Feb</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Feb-mid March</td>
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<tr>
<td>31 March</td>
<td>Final submission date for the FAs.</td>
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<tr>
<td>April/May</td>
<td>Exam practice WebBoard conferences open 6 weeks prior to the exam.</td>
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<tr>
<td>June</td>
<td>Exam usually held in early June.</td>
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**CAL (Computer Assisted Learning) material**

- This forms the basic learning material, and is provided on CD-ROM. If you have not yet received your CD ROM, or do not have access to these, you may download the CAL material from the link below. Please note you will only be able to download these materials twice. http://www.lshtmldldownloads.co.uk/.

- You should work through all the CAL sessions in sequence and try to ensure you understand each step before you go on to the next, as the course material builds on itself. The module consists of fifteen compulsory sessions (PE01-15) and three optional sessions (PE16-18) – see details of the optional sessions below.
Optional sessions:

- **PE16 Geographical Information Systems.** This session offers an introduction into geographic information systems and mapping. Its content will not be examined. You need special MapInfo software for this session - this has been sent to you on a separate CD-ROM. (Please note that this software is not compatible with Apple Mac computers.) To install the MapInfo software you will need to register to use the software by completing the MapInfo software licence agreement form which you will find on the EP Core Module CD-ROM. Your signed agreement form must be returned to dlsupport@lshtm.ac.uk and then you will be emailed back with a registration code which will allow you to install the software on your PC. The software registration lasts one year, at the end of which you must remove the software from your computer.

- **PE17-18** offer an opportunity to revise key concepts in epidemiology and statistics (PE18) that have been taught in EPM101, EPM102 or EPM103. To help you decide whether to complete part or all of PE18, we offer a self-assessment (PE17). Note that while the sessions PE17-18 are optional, we consider the key concepts they revise to be fundamental to epidemiology, and they may be assessed in the EPM103 exam.

We also have ‘masterfiles’ for all sessions. These are sessions in PDF format on the module CD-ROMs. The masterfiles hold the same information as the CAL material but can be printed out. Please note that masterfiles are not interactive and do not replace the CAL material. When studying the CAL sessions, we recommend that you work through the CD-ROM material first. The masterfile document can then be used for revision purposes to refer back to specific sessions if you wish.

**Readings**

- There is a ‘reader’ with articles for you to read while studying this module – you are pointed to these at the appropriate places in the CAL material. Please note that some documents have been added to this after the initial compilation and so may not be in the same order as the CAL sessions to which they refer. Please refer to the Table of Contents page at the beginning of the Reader to locate the appropriate page number for the documents you require.

- Throughout the module, you will frequently be referred to two real studies included in your Reader. These are:
  - a study of the low utilization of eye services in a rural community in a developing country, which investigated barriers to treatment of cataract in South India
  - a study of tuberculosis preventive therapy among HIV-infected individuals in Zambia, which investigated the efficacy of two drug regimes to prevent TB in this population.

- You should make use of the textbooks supplied with your material – specific recommended readings from these are given in the reference section of the individual CAL sessions.
Another book recommended as optional reading for this module includes (this book is not supplied):

- *Actions Speak. The Study of Hygiene Behaviour in Water Sanitation Projects*  
  Edited by Marieke T. Boot and Sandy Cairncross (1993)  
  ISBN 90-6687-023-0.

We recommend you also make use of the **LSHTM on-line library resources** (access via the University of London International Programmes portal). Details on how to access the library are given in the Student Handbook.

### Practical exercises

- Sessions 6 and 16 have separate practical exercises. You can access these and the solutions as .pdf files from within the CAL session; the Practical for Session 6 is also provided as a paper-based resource.
- Stata. Certain activities require the software packages EpiData or Stata. Note that the activities have been designed for Stata version 11.
- Please make use of the *Stata Guidelines - A Stata Summary for DL Students* - a summary of all the commands you will meet in the EP statistical modules. This can be downloaded from the General Resources page on the student website [http://dl.lshtm.ac.uk/programme/student/ep/student/general.htm](http://dl.lshtm.ac.uk/programme/student/ep/student/general.htm).

### Formative Assignments and self-assessment exercises

- There are 3 FAs and we recommend that you complete them all. These test your understanding of course material and the feedback given by tutors (and specimen answer) will enable you to see how you are progressing. The FA submission deadline is 31st March (except for the VEC – see below).
- One of the FAs is in the form of a group exercise, in which you take part in a ‘Virtual Ethics Committee (VEC)’. Details of this will be posted on the EPM103 Noticeboard (see under Web Conferencing below), but it is worth noting you will need to sign up for a preferred timeslot by 1st November. There are usually three available 6-week time slots held between October and March.
- Two additional self assessment exercises are also provided for which you can request a specimen answer once you have attempted these yourself.
- FAs and exercises should be downloaded from the module page on the course website: [http://dl.lshtm.ac.uk/programme/student/ep/student/modules/ep103.htm](http://dl.lshtm.ac.uk/programme/student/ep/student/modules/ep103.htm) (see website section at the end of this document). Full details of how and when to submit assignments (using the on-line Assignment Management System) can be found in Chapter 8 of the Student Handbook.
- For all your assignment work, it is vital that you understand and apply principles of good academic writing, referencing and using source material, as well as avoiding plagiarism. Please refer to the *Academic Writing Handbook* for
Web conferencing

- The ‘WebBoard’ is our current web-based conference system* and an integral part of this course, putting you in touch with other students and with tutors on relevant modules. The WebBoard will be open from the first week of October onwards until the module exam in June.

- It is used for:
  - **Discussion of module content and queries.** We strongly recommend that you make use of the EP web conferencing system (WebBoard) to discuss issues relating to the course material. This gives an opportunity for you to ask questions and to take part in discussions initiated by fellow students. The conferences are monitored by tutors who will contribute to the discussions. There are conferences for different parts of the module, together with a General EPM103 conference, one for discussing FAs, and, in May, conferences to help you prepare for the exams by discussing past exam questions. Instructions on how to use the WebBoard are given in the Student Handbook. You may also email specific queries to the Distance Learning Support Office (dlsupport@lshtm.ac.uk) who will refer your queries to one of the EPM103 tutors.
  - **Messages from your Module Organiser and Distance Learning Support Office.** We use WebBoard as the primary means of communication of important messages between students and staff, and in early October, the Student Support Office will subscribe you to the mailing lists for the EPM103 NoticeBoard (Students). This conference will be ‘read-only’ with only Course Directors, Module Organisers and Student Support Office staff posting messages in these and it is essential that you read all messages posted there. **Please log on regularly to WebBoard to view this module NoticeBoard, and check you are receiving these messages by email.** Please do this at least once by the end of October at the latest. If you see NoticeBoard messages for this module on WebBoard that have not reached you by email, please contact the Distance Learning Support Office (dlsupport@lshtm.ac.uk).
  - **Accessing WebBoard.** Access is via the student website http://dl.lshtm.ac.uk/ (then click on EP). All students studying EP modules should have their own unique username and password to access the EP WebBoard. Please contact the Distance Learning Support Office (dlsupport@lshtm.ac.uk) if you do not have this. For information about using WebBoard in general, please see Chapter 7 of the Student Handbook.

*Please note that we may be upgrading our web conferencing software over the next few months. We will keep you informed of any changes.
Website

- Assignments and additional resources such as past exam questions, Frequently Asked Questions, list of module tutors, student evaluations etc can be downloaded from the EPM103 module page on the student website http://dl.lshtm.ac.uk/programme/student/ep/student/modules/ep103.htm.

- There is also a General Resources page which includes documents such as the Student Handbook, list of course materials, general exam guidance and some basic maths resources. http://dl.lshtm.ac.uk/programme/student/ep/student/general.htm.

- Accessing the student website. You will be provided with the username and password to access the website at the beginning of the academic year. Please email dlsupport@lshtm.ac.uk if you do not know these.

Finally, a reminder that we are here to help! Do let us know if you have any queries at all – either by posting in the relevant WebBoard conference, or emailing dlsupport@lshtm.ac.uk