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MPH Student Handbook

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About the Program

Accreditation

WKU's Master of Public Health program is accredited by the Council on Education for Public Health (CEPH). In 2002, we became the first accredited MPH in the Commonwealth and have been accredited continually since that time. In 2016, we became the first – and only – accredited MPH to be offered in a fully online format, in addition to the campus-based format.

Vision

To be a regionally and nationally recognized institution contributing to the optimal well-being for all populations.

Mission

To prepare competent public health practitioners to enhance the health status and quality of life of diverse populations.

Values

Service to students, department, university, and the communities we serve
Partnerships and collaborations within and beyond our academic home
Integrity, professionalism, and transparency in all we do
Research that is applied, community-based, and engages students
Inclusive, culturally-competent, and equitable
Teaching excellence: competency-based, relevant, and application-focused

Goals

- Cultivate an educational experience that is integrative, comprehensive, and interdisciplinary based on current best practices in public health.
- Facilitate a culture of service that is collaborative, inclusive, and beneficial to diverse communities.
- Promote a collaborative environment conducive to timely and innovative scholarship that contributes to evidence-based public health practices and policies.

MPH Program Overview

Program Description

The Master of Public Health (MPH) is a professional practice degree that prepares you for a wide range of health professions. The 42 credit-hour program is accredited by the Council on Education for Public Health (CEPH), and is offered on WKU's campus and in a fully online format. Beyond the required core courses, you'll work in partnership with your academic advisor to select electives and tailor a program that meets your professional and academic goals related to public health. The MPH program is competency-based and focuses on applied and integrative learning.

Foundational Knowledge

The MPH curriculum is grounded in foundational public health knowledge, delineated by the following learning objectives required by CEPH. Our MPH curriculum provides you with this foundational knowledge. The course syllabi identifies if foundational knowledge is being addressed in that class.

Profession & Science of Public Health

1. Explain public health history, philosophy and values
2. Identify the core functions of public health and the 10 Essential Services.
3. Explain the role of quantitative and qualitative methods and sciences in describing and assessing a population's health
4. List major causes and trends of morbidity and mortality in the US or other community relevant to the school or program
5. Discuss the science of primary, secondary and tertiary prevention in population health, including health promotion, screening, etc.
6. Explain the critical importance of evidence in advancing public health knowledge

Factors Related to Human Health

7. Explain effects of environmental factors on a population's health
8. Explain biological and genetic factors that affect a population's health
9. Explain behavioral and psychological factors that affect a population's health
10. Explain the social, political and economic determinants of health and how they contribute to population health and health inequities
11. Explain how globalization affects global burdens of disease
12. Explain an ecological perspective on the connections among human health, animal health and ecosystem health (e.g., One Health)

Foundational Competencies

The MPH curriculum is guided by 22 foundational competencies, which are informed by the traditional public health core knowledge areas (biostatistics, epidemiology, social and behavioral sciences, health services administration, and environmental health sciences), as well as cross-cutting and emerging public health areas.   Our courses are designed to develop these competencies and will explain how on the syllabi.

Evidence-based Approaches to Public Health

1. Apply epidemiological methods to the breadth of settings and situations in public health practice
2. Select quantitative and qualitative data collection methods appropriate for a given public health context
3. Analyze quantitative and qualitative data using biostatistics, informatics, computer-based programming and software, as appropriate
4. Interpret results of data analysis for public health research, policy or practice

Public Health & Health Care Systems

5. Compare the organization, structure and function of health care, public health and regulatory systems across national and international settings
6. Discuss the means by which structural bias, social inequities and racism undermine health and create challenges to achieving health equity at organizational, community and societal levels

Planning & Management to Promote Health

7. Assess population needs, assets and capacities that affect communities' health
8. Apply awareness of cultural values and practices to the design or implementation of public health policies or programs
9. Design a population-based policy, program, project or intervention
10. Explain basic principles and tools of budget and resource management
11. Select methods to evaluate public health programs

Policy in Public Health

12. Discuss multiple dimensions of the policy-making process, including the roles of ethics and evidence
13. Propose strategies to identify stakeholders and build coalitions and partnerships for influencing public health outcomes
14. Advocate for political, social or economic policies and programs that will improve health in diverse populations
15. Evaluate policies for their impact on public health and health equity

Leadership

16. Apply principles of leadership, governance and management, which include creating a vision, empowering others, fostering collaboration and guiding decision making
17. Apply negotiation and mediation skills to address organizational or community challenges

Communication

18. Select communication strategies for different audiences and sectors
19. Communicate audience-appropriate public health content, both in writing and through oral presentation
20. Describe the importance of cultural competence in communicating public health content

Interprofessional Practice

21. Perform effectively on interprofessional teams

Systems Thinking (waiting on technical assistance paper from CEPH)

22. Apply systems thinking tools to a public health issue

Program Competencies

The In addition to foundational competencies, the MPH curriculum is built on five unique competences, developed by MPH faculty and stakeholders to reflect our program's mission. Our courses are designed to develop these competencies. Course syllabi will show you how.

WKU MPH Program Competencies

23. Apply health behavior theories and models to address public health problems.
24. Describe the role of budgeting; methods of seeking extramural funding; and methods of financial analysis in making decisions about policies, programs and services.
25. Discuss theoretical models and methods used to understand, explain, and ameliorate health disparities.
26. Integrate social determinants into public health science, practice, and research.
27. Identify the direct and indirect population health effects of environmental hazards (biological, chemical and physical) on humans, animals and the ecology.

Competency

The capability to apply or use a set of related knowledge, skills, and abilities required to successfully perform "critical work functions" or tasks in a defined work setting. Competencies often serve as the basis for skill standards that specify the level of knowledge, skills, and abilities required for success in the workplace.

MPH Program Requirements

The MPH program adheres to all of the requirements and [policies set forth by the Graduate School](#). It's important that you are familiar with these requirements, especially those regarding GPA requirements and maximum length of time for degree completion.

In addition to meeting the requirements set forth by the Graduate School, the MPH program requires that you complete each of the following for the MPH degree:
- 30 credit hours of required courses;
- 12 credit hours of elective courses;
- 4 units of graduate applied practice experiences that yield at least 2 competency-based products;
- an integrative learning experience paper _and_ presentation;
- CITI training (2 modules);
- the How to Recognize Plagiarism certificate; and
- an e-Portfolio.

Each of these requirements are summarized below. It is your responsibility to ensure these requirements are met in order to graduate.

Required Courses

Every MPH student is required to take the following ten courses. Proper course sequencing is crucial to graduating on time. You're encouraged to work with your advisor to sequence your courses, but ultimately it is your responsibility to ensure courses are taken in the proper sequence.

Course #	Title	Cr	Fall	Sp	Su[2]
PH 580	Introduction to Public Health	3	Web	F2F	
PH 520[1]	Biostatistics	3	Web	F2F	Web
PH 582	Epidemiology	3	F2F	Web	Web
PH 583	Public Health Administration	3	Web	F2F	Web
PH 584	Environmental Health	3	F2F	Web	Web
PH 587	Health Behavior	3	F2F	Web	Web
PH 575	Program Planning (prerequisites: PH 587)	3	Web	F2F	
PH 578	Health Disparities	3	F2F	Web	
PH 581	Applied Methods of Public Health Practices	3	Web	F2F	
PH 591	Program Evaluation (prerequisites: PH 587, PH 575, PH 520)	3	F2F	Web	
	Total Required Credit Hours	30			

[1] PH 620 _may_ be substituted for students who've had graduate-level statistics; it is only offered in a f2f format

[2] Summer classes are offered based on faculty availability and course enrollments.

Elective Courses

You will take 12 credit hours of electives, chosen in consultation with your academic advisor. You're encouraged to seek out electives that reflect your professional or personal goals**.** You can choose to use some or all of your elective hours to complete a graduate certificate that complements public health. [Courses that are required by both the MPH program and the certificate may count toward both programs](#).

A list of certificates that compliment public health is on the [MPH website](#). The list is hyperlinked to take you to certificate's information page. You must apply and be accepted into certificate programs, independent of the MPH application process. Certificates earned are displayed on your transcripts.

It is your responsibility to ensure proper sequencing of electives/certificate courses.

Graduate Applied Practice Experiences

The MPH is a professional *practice* degree, and as such, we believe it is important for all MPH students to be exposed to, and involved in, public health practice throughout the program. One of the ways we do this is through graduate applied practice experiences – or GrAPEs. GrAPEs are different than volunteering or shadowing, because they provide you opportunities to apply content learned in your courses to real-world, real-time public health issues. MPH GrAPEs have four distinct requirements that must be met:

- *S*ubstantial interaction with a public health or related organization*.*
- *Application of content learned in courses to a public health problem.*
- *Competency-based product developed during the experience.*
- *Structured reflection on the experience.*

To ensure substantial interaction with a public health or related organization, you're required to complete four units of GrAPEs prior to graduation. Each GrAPE unit is 25 – 40 clock hours of *working with* or *working in* a practice setting, depending on the type of GrAPE experience(s) you choose (explained on next page).

You are required to demonstrate the application of course content by creating a competency-based product during your GrAPE. Per accreditation requirements, you must produce a *minimum of two products* from your GrAPEs that demonstrate a minimum of five competencies, of which at least three must be foundational competencies. That probably sounds more complicated than it is, but the instructions on the MPH Student organizational site on Blackboard will explain all of this in great detail.

In the spirit of true service leaning, you'll complete a structured reflection, and upload it, your products, and all other related forms into your e-Portfolio.

Curricular GrAPEs

<u>PH 546, Internship</u>, is a one – six credit hour field-based experience in a public health or related organization, completed near the end of your program. Each credit hour of internship requires a minimum of 40 clock-hours of on-site time, and is equal to one GrAPE unit. If you've never worked in public health or a related field, we strongly encourage you to do an internship to gain this professional experience. If you choose to complete an internship, you must first complete an internship orientation. Instructions and forms are housed in the MPH Student organizational site on Blackboard.

<u>PH 588, Capstone</u>, is a three credit-hour applied practice experience course that counts for three GrAPE units. Students taking capstone work the entire semester on a project for an external public health or related client. Capstone can only be taken near the end of your program, and requires instructor approval to enroll.

<u>Course-Embedded Projects</u> allow you to earn up to three units of GrAPEs within the course. Course-embedded projects are offered at the discretion of the instructor.

Co-Curricular GrAPEs

<u>Group GrAPE Projects</u> can be proposed by groups of students or student organizations. The proposal must address the four GrAPE requirements, and must be approved prior to beginning the project. Instructions and forms are housed in the MPH Blackboard organizational site.

<u>Individual GrAPE Projects</u> can be proposed by for projects that meet your public-health related interests and passions. Your proposal must address the four GrAPE requirements and must be approved prior to beginning the project. Instructions and forms are housed in the MPH Student organizational site on Blackboard.

<u>Kentucky Public Health Assistance and Support Team (K-PHAST) activities</u>. Students who are <u>K-PHAST certified</u> may use mobilization activities toward GrAPE requirements. *The K-PHAST training for the 2017/2018 academic year is scheduled for October 13th.*

Integrative Learning Experience (ILE)

During the final semester(s) of study, you are required to complete an integrative learning experience that demonstrates synthesis of foundational and program competencies. ILEs require two products: 1) a high-quality written product and 2) a presentation on the ILE.

High-quality written products can take many forms, such as a mentored research report, journal article, grant application, policy development, project plan, evaluation report, or technical report. Regardless of the type of product, the written portion of the ILE must *minimally* contain:

- Clearly defined overview, background and significance, or statement of the problem.
- Thorough literature review
- Discussion or critical analysis
- Recommendations, public health implications, or conclusions

There are several options for completing your written ILE, both through curricular or co-curricular pathways. You must upload the final draft of your written ILE, to the MPH Student organizational site on Blackboard, at least two weeks before the end of the semester (three weeks, if you include finals week) to allow faculty reviewers enough time to assess your work.

Curricular ILEs

PH 599, Thesis, is six-credit hours and must follow requirements set forth by the Graduate School. The thesis and public defense meet both ILE requirements.

PH 588, Capstone, is a three-credit hour applied practice experience class. As part of the course, you will complete and present an individual, evidence-based project/report for an external public-health organization. The project/report and presentation meet both ILE requirements.

PH 530, Independent Investigations, is a one- to three-credit hour class that allows you, under faculty supervision, to pursue an individual research or practice interest. You may use this course to complete the written portion of their ILE.

PH 546, Internship, *may* provide opportunities for you to complete the written portion of the ILE, depending on the type of projects you complete as part of your internship experience.

Co-Curricular ILEs

Take-home Essay Exams can be requested for the written portion of the ILE. Requests must be submitted via email to the MPH program coordinator no later than the beginning of the third week of the final semester of study.

Co-curricular Individual GrAPEs *may* provide opportunities for you to complete the written portion of the ILE, if your competency-based project meets the guidelines.

Co-curricular Research Projects can be used to for the written portion of the ILE.

Presentation

ILEs other than thesis or capstone projects will be presented during a public health symposium during the last week of classes. Instructions for presentations are posted in the MPH Student organizational site on Blackboard. Provisions are made to accommodate distance learners.

Collaborative IRB Training Initiative (CITI) Training

CITI is a web-based ethics training course for those conducting research, and is a course requirement for Biostatistics (PH 520). You are required to complete, and obtain a minimum score of 80%, two training modules: 1) the Social/Behavioral Research Course (live human beings), and 2) the Social and Behavioral Responsible Conduct of Research Course (RCR). Each module takes a minimum of two - three hours to complete. See instructions on how to register for this free training.

How to Recognize Plagiarism Certificate

You are required to obtain a [certificate in recognizing and preventing plagiarism](#), and is a course requirement for PH 580, Introduction to Public Health. This is a free certification program through Indiana University. Instructions are found in the MPH Student organizational site on Blackboard.

e-Portfolio

You are required to create and maintain an e-portfolio. The e-portfolio, housed in the "Program Requirements" section of the MPH Student organizational site on Blackboard, serves as a format for documenting your achievement of the MPH competencies and program requirements. You are required to submit artifacts to the e-portfolio each semester, per instructions in each content area.

Not Required, but…

Student Survey. At the end of each year, we will send you a link to an anonymous online survey that will ask you about things you did that year, your perceptions of courses and advising, and your opinions about the program. Some of this information is used for accreditation reporting, but all of it is used to improve the program.

Social Media. Please join us on social media.
- Facebook https://www.facebook.com/WKU-Master-and-Bachelor-of-Public-Health-Programs-400937126923080/
- Twitter https://twitter.com/WKU_MPH_BSPH
- Instagram https://www.instagram.com/wku_mph_bsph/
- LinkedIn https://www.linkedin.com/groups/12037849

Get Started. Be Successful.

Enrolling in Courses

You are strongly encouraged to discuss course selections with your academic advisor prior to enrolling in classes each semester to ensure proper sequencing of your core and elective courses. You may then enroll yourself into courses through TopNet. If you are in the Online MPH program, please make sure to enroll in the online sections (core courses only).

Course Sequencing

All core courses are offered in fall and spring semesters in either a face-to-face or online format, as shown in the "Required Courses" section. A few core courses are offered online in the summer. Preferential enrollment in online core courses during fall and spring semesters is given to students in the Online MPH program. Most MPH elective courses are offered once a year; some are also offered through WKU-On-Demand. If you are planning to do a certificate for your electives, check with the certificate coordinator for course sequencing.

There are a few core and elective courses that have prerequisites, so please plan accordingly:

Required Courses	Prerequisite(s)
PH 575	PH 587
PH 591	PH 520, PH 587, PH 575
Elective Courses	
PH 620	PH 520
PH 630	PH 582

Program of Study Form

Before completing 12 credit hours, you must submit a Program of Study (POS) form to the Graduate School. This form identifies all of the courses you'll take for your degree, and must be signed by your advisor and approved by the Graduate School. You can get a partially-completed and fillable PDF POS from your academic advisor, or download one from the MPH Student organizational site in Blackboard or MPH website.

If you decide later to take different elective courses than those you've listed on your POS, you'll need to complete the Program of Study Change Form prior to applying for graduation.

If you are transferring in core courses from another graduate program, you will need to complete a core course substitution appeal with your academic advisor.

Academic Standing

You are required to earn a C or higher on all courses listed in your POS, and to maintain a 3.0 cumulative GPA to stay in good academic standing. Per WKU policy, you are allowed to repeat any course in which a C or below was earned, but an individual course may only be repeated one time. Only the second grade will be counted in computing the grade point average. The course and grade received for each attempt will continue to appear on the student's transcript.

If your cumulative GPA falls below a 3.0, you will be placed on academic probation. Don't panic if this happens! You're given 9 credit-hours to bring your GPA back up, so talk to your academic advisor and check out some of the academic support resources provided. If your GPA doesn't improve in that time, you will receive a letter of dismissal from the Graduate School. Don't panic too much if this happens! Instead, work with your advisor to develop an academic plan and complete an academic dismissal appeal.

Academic Integrity

We expect all MPH students to demonstrate academic integrity. Know what it is. Those who do not act with academic integrity face sanctions ranging from a zero on an assignment to dismissal from the program. If you witness any act of academic dishonesty, please report it to the MPH Program Coordinator or your instructor. Not reporting a witnessed act of academic dishonesty is itself an act of academic dishonesty.

Graduation

By WKU policy, you have six years to complete all of the MPH requirements. If you are a full-time student, you should expect to finish the program in four semesters, two of which you'll take 12 credit hours, and a minimum of nine-credit hours in the other two. If you are a part-time student, you should expect to finish the program in seven semesters, if you take two courses per semester.

The semester prior to graduation, you must log onto TopNet and apply for graduation. You will receive emails from the Graduate School, based on the projected semester of graduation listed on your POS.

You must be enrolled in at least one-credit hour during the semester you graduate.

Get Involved!

Make the most of your time at WKU!   Here are some of ways the ways to get involved and build professional networks, develop professional skills, and have fun.

Service Organizations

We encourage you to be active in our service organizations and share your voice and talents.

Public Health Undergraduate-Graduate Associated Students (PHUGAS). By virtue of being a MPH student, you are also a member of PHUGAS. PHUGAS is the MPH student governance organization, and s/elects students to serve on MPH committees. By MPH policy, students have a collective vote on most programmatic issues. PHUGAS meets monthly.

Kentucky Public Health Association (KPHA) – WKU Student Chapter. KPHA promotes and creates awareness of public health issues both on campus and in our community through various service and advocacy projects. KPHA meets monthly.

Student Rural Health Association (SRHA). SRHA is dedicated to fostering an appreciation of needs, resources, and strategies for improving health status and health care for all rural Kentuckians.

Kentucky Public Health Assistance and Support Team (K-PHAST). K-PHAST is not really a service organization, but it's worth mentioning again here! If you're in KY, but not near Bowling Green, and want to participate, let us know. We'll connect you with a K-PHAST closer to you.

Research

We encourage all MPH students to engage in research. Talk to your academic advisors about your research interests and talk to faculty about theirs.

Student Research Council. The WKU Student Research Council promotes scholarly activities and professional development of graduate, undergraduate, and Gatton Academy students in all disciplines. Each spring, they sponsor a Student Research Conference. The call for abstracts begins in December, so be thinking of ideas!

Research Grants. The Graduate School has limited funding for projects conforming to their research grant guidelines. Other WKU sources for funding are listed here.

Professional Conferences

Students are encouraged to present their research at professional conferences. Notices of conferences will be sent out through the MPH Student organizational site and social media. The Graduate School has limited funding for travel grants to go to conferences to present your research. Some organizations, such as the American Public Health Association, have scholarship opportunities to help defray costs.

WKU Resources

Center for Career and Professional Development. Staff at this [center](#) assist students with resumes, internship placements, job opportunities, and other professional development opportunities. Services are available for alumni as well.

Student Accessibility Resource Center (SARC). [SARC](#) coordinates services and accommodations for students with documented disabilities.

Writing Center. The [Writing Center](#) has locations in Cherry Hall 123 and in the Commons at Cravens Library on the Bowling Green campus. The Glasgow Writing Center is located in room 163 on the Glasgow campus. The Writing Center also offers online consultations for students who live at a distance or who cannot visit during operating hours. Writing tutors have been trained to provide helpful feedback to students at all phases of a writing project: they can *help you* brainstorm ideas, structure your essay, clarify your purpose, strengthen your support, and edit for clarity and correctness. But they will not revise or edit the paper *for you*. See instructions on the website for making online or face-to-face appointments. Or call (270) 745-5719 during operating hours (also listed on our website) for help scheduling an appointment.

WKU Libraries. Need assistance with your research? [WKU Libraries](#) can help. We are lucky to have Carol Watwood, Health Science Librarian, assigned to work with us. She has put together an extremely helpful [video](#) and one-page summary that explain how to use the library system, and is available to meet/consult with students individually or in groups.

Counseling and Testing Center. The [Counseling and Testing Center](#) provides a variety of psychological services to students that augments recruitment, retention, and graduation by strengthening students' capacity to tolerate distress, form healthy relationships, and seek healthy expressions of their ideals and values. Their website has lots of great links and resources.

Parking and Transportation. [Parking and Transportation](#) is where you get a pass to park on campus, and pay your tickets when you park in the wrong place. It's also where you'll find information to understand where you can park, when you can park there, and how to file an appeal when you get a ticket.

Graduate Assistantships and Student Employment. Information on Graduate Assistantships and openings are posted [here](#), and student employment opportunities [here](#). There are very limited graduate assistantships in the department.

Check the [WKU website](#) for other resources!