

2019-2020

# MPH Student Handbook





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# *Welcome!*

We are excited to welcome you to WKU’s MPH program for the 2019-2020 academic year.

This Student Handbook provides a comprehensive overview of the MPH program. In these pages, you will see descriptions of the program requirements, services and activities available to students, policies, and practice.

Thank you for choosing WKU. We hope your year ahead is both challenging and successful. We are committed to working with you to help you achieve your academic and professional goals and will do everything possible to support your success.

*The MPH Faculty and Staff*

# About the Program

## 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

- S**ervice to students, department, university, and the communities we serve
- P**artnerships and collaborations within and beyond our academic home
- I**ntegrity, professionalism, and transparency in all we do
- R**esearch that is applied, community-based, and engages students
- I**nclusive, culturally-competent, and equitable
- T**eaching 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.

## Diversity, Inclusion, & Equity

We promote social justice by creating a respectful, collaborative, diverse, inclusive, and equitable environment through teaching, service, and research.

## 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, in 2016, we also became Kentucky's first – and only – accredited MPH offered in a fully online format.



### **Benefits of Accreditation.<sup>1</sup>**

CEPH accreditation serves multiple purposes for different constituents. In general, specialized accreditation attests to the quality of an educational program that prepares for entry into a recognized profession.

- For the public, accreditation promotes the health, safety and welfare of society by assuring competent public health professionals.
- For prospective students and their parents, accreditation serves a consumer protection purpose. It provides assurance that the school or program has been evaluated and has met accepted standards established by and with the profession.
- For prospective employers, it provides assurance that the curriculum covers essential skills and knowledge needed for today's jobs.
- For graduates, it promotes professional mobility and enhances employment opportunities in positions that base eligibility upon graduation from an accredited school or program.
- For public health workers, it involves practitioners in the establishment of standards and assures that educational requirements reflect the current training needs of the profession.
- For the profession, it advances the field by promoting standards of practice and advocating rigorous preparation.
- For the federal government and other public funding agencies, it serves as a basis for determining eligibility for federally funded programs and student financial aid.
- For foundations and other private funding sources, it represents a highly desirable indicator of a program's quality and viability.
- For the university, it provides a reliable basis for inter- and intra-institutional cooperative practices, including admissions and transfer of credit.
- For the faculty and administrators, it promotes ongoing self-evaluation and continuous improvement and provides an effective system for accountability.
- For the school or program, accreditation enhances its national reputation and represents peer recognition.

Watch [this video](#) on why accreditation is important.

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<sup>1</sup> <https://ceph.org/constituents/students/benefits-of-accreditation/>

# 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.

The 30-hour MPH core meets CEPH's foundational knowledge and competency requirements and focuses on developing skills to make you a practice-ready public health professional. Beyond the core, you'll work in partnership with your academic advisor to select 12 hours of electives and tailor a program that meets your professional and academic goals.

## Foundational Knowledge

The MPH core curriculum is grounded in foundational public health knowledge and meets the learning objectives required by CEPH.

### 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 core 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

22. Apply systems thinking tools to a public health issue

## Program Competencies

In addition to foundational competencies, the MPH curriculum incorporates five unique competences, developed by MPH faculty and stakeholders to reflect our program's mission. Our core 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 to be 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:

-  orientation;
-  30 credit hours of required courses;
-  12 credit hours of elective courses;
-  100 hours of graduate applied practice experiences that yield at least two competency-based products;
-  an integrative learning experience (ILE) paper and presentation;
-  CITI training (2 modules);
-  the How to Recognize Plagiarism certificate; and,
-  MPH exit survey.

Each of these requirements is summarized in this section. It is your responsibility to ensure each requirement is met in order to graduate. You may track your progress through the grade center in the MPH Student organizational site on [Blackboard](#).

## Orientation

To provide equal access to orientation, an orientation presentation is posted on the MPH Student organizational site on [Blackboard](#). The information supplements, and sometimes reiterates, information contained in this handbook. There is also a link to the **required** orientation form. This form helps us advise you and collects information used to inform our accreditation reports and strategic planning.

You are also encouraged to attend the Graduate School orientation. International students are required to attend orientation through the Office of International Programs.

The MPH Program Coordinator, GrAPE Coordinator, and your academic advisor are all available to help answer any questions you have about the program and to refer you to appropriate resources if it's beyond our scope.

## Required Core Courses

Every MPH student is required pass each of the required ten core courses with a C or higher. 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. ***At present, only online MPH students are eligible to take web-based core courses during fall and spring semesters.***

Course	Title	Cr	Fall	Sp	Su <sup>2</sup>	WKU On Demand
PH 580	Introduction to Public Health	3	Web	F2F		
PH 520 <sup>1</sup>	Biostatistics	3	Web	F2F	Web	
PH 582	Epidemiology	3	F2F	Web	Web	X
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	X
PH 575	Program Planning (prerequisites: PH 587)	3	Web	F2F		X
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				

<sup>1</sup> PH 620 *may* be substituted for students who've had graduate-level statistics; it is only offered in a f2f format

<sup>2</sup> Summer classes are offered based on faculty availability and course enrollments.

## Elective Courses

You are required to take 12 credit hours of electives, chosen in consultation with your academic advisor. You're encouraged to seek out graduate-level electives that reflect your professional or personal goals that relate to public health. You are welcome to choose electives outside of the MPH program. Electives routinely offered by the MPH program include the following; this list is subject to change.

Course	Title	Fall	Spring	Summer	On-Demand
PH 530	Independent Investigations*	X	X	X	
PH 548	Community Organization	Web			X
PH 564	Women's Health	Web			
PH 576	Educational Methods		Web		X
PH 585	International Health		Web		
PH 620	Advanced Biostatistics		F2F		
PH 638	Advanced Epidemiology		F2F		

\*Instructor approval required; 1 – 6 credit hours

You can choose to use some or all of your elective hours to complete a graduate certificate that complements public health. Graduate certificates display on your transcripts as a separate academic credential. Most, but not all, certificates can be completed within the 42 credit hour MPH requirement. [Courses that are required by both the MPH program and the certificate may count toward both programs.](#)

The Graduate School maintains a [comprehensive list of graduate certificates](#), several of which compliment public health. Your advisor must approve of your certificate if the courses are to be used to fulfil your elective hours.

**Approved Certificates.**

Here is a list of the approved certificates for the MPH program. This list is subject to change as certificates are added and deleted. Most, but not all, are available 100% online.

<b>Certificate</b>	<b>Hours</b>	<b>MPH Core</b>	<b>Elective Hours</b>
<a href="#">Addictions Education</a>	15	PH 587	12
<a href="#">Biology</a>	15	None	15
<a href="#">Communicating in Health Care</a>	12	PH 587	9
<a href="#">Communicating in Organizations</a>	12	None	12
<a href="#">Emergency Management Disaster Science</a>	15	PH 581	12
<a href="#">Environmental Health &amp; Safety</a>	15	PH 584 & PH 581	9
<a href="#">Gender &amp; Women’s Studies</a>	15	PH 578	12
<a href="#">Geographic Information Science</a>	10	None	10
<a href="#">Global Health Administration</a>	15	PH 583	12
<a href="#">Health Education</a>	12	PH 587 & PH 575	6
<a href="#">Lean Sigma</a>	12	None	12
<a href="#">Local Government Administration</a>	12	None	12
<a href="#">Non-Profit Administration</a>	12	None	12*
<a href="#">Organizational Leadership</a>	12	PH 587 & PH 578	6
<a href="#">Workplace Health Promotion</a>	18	PH 587 & PH 575	12

\*Includes practicum that may be approved to fulfill GrAPE hours.

**Applying to Certificates.**

You must apply to a certificate program using the Graduate School’s [online application](#). Use your 800 number to waive the certificate application fee. You will be assigned a secondary advisor for the certificate.

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:

-  *Substantial 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 a minimum of 100 hours of GrAPEs prior to graduation. Your time must be spent *working with* or *working in* a practice setting. These hours do not need to be completed all at once – or even with the same agency. Up to 25 hours may be spent attending approved conferences.

In addition to the hour requirement, 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. You are encouraged to work with multiple organizations or on multiple projects to complete the requirement – not all of your hours or both of your products have to be from the same experience.

The structured reflection aligns your activities and products with foundational and/or program competencies, and to share insights, recommendations, etc. related to your experience.

We designed the GrAPE requirement to be flexible and inclusive, while maintaining rigor. You are encouraged to discuss various options with your academic advisor and the GrAPEs Coordinator, Ms. Marina Rust.

### Curricular GrAPEs

 PH 546, Internship, 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.

- PH 588, Capstone, 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.
- Course-Embedded Projects 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

- Group GrAPE Projects 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.
- Individual GrAPE Projects 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.
- Agency-Requested GrAPes. If an agency requests a student or group of students to assist with an activity, these can count as well. Many of these opportunities can be found on the GrAPE Vine on Blackboard. Students who are [K-PHAST certified](#) may use mobilization activities toward GrAPE requirements.
- AHEC Scholars is a two year program designed to prepare students to work on interdisciplinary teams in the ever-evolving healthcare field. Involves 40 hours of online didactic training and 40 hours of community and clinical training in a rural or underserved area each year.
- Conference Attendance. Up to 25 hours; no products required other than the structured reflection.

Forms and instructions are found on the MPH Student organizational site on Blackboard, and may be obtained by contacting the GrAPE Coordinator at [marina.rust@wku.edu](mailto:marina.rust@wku.edu). All GrAPes, regardless of format, must be **approved in advance** by the MPH GrAPE Coordinator, Ms. Marina Rust.

Track your completed GrAPE hours and products in the “Check Your Status” link on the MPH Student organizational site.

## 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* meet these four criteria:

- 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, as described in detail below.

### 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.

### **ILE Submission Deadlines.**

Instructions on how to submit each of the following, and how each item is evaluated, are found on the MPH Student organizational site on Blackboard.

<u>Due:</u>	<u>Fall 2019</u>	<u>Spring 2020</u>	<u>Summer 2020</u>
ILE Proposal	9/13	2/14	5/29
First Draft	10/11	3/13	6/26
Final Draft	11/8	4/10	7/17
Final Revisions	11/29	5/1	8/7

### **Presentation.**

ILEs other than thesis or capstone projects are presented online during the last week of classes. Instructions for presentations are posted in the MPH Student organizational site on Blackboard.

### **ILE Assessment.**

Your ILE proposal and first draft is reviewed by your primary reviewer, who will be assigned to you during your final semester. The final draft and final revisions are reviewed by your primary and a secondary reviewer, using a four-level rating system -- High Pass, Pass, Low Pass, Fail – on each of the four required criteria for ILE papers.

## **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. You will upload each certificate using links the MPH Student organizational site on Blackboard.

## **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 on the MPH Student organizational site on Blackboard, where you will also upload your certificate of completion.

## MPH Exit Survey

The MPH Exit Survey is your final program **requirement**. The MPH Program Coordinator will send you a link a few weeks before the end of your final semester. The information you are asked to provide informs strategic planning and program improvements, as well as to meet accreditation requirements. We value your honest feedback.

## Social Media

Please join us on social media. We use social media to send out interesting public health stories, GrAPE opportunities, job announcements, student successes, and random memes. We love it when you post!

-  [Facebook https://www.facebook.com/wku.mph.bsph/](https://www.facebook.com/wku.mph.bsph/)
-  [Twitter https://twitter.com/WKU MPH BSPH](https://twitter.com/WKU MPH BSPH)
-  [Instagram https://www.instagram.com/wku\\_mph\\_bsph/](https://www.instagram.com/wku_mph_bsph/)
-  [LinkedIn](#) Must be added to group by an existing member

## After You Graduate

About a year after you graduate, we will contact you to see whether you're employed, continuing your education, or seeking employment. We are required to report this data to CEPH. We are also required to contact you a few years later to get your perceptions of your ability to apply the foundational and program competencies in your post-graduation placements.

We also encourage you to email us and/or post messages on social media to keep us updated on your life.

# 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. While it is your responsibility to ensure proper sequencing of your core and elective courses, your academic advisor will help you with the planning process. At present, online core courses are restricted to online students during fall and spring terms and require an override by the MPH Program Coordinator. You may [enroll yourself into unrestricted courses through TopNet](#).

## 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 also offered online in the summer and through WKU-On-Demand. During the fall and spring semesters, online core courses are restricted 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

PH 575

PH 591

### Prerequisite(s)

PH 587

PH 520, PH 587, PH 575

### Elective Courses

PH 620

PH 630

### Prerequisite(s)

PH 520

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. Please let your advisor know right away if you have any graduate work that may transfer into the program.

## 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 transcript.

If your cumulative GPA falls below a 3.0, you will be placed on academic probation if you were admitted in good standing. 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](#).

If you were admitted conditionally and your GPA falls below 3.0 during the first semester of study, you will receive a letter of dismissal from the Graduate School. If this happens, please contact the MPH Program Coordinator to file an 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.

Per Graduate School policy, you must be enrolled in at least one credit hour during the semester in which you finish all of your program requirements.

Commencement ceremonies are held in December and May. August graduates may elect to participate at either time. To honor and recognize the significant achievement of earning a master's degree, we hold a hooding ceremony for all of the graduate students in the Department of Public Health in December and May.

## *Hooding Ceremony*

The hooding ceremony, believed to have originated in European universities in the 12th century, was first instituted to recognize graduating students as they entered into their scholarly careers. Hooded robes, often required for warmth in unheated medieval libraries, were first used as a practical uniform for scholars as they studied and produced written works. With the introduction of the printing press in the 15th century, robes became largely symbolic. Universities began to differentiate students by their academic majors, and colors were added to the robes to signify those distinctions. Hoods later became detached ornaments, presented to graduates as part of their commencement.

Hoods are still used today to represent a commitment to a scholarly life. While modern day undergraduates wear robes and caps, those with masters degrees are presented with hoods to show their continued pursuit of knowledge. These hoods are an expression of tradition and will be used to communicate the wearer's school and degree for the rest of their lives.

# 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

**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 selects/elects students to serve on MPH committees. By [MPH policy](#), students have a collective vote on most programmatic issues. PHUGAS meets monthly. Announcements are sent out through the MPH Student organizational site. Meeting schedules, current agendas, and minutes are posted on the [departmental website](#).

**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.

**AHEC Scholars.** [AHEC Scholars](#) is a two year program designed to prepare students to work on interdisciplinary teams in the ever evolving healthcare field. Contact [catherine.malin@wku.edu](mailto:catherine.malin@wku.edu) for details.

## Professional Organizations

**American Public Health Association (APHA).** Students are encouraged to join APHA, the professional organization for the public health profession. APHA has over 25,000 members, and provides vast opportunities to expand your public health expertise through science and industry resources, networking and professional development. [Membership rates](#) are discounted deeply for students.

## 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!**