

# PUBLIC HEALTH, PHD

**Banner Code:** PH-PHD-PUBH

## Academic Advising

Website: <https://publichealth.gmu.edu/students/academic-advising>  
(<https://publichealth.gmu.edu/students/academic-advising/>)

The Doctor of Philosophy (PhD) in Public Health prepares students to think critically as public health scientists, develop subject matter expertise and analytical skills to become successful independent researchers, and respond to the most pressing public health challenges facing Virginia, the nation, and the world.

The program provides doctoral students with a substantive public health knowledge base accompanied by advanced training in research methods and data analysis. Students develop competencies related to synthesizing the scientific literature on the social and behavioral determinants that influence public health and associated health disparities. Students receive individualized research and professional mentoring necessary to ensure their success as public health scholars. The program also requires all students to complete a teaching practicum, which includes an opportunity to independently teach a variety of public health courses to prepare them for successful careers in academia.

Graduates are prepared to work as researchers, prevention scientists, epidemiologists, and evaluation specialists in a variety of employment sectors including, colleges and universities, local, state, and federal official health agencies, non-government health organizations, health care systems, and private entities such as contract research organizations, consultant management firms, and industry-based associations.

The PhD in Public Health offers two concentrations:

## Epidemiology

Students pursuing the concentration in Epidemiology examine the distribution and determinants of health-related conditions in populations to ameliorate disease, disability, and other health problems. Students in this concentration develop the substantive knowledge and methodologic tools needed for designing and analyzing etiologic research focusing on understanding observed disparities and etiology of health conditions.

## Social and Behavioral Sciences

The Social and Behavioral Science concentration prepares students to analyze the social and behavioral determinants of population health and well-being. Using social/behavioral theoretical frameworks, students learn how to design and evaluate multi-level public health interventions aimed at preventing disease, promoting health and well-being, and eliminating health disparities.

## Admissions & Policies

### Admissions Requirements

Students must have an earned baccalaureate and/or graduate degree from an institution of higher education accredited by a Mason-recognized U.S. institutional accrediting agency or international equivalent verified from official transcripts. Expectation of an earned baccalaureate and/or

graduate degree from an institution of higher education accredited by a Mason-recognized U.S. institutional accrediting agency or international equivalent, prior to the first day of classes for the term for which the student is applying, will also meet this requirement. Students with a master's degree will have preference for admission, but exceptional post-baccalaureate candidates will be considered. Applicants must meet the admission standards and application requirements specified in Graduate Admissions (<https://catalog.gmu.edu/admissions/graduate-policies/>) and must apply using the online Schools of Public Health Application System (<http://www.sophas.org/>) (SOPHAS). For application deadlines and detailed application requirements, refer to the College of Public Health admissions website (<https://publichealth.gmu.edu/admissions/graduate-admissions/standards-requirements-and-deadlines/>). Students must submit transcripts, resume/CV, and three letters of recommendation. English proficiency demonstrated by a university approved exam or waiver is required for applicants from foreign institutions, as required by the university.

## Policies

### Reduction of Credit

Students who enter with a master's or other advanced degree may have the credit requirement reduced by up to 30 credits for previous coursework that closely corresponds with doctoral program requirements. The credit reduction must be approved by the Director of Doctoral Studies in consultation with the doctoral advisor.

### Time requirements

Students must complete all requirements for the PhD in Public Health within 9 calendar years from the time of first enrollment as a doctoral student. PhD students are expected to progress steadily toward their degree and to complete all coursework, the qualifying exam and dissertation proposal defense in order to advance to candidacy within no more than 6 years.

### Qualifying Exam

The qualifying exam will be written exam offered once per academic year. The exam must be taken at the first opportunity following completion of Public Health core courses (excluding: GCH 830 Research Grant Writing for Public Health, GCH 890 Doctoral Seminar and PH 850 Teaching Practicum in Public and Population Health). Any student failing the qualifying exam will be offered a second opportunity to pass the exam. A second failure will result in dismissal from the program. Students must pass the qualifying exam in order to be eligible to register for GCH 998 Doctoral Dissertation Proposal and to undertake the Oral Dissertational Proposal Defense.

### Dissertation Proposal Defense

The written dissertation proposal and oral defense of proposal will constitute of Dissertation Proposal Defense. The student's Dissertation Committee will assess the student's success and preparedness for undertaking dissertation research. The Dissertation Committee may pass the student unconditionally, request additional work before passing the student, or fail the student. A student who fails the oral examination will be given one additional attempt. Students failing the oral dissertation proposal defense twice will be dismissed from the Program.

## Advancement to Candidacy

Students who complete all public health core and concentration core course requirements (excluding GCH 830 Research Grant Writing for Public Health, GCH 890 Doctoral Seminar, PH 850 Teaching Practicum in Public and Population Health, and electives), pass the qualifying examination, and successfully defend their dissertation proposal may advance to candidacy (GCH 998 Doctoral Dissertation Proposal). A student must advance to candidacy before registering for GCH 999 Doctoral Dissertation.

## Dissertation

With the approval of the Director of Doctoral Studies, students may change advisors at any point prior to beginning work on their dissertation proposal. At the time the student begins the dissertation process, the PhD Advisor becomes the Dissertation Mentor, and Chair of the Dissertation Committee. Dissertation Mentors must hold a graduate faculty appointment in the Department of Global and Community Health, or be designated as Public Health program graduate faculty, and have successfully completed their three-year review.

The Director of Doctoral Studies must approve the Dissertation Committee. The committee must have at least three members, each of whom must be a full-time member of the graduate faculty. At least one other member of the Dissertation Committee must be a faculty member in the College of Public Health. The third member of the committee may be from the College of Public Health or another academic unit at George Mason University. Additional members may be added with approval of the Director of Doctoral Studies and may include scholars from outside Mason.

After advancement to candidacy, the PhD Public Health student must complete an approved dissertation. The Dissertation represents a substantial body of scholarship that advances the scientific understanding related to an important public health question or concern. The Dissertation is presented and evaluated in two components: a written document and an oral defense of dissertation. The final evaluation of the Dissertation is made by the Committee after the Dissertation Defense. The Committee may decide to pass the student unconditionally, request additional work, or fail the student.

## Requirements

### Degree Requirements

Total credits: 72

### Overview

The purpose of the PhD in Public Health is to prepare students for research careers in academia, government agencies, non-governmental organizations, and private-sector entities that support population health. The degree includes two concentrations of specialized study:

- Epidemiology
- Social and Behavioral Sciences

### Requirements

The PhD in Public Health comprises 72 credits. The 24-credit Public Health core provides the foundation for the degree and includes 6 credits of professional development. Students complete 33 credits of concentration coursework, including 21 credits in concentration core courses and 12 credits of approved restricted elective coursework

relating to the student's area of interest. Students must complete 12 credits toward dissertation requirements and complete coursework in faculty preparation.

## Public Health Core

Code	Title	Credits
<b>Core Courses</b>		
GCH 700	Social and Ecological Determinants of Health	3
GCH 712	Introduction to Epidemiology	3
GCH 726	Advanced Methods in Epidemiology I	3
GCH 772	Social Epidemiology	3
GCH 804	Biostatistics for Public Health I	3
GCH 805	Biostatistics for Public Health II	3
<b>Professional Development Courses</b>		
GCH 830	Research Grant Writing for Public Health	3
GCH 890	Doctoral Seminar	3
<b>Total Credits</b>		<b>24</b>

## Faculty Preparation

Code	Title	Credits
PH 850	Teaching Practicum in Public and Population Health	3

## Concentration in Epidemiology (EPID)

Code	Title	Credits
<b>Concentration Core Courses</b> <sup>1</sup>		
GCH 727	Advanced Methods in Epidemiology II	3
GCH 814	Biostatistics for Public Health III	3
GCH 824	Advanced Data Analysis for Epidemiologic Research	3
GCH 826	Design of Epidemiologic Research	3
GCH 880	Epidemiologic Research Seminar	3
Select two from the following:		6
GCH 722	Infectious Disease Epidemiology	
GCH 728	Meta-Analysis for Population Health Research	
GCH 732	Chronic Disease Epidemiology	
GCH 742	Behavioral Epidemiology	
GCH 752	Nutritional Epidemiology	
GCH 762	Environmental Epidemiology	
GCH 795	Advanced Special Topics in Global and Community Health <sup>2</sup>	
GCH 807	Measurement Theories and Applications in Public Health Research	
PSYC 557	Psychometric Methods	
PSYC 889	Structural Equation Modeling and Meta-Analysis	

<b>Restricted Electives</b>	
Advisor-approved electives	12
<b>Total Credits</b>	<b>33</b>

<sup>1</sup> Concentration core coursework must be completed prior to advancement to candidacy.

<sup>2</sup> GCH 795 requires advisor permission prior to registration. Course may be repeated for credit within the concentration as long as the topic varies.

## Concentration in Social and Behavioral Sciences (SBS)

Code	Title	Credits
<b>Concentration Core Courses</b> <sup>1</sup>		
GCH 609	Community Assessment and Partnerships	3
GCH 610	Health Behavior Theory	3
GCH 651	Behavioral Research Methods	3
GCH 730	Interventions in Public Health	3
GCH 851	Advanced Research Designs and Analysis for Social and Behavioral Health Sciences	3
Select two of the following:		6
GCH 626	Migrant Health	
GCH 728	Meta-Analysis for Population Health Research	
GCH 807	Measurement Theories and Applications in Public Health Research	
GCH 814	Biostatistics for Public Health III	
HAP 824	Social Determinants of Health: A Multilevel Evidence-Based Approach	
HAP 925	Advanced Methods in Qualitative Research for Health Care	
PH 810	Systematic Reviews of Health Research	
NURS 920	Qualitative Research in Nursing and Health Care	
CRIM 784	Experimental Criminology	
EDRS 812	Qualitative Methods in Educational Research	
PSYC 557	Psychometric Methods	
PSYC 889	Structural Equation Modeling and Meta-Analysis	
SOCI 634	Qualitative Research Methods	
<b>Restricted Electives</b>		
Advisor-approved electives		12
Total Credits		33

<sup>1</sup> Concentration core coursework must be completed prior to advancement to candidacy.

## Dissertation

Code	Title	Credits
GCH 998	Doctoral Dissertation Proposal	3
GCH 999	Doctoral Dissertation	9
Total Credits		12