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 or interventional research focusing on health issues (e.g., diabetes, endometriosis, infectious disease) or exposures (e.g., air pollution, environmental chemicals, infectious agents) for targeted populations.

**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**

**Requirements**

Students must have a bachelor’s degree from a regionally-accredited institution before being admitted to the 72-credit PhD program. 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 and must apply using SOPHAS (http://www.sophas.org/). For application deadlines and detailed application requirements, refer to the CHHS admissions website (https://chhs.gmu.edu/admissions/graduate-admissions/). Students must submit transcripts, resume/CV, GRE scores, and three letters of recommendation. TOEFL scores are 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 will be recommended by the doctoral advisor and requires approval of the Director of Graduate Studies. Requests for reduction of credit are reviewed only after acceptance to the doctoral program.

**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 and comprehensive and field exams in order to advance to candidacy within no more than 6 years.

**Comprehensive Exam**

The comprehensive exam will determine whether the student has the necessary knowledge and skills to undertake dissertation work. The exam must be taken within one year of completion of all coursework (except for dissertation and professional development seminar courses).

**Advancement to Candidacy**

Students who complete all core and concentration course requirements, pass comprehensive exam, and successfully defend the dissertation proposal advance to candidacy. A student must advance to candidacy before taking the dissertation courses.

**Dissertation**

After advancement to candidacy, the PhD Public Health student must complete an approved dissertation. The student must seek and
obtain approval of the Director of Graduate Studies on the selection of
dissertation chair and committee members. The committee must have
at least three members, each of which must be a full-time member of the
graduate faculty. The Dissertation Committee Chair must hold a graduate
faculty appointment in the Department of Global and Community Health,
or be designated as Public Health program graduate faculty. The second
member must be a member of the College of Health and Human Services
(CHHS), and the third member of the committee may be from CHHS or
another academic unit at George Mason University. A fourth member
of the committee may be appointment from another academic unit or
outside Mason, with approval of the Director of Graduate Studies.

Within six months of passing the comprehensive exam, the student
will submit a draft dissertation proposal to his/her/their dissertation
committee. The contents of the dissertation proposal will be agreed upon
at the start of undertaking graduate credit GCH 998 Doctoral Dissertation
Proposal. An oral proposal defense will be schedule with dissertation
committee members who have agreed to serve. Students must pass the
proposal defense before embarking on graduate credit GCH 999 Doctoral
Dissertation.

**Requirements**

*Note: as of catalog publication in April, the program described below has
been approved by the Board of Visitors and sent to the State Council of
Higher Education in Virginia for consideration as a new degree program. The
university cannot accept applications or enroll students in this program until
SCHEV approval has been granted.*

**Degree Requirements**

Total credits: 72

**Overview**

The purpose of the PhD program 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 Public Health comprises 72 credits. This includes 24 credits
in the Public Health and Research Core, 12 credits toward dissertation
requirements, and 24 credits of concentration coursework and 12 credits
of approved elective coursework within their concentration area.

**Public Health and Research Core**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Code</th>
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<th>Credits</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>GCH 500</td>
<td>Foundations of Public Health</td>
<td>3</td>
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<tr>
<td>GCH 712</td>
<td>Introduction to Epidemiology</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>GCH 726</td>
<td>Advanced Methods in Epidemiology I</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>GCH 804</td>
<td>Biostatistics for Public Health I</td>
<td>3</td>
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<tr>
<td>GCH 805</td>
<td>Biostatistics for Public Health II</td>
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<tr>
<td>GCH 830</td>
<td>Research Grant Writing for Public Health</td>
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<td>GCH 890</td>
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<td>HHS 825</td>
<td>Conducting and Publishing Health Research</td>
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**Concentration in Epidemiology (EPID)**

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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>GCH 727</td>
<td>Advanced Methods in Epidemiology II</td>
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<td>GCH 814</td>
<td>Biostatistics for Public Health III</td>
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<td>GCH 824</td>
<td>Advanced Data Analysis for Epidemiologic Research</td>
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<td>GCH 826</td>
<td>Design of Epidemiologic Research</td>
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<td>GCH 880</td>
<td>Epidemiologic Research Seminar</td>
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Select two from the following: 6

- GCH 722 Infectious Disease Epidemiology (Take two of)
- GCH 732 Chronic Disease Epidemiology
- GCH 742 Behavioral Epidemiology
- GCH 752 Nutritional Epidemiology
- GCH 762 Environmental Epidemiology
- GCH 772 Social Epidemiology

Select one from the following: 3

- GCH 728 Meta-Analysis for Population Health Research
- RHBS 720 Principles of Clinical Trials

Advisor-approved electives: 12

Total Credits: 36

**Concentration in Social and Behavioral Sciences (SBS)**

<table>
<thead>
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<tr>
<td>GCH 609</td>
<td>Community Assessment and Partnerships</td>
<td>3</td>
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<td>GCH 610</td>
<td>Health Behavior Theory</td>
<td>3</td>
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<tr>
<td>GCH 651</td>
<td>Behavioral Research Methods</td>
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<tr>
<td>GCH 730</td>
<td>Interventions in Public Health</td>
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<tr>
<td>GCH 731</td>
<td>Monitoring and Evaluation of Public Health Interventions</td>
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<tr>
<td>GCH 772</td>
<td>Social Epidemiology</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>GCH 851</td>
<td>Advanced Research Designs and Analysis for Social and Behavioral Health Sciences</td>
<td>3</td>
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<tr>
<td>HAP 925</td>
<td>Advanced Methods in Qualitative Research for Health Care</td>
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Advisor-approved electives: 12

Total Credits: 36

**Dissertation**

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<td>Doctoral Dissertation Proposal</td>
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<td>GCH 999</td>
<td>Doctoral Dissertation</td>
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Total Credits: 12