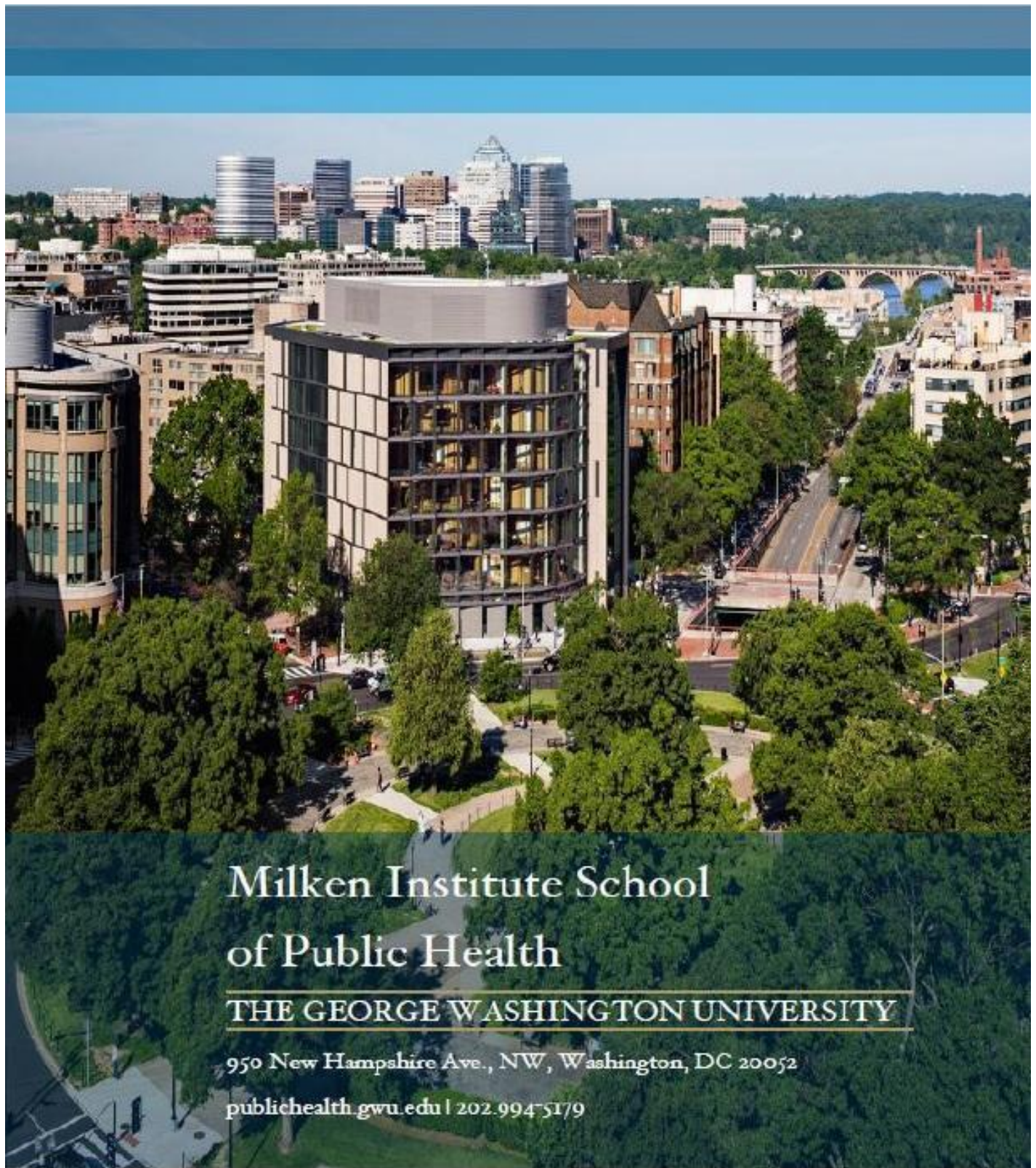




Milken Institute School of Public Health

THE GEORGE WASHINGTON UNIVERSITY

950 New Hampshire Ave., NW, Washington, DC 20052

publichealth.gwu.edu | 202.994.5179

The GWSPH Graduate Student Handbook

The Graduate Student Handbook serves as a repository for policies and procedures that govern The Milken Institute School of Public Health (GWSPH) at The George Washington University (GW) and students' academic rights and responsibilities. This handbook applies to all of the doctoral, masters and graduate certificate programs in the school. Students are expected to be knowledgeable about these policies and procedures. In addition, the handbook provides information and references about GWSPH and its academic programs.

The Graduate Student Handbook is secondary to the [University Bulletin](#), a complete source of university-wide information. Information in this handbook is accurate as of August 22, 2025. The university and GWSPH reserve the right to change courses, programs, and fees, or to make other administrative and policy/procedure changes deemed necessary or desirable, giving advance notice of these changes when possible.

This handbook is updated on an annual basis and can be found on the [Milken Institute School of Public Health website](#).

The George Washington University does not unlawfully discriminate against any person on any basis prohibited by federal law, the District of Columbia Human Rights Act, or other applicable law, including without limitation, race, color, religion, sex, national origin, age, disability, veteran status, sexual orientation, gender identity or expression, genetic information, pregnancy, or familial or marital status. This policy covers all programs, services, policies, and procedures of the university, including admission to education programs and employment.

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Glossary

APEX	MPH Applied Practice Experience
ASPPH	Association of Schools and Programs of Public Health
BA	Bachelor of Arts
BS	Bachelor of Science
CAP	GW Counseling and Psychological Services
CAHME	Commission on Accreditation of Healthcare Management Education
CASCE	Council on Accreditation of Strength and Conditioning Education
CE	Culminating Experience
CEPH	Council on Education for Public Health
CESA	Conflict Education and Student Accountability
CHES	Certified Health Education Specialist
CITI	Collaborative IRB Training Initiative
CPT	Curricular Practical Training
CR/NC	Credit/No Credit
CSCS	Certified Strength and Conditioning Specialist
CSPS	Certified Special Population Specialist
CV	Curriculum Vitae
DAPEX	DrPH Applied Practice Experience
DBB	Department of Biostatistics and Bioinformatics
D.C.	Washington, D.C.; District of Columbia
DrPH	Doctor of Public Health
DrPH@GW	Online Doctor of Public Health
DSS	Disability Support Services
EOH	Department of Environmental and Occupational Health
EPI	Department of Epidemiology
EPR	Expedited Portfolio Review
ETD	Electronic Thesis/Dissertation
EXNS	Department of Exercise and Nutrition Sciences
F	Fail grade
FACHCA	Fellow of the American College of Health Care Administrators
FACHE	Fellow of the American College of Healthcare Executives
FAQ	Frequently Asked Questions
FTC	Full-Time Certification
GA	Graduate Assistant
GAO	United States Government Accountability Office
GH	Department of Global Health
GPA	Grade-Point Average
GTA	Graduate Teaching Assistant
GTAP	Graduate Teaching Assistantship Program

GW or GWU	The George Washington University
GWPD	The George Washington Police Department
GWSPH	The Milken Institute School of Public Health
HIPAA	Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act of 1996
HPM	Department of Health Policy and Management
I	Incomplete grade
ILE	Integrative Learning Experience
IPG	In Progress grade
IPE	Interprofessional Experience
IRB	Institutional Review Board
ISO	GW International Services Office
LOA	Leave of Absence
MCHES	Master Certified Health Education Specialist
MHA	Master of Health Administration
MHA@GW	Online Master of Health Administration
MPH	Master of Public Health
MPH@GW	Online Master of Public Health
MS	Master of Science
MSCHE	Middle States Commission on Higher Education
NADrPH	National Association for Doctors of Public Health
NSCA-CPT	Certified Personal Trainer
OAPH	Office of Applied Public Health
OIE	Office of Inclusive Excellence
OIP	Office of International Programs
ORE	Office of Research Excellence
OSA	Office of Student Affairs
PCH	Department of Prevention and Community Health
PE	Professional Enhancement
PhD	Doctor of Philosophy
PHSA	Public Health Student Association
QandA	Question and Answer
RTF Classic	Registration Transaction Form-Classic
RTF-EZ	Registration Transaction Form-EZ
SAP	Satisfactory Academic Progress
SELF	Student Emergency Loan Fund
SOPHAS	Schools of Public Health Application Service (central application service)
UHP	Urban Health Program
VTSC	Virginia Science and Technology Campus
Z	Unauthorized withdrawal grade

The Milken Institute School of Public Health

The Milken Institute School of Public Health (GWSPH) is committed to excellence in scholarship to advance the health of the populations of our local, national, and global communities. Our mission is to advance population health, wellbeing, and social justice locally, nationally, and globally by applying public health knowledge to enhance policy, practice, and management; conducting rigorous, basic, applied, and translational research; and educating the next generation of public health leaders, policy makers, practitioners, scientists, advocates, and managers. Through our core values of scholarship, leadership, scientific rigor, and policy analysis, GWSPH aims to foster the next generation of thought leaders, practitioners, policy makers, and scientists who will transform public health worldwide, especially for underserved populations. To learn about the school's history, mission and vision visit the school's [website](#).

Location

950 New Hampshire Avenue NW | Washington, D.C. 20052
Phone: 202-994-7400 | Fax: 202-994-3773

[Interactive Map](#) of GW Foggy Bottom Campus

School Leadership

950 New Hampshire Avenue NW | 7th Floor | Washington, D.C. 20052
Phone: 202-994-5179 | Fax: 202-994-3773

School Leadership	
Lynn R. Goldman , MD, MS, MPH Michael and Lori Milken Dean of Public Health goldmanl@gwu.edu 202-994-5179 <i>As of October 1, 2025</i> Kelly A. Gebo, MD, MPH Michael and Lori Milken Dean of Public Health	Natasha Kazeem , MBA Executive Associate Dean, Operations and Chief Operating Officer nnathan@gwu.edu 202-994-5667

School Leadership	
Jane Hyatt Thorpe , JD Senior Associate Dean for Academic, Student, and Faculty Affairs jthorpe@gwu.edu 202-994-4183	Christopher Mores , ScD, SM Interim Senior Associate Dean for Research and Innovation Professor, Department of Global Health cmores@gwu.edu 202-994-0981
Sara Wilensky , PhD, JD Associate Dean for Undergraduate Programs wilensky@gwu.edu 202-994-4126	Lorien Abrams , ScD, MA Associate Dean for PhD/MS Programs lorien@gwu.edu 202-994-3518
George Gray , PhD, MS Associate Dean for MPH Programs gmgray@gwu.edu 202-994-7793	Gene Migliaccio , DrPH, MPH Associate Dean for Applied Public Health and DrPH Program Director geno@gwu.edu
Sarah Crozier , MA Executive Director of Communications and Marketing sarah.crozier@gwu.edu 303-868-9600	Heather Renault Assistant Dean for Student Services hrenault@gwu.edu 202-994-0554
Monica Partsch Assistant Dean for Faculty Affairs and Program Development mpartsch@gwu.edu 202-994-7418	Andrew Wiss , PhD, EdM Assistant Dean for Academic Innovation awiss@gwu.edu
Diana Paulraj , MAM Managing Director of Finance and Administration dpaulraj@gwu.edu 202-994-2330	

Refer to the [leadership section](#) of the school's website for information on the GWSPH deans. Information regarding GWSPH [faculty biographies and contact information](#) is available online. Any GW student or employee can be looked up by name in the [GW directory](#).

Academic Departments and Online Programs

GWSPH offers the following graduate degrees: Master of Public Health (MPH), Master of Science (MS), Master of Health Administration (MHA), Doctor of Public Health (DrPH), and Doctor of Philosophy (PhD). Additionally, the school offers several graduate certificates and dual degree programs. The aforementioned academic degrees and programs are offered through the following:

- Academic departments
 - [Biostatistics and Bioinformatics](#)
 - [Environmental and Occupational Health](#)
 - [Epidemiology](#)
 - [Exercise and Nutrition Sciences](#)
 - [Global Health](#)
 - [Health Policy and Management](#)
 - [Prevention and Community Health](#)
- Schoolwide graduate programs
 - [MPH@GW](#) (online)
 - [MPH](#) (residential)
 - [DrPH@GW](#) (online)
 - [DrPH](#) (residential)

Accreditation

GW is accredited by the [Middle States Commission on Higher Education](#) (MSCHE). Its accreditation was reaffirmed in 2018. The next evaluation visit is scheduled for 2026-2027. The school is accredited by the [Council on Education for Public Health](#) (CEPH) until 2031. The Masters of Health Administration programs are accredited by the [Commission on Accreditation of Healthcare Management Education](#) (CAHME). The Bachelor of Science in Exercise Science with a concentration in Strength and Conditioning received its inaugural accreditation from the [Council on Accreditation of Strength and Conditioning Education](#) (CASCE) in 2025. GWSPH is a member of the [Association of Schools and Programs of Public Health](#) (ASPPH). For more information, students should visit the school's [website](#).

Administrative Offices

Visit [administrative offices](#) for more information.

Student Affairs

950 New Hampshire Avenue NW | 2nd floor | Washington, D.C. 20052

Phone: 202-994-0822 | Email: gwsphosa@gwu.edu

The [Office of Student Affairs](#) (OSA) provides information and services to GWSPH students. The OSA staff strives to promote quality services by being available, resourceful, respectful of students' needs, fair and consistent with GWSPH policies and procedures, culturally competent, and responsive to faculty and student feedback. Official petitions and other administrative activities are finalized in the OSA (including any administrative action indicating the need for "dean's office" sign-off). The OSA is the first stop for students needing support, assistance, and advice on GWSPH matters. The OSA includes Admissions, Career Development, Student Financial Services, and Student Records. Although email documentation is preferred, there is a physical OSA mailbox located on the second-floor reception area.

The OSA handles a variety of administrative functions for students including, but not limited to:

- Student services and advisement on GWSPH policies and procedures
- GWSPH forms and publications
- GWSPH international student forms and requirements
- Registration for restricted courses
- Course evaluations
- Questions regarding GWSPH special events (e.g., orientations, Public Health Week, career fairs, Commencement, and school celebration ceremony)
- GWSPH course schedules, course caps, rooms, etc.
- GWSPH listserv subscriptions and questions
- Student organizations' needs such as classroom reservations

Admissions

950 New Hampshire Avenue NW | 2nd floor | Washington, D.C. 20052

Residential programs | Email: gwsphadmit@gwu.edu | Phone: 202-994-2160

MPH@GW | Email: admissions@publichealthonline.gwu.edu | Phone: 855-674-2849

DrPH@GW | Email: drphadmin@email.gwu.edu

MHA@GW | Email: admissions@mha.gwu.edu | Phone: 855-642-2849

The [Office of Admissions and Enrollment](#) manages enrollment into the residential graduate programs at GWSPH. In addition, the office works with the university undergraduate admissions team who is responsible for the admissions process for the undergraduate programs (see the [Undergraduate Student Handbook](#)). The Office of Admissions and Enrollment also works closely with GWSPH's online partner for the MPH@GW, MHA@GW, and DrPH@GW programs regarding admissions. The policies to which the Office of Admissions and Enrollment adheres

are set by the Admissions Committee, a faculty committee made up of one voting representative from each department and the online programs.

The Office of Admissions and Enrollment can assist graduate students with the following:

- Admissions and matriculation
- International student questions and preliminary visa processing
- General scholarship process and external funding information
- New student clearance for registration
- Petitioning for readmission or changing programs

Student Financial Services

950 New Hampshire Avenue NW | 2nd floor | Washington, D.C. 20052

Phone: 202-994-1950 | Email: gwsphfinaid@gwu.edu

[GWSPH Student Financial Services](#) is committed to assisting students in creating a financial plan to achieve their educational goals and resolving emergent issues that pertain to federal student aid, institutional resources such as scholarships and assistantships, and managing student accounts. Staff serve as a liaison for GWSPH students and the [GW Office of Student Financial Assistance](#) and [GW Student Accounts Office](#), assisting students when functions require direct contact with these offices. Online students can visit the [GW tuition, billing, and financial aid FAQ](#) for more information.

GWSPH Student Financial Services can assist students with the following:

- Counseling on federal student aid eligibility and the application process
- Management of institutionally funded grants and scholarships
- Identification of external scholarship resources
- Assistance in managing services offered through the [GW Office of Student Financial Assistance](#) and [GW Student Accounts Office](#)

The GW Office of Student Financial Assistance maintains policies related to financial assistance and can be found [here](#), including the policy related to federal [Satisfactory Academic Progress \(SAP\) requirements](#).

Emergency Loan Funding

The [GWSPH Student Emergency Loan Fund](#) (SELF) is available to qualified students managing unexpected expenses. Funding from the GWSPH SELF has a zero percent interest rate if repaid within 45 days. Students may borrow only once per semester. For more information on qualifications and how to apply, students should reach out to a representative from the [GWSPH Student Financial Services](#).

Graduate Career Services

950 New Hampshire Avenue NW | 2nd floor | Washington, D.C. 20052

Phone: 202-994-5485 | Email: gwsphcareer@gwu.edu

[GWSPH Graduate Career Services](#) is dedicated to providing the tools, resources, and recommendations required to support students and alumni confidently navigate the career management life cycle.

Graduate Career Services provides the following support for both students and alumni:

- Immediate and long-term career goal setting
- Career exploration and assessment
- Professional branding
- Resume and cover letter revisions
- Personal statement revisions
- Job search and networking strategies
- Mock interviews (e.g., jobs, academic admissions)
- Compensation package negotiation
- Employer and alumni networking events

[Handshake](#) is GW's virtual career platform. On Handshake, students and alumni may schedule career counseling appointments, seek jobs, internships, fellowships and practicum opportunities, and register for career services events.

Student Records

950 New Hampshire Avenue NW | 2nd floor | Washington, D.C. 20052

Phone: 202-994-7400 | Email: gwsphrecords@gwu.edu

The essential role of the [GWSPH Office of Student Records](#) is to provide students and faculty with guidance and administrative support as it pertains to students' academic records. In addition, the GWSPH office acts as a liaison on behalf of students with offices across the university.

The Office of Student Records assists students with the following:

- Assisting with course registration (e.g., adding, dropping, withdrawing, restricted courses) and [GWeb Information System](#)
- Clearing students for graduation
- Filing a [records petition](#)
- Registering for a [leave of absence or Continuous Enrollment](#)

- Documenting the completion of [Academic Integrity Quiz](#), [CITI Training](#), and [Professional Enhancement hours](#)
- Processing [half-time/full-time certification](#) requests
- Updating [DegreeMAP](#)
- Processing [academic forms](#)

Academic Advising

Upon admission to GWSPH, students are assigned an academic advisor appropriate to the program in which they enrolled. Graduate academic advisors are also listed on the [GWSPH website](#). Advisors assist not only with academic counseling, but also in areas ranging from understanding university requirements to finding campus resources to help individual students connect with the GW community. Students should communicate regularly with their advisor to discuss:

- Curriculum changes
- Selection of electives
- Academic progress
- Preparation for graduation

[DegreeMAP](#) is GW's online advising tool for use by students, advisors, and the Office of the Registrar to clear students for graduation. Students are responsible for meeting all degree requirements and may use DegreeMAP for planning and verifying these graduation requirements. DegreeMAP is available through the [GWeb Information System](#).

Master of Public Health Student Support

MPH students should seek advice from their academic advisors about planning for the [Applied Practice Experience \(APEX\)](#) and [Culminating Experience \(CE\)](#). Activities such as these generally require substantial lead time and will likely involve communication with departmental Practice Teams.

Online Student Support

950 New Hampshire Avenue NW | 2nd Floor | Washington, D.C. 20052

MPH@GW | Email: mphadvising@gwu.edu | Phone: 855-494-6740

MHA@GW | Email: studentsuccess@mha.gwu.edu | Phone: 844-642-2849

DrPH@GW | Email: drphadmin@gwu.edu

Online program staff assist GWSPH students enrolled in the MPH@GW, MHA@GW, DrPH@GW in conjunction with OSA and team members from Admissions, Student Records, and Career Services.

Students in the MPH@GW, MHA@GW, and DrPH@GW programs also receive support from the 2U Student Success team.

Office of Applied Public Health

950 New Hampshire Avenue NW | 7th floor | Washington, D.C. 20052

Email: sphprac@gwu.edu

The [Office of Applied Public Health](#) (OAPH) is the central and dedicated resource that facilitates student access to practice-based education, research, and service to strategically enhance and develop professional skills and competencies in contribution to the public health workforce. The office supports academic public health practice by building mutually beneficial relationships with communities, non-profit organizations, and healthcare and government agencies. OAPH is dedicated to practice-based education that convenes faculty, staff, students, and communities to advance social justice through reciprocal partnerships to influence local, national, and global health practice.

Through student practicums and programs such as [D.C. Metro Urban Health Program](#), OAPH:

- Provides a dedicated environment for schoolwide public health practice where students enhance their skills and competencies through experiential-learning and community engagement, informing their sense of responsibility to contribute to the public health workforce.
- Trains students to be influential leaders through opportunities that enhance practice, scholarship and service-learning to address the public health needs of the local, national and global communities.
- Affords students the opportunity to translate skills learned in their coursework into real-world practice through meaningful and reciprocal service-learning partnerships with communities in the nation's capital.

Office of Inclusive Excellence

950 New Hampshire Avenue NW | 7th floor | Washington, D.C. 20052

The [Office of Inclusive Excellence](#) (OIE) leads the charge in fostering a diverse, equitable, inclusive, and accessible community for students, faculty, and staff. At GWSPH, inclusion means creating a working and learning environment where each person can participate fully to achieve success and is valued for their distinctive skills and capabilities. OIE aims to create and nurture an environment in which all members of the school community are treated equitably, contribute fully to the mission, and embrace and model the school's values.

Grounded in a commitment to addressing health disparities and systemic inequities, OIE strives to create a culture of belonging where all voices are heard, respected, and valued. Building and

sustaining healthier communities through a diverse public health workforce is crucial, and rigorous research and diverse perspectives create the next generation of public health leaders. Through education, advocacy, and innovation, GWSPH empowers individuals to thrive and equips public health leaders to advance equity on a global scale.

Office of Research Excellence

950 New Hampshire Avenue NW | 7th floor | Washington, D.C. 20052

Email: GWSPHResearch@gwu.edu

The [Office of Research Excellence](#) (ORE) is dedicated to supporting the research efforts of faculty, staff, and students within GWSPH. The ORE serves the school and its departments in different ways by offering strategic research expertise and support for various research-related functions while catalyzing research productivity. It is responsible for research coordination, compliance with applicable regulations and institutional policies, research integrity and training, research communication, contracting and enhancement, and providing service to advance research and discovery by faculty, students, staff, and individuals affiliated with GWSPH.

Policies and Procedures

This section summarizes many important policies and procedures that will help students successfully navigate their way while enrolled in a GWSPH program. Students should also review all GWSPH and university policies listed in the [University Bulletin](#).

Academic Calendars

- Current [on-campus academic calendar](#) ¹
- Current [MPH@GW academic calendar](#)
- Current [MHA@GW academic calendar](#)

Credits and Courses

Adding, Dropping, and Withdrawing from Courses

The [GW Office of the Registrar](#) helps to facilitate the registration process by providing a variety of resources for students such as instructions on how to register for classes through the [GWeb Information System](#), the registration schedule for each upcoming semester, information on waitlists, instructions for resolving holds, withdrawal and refund information, and details on ROTC and Consortium registration.

Students should meet with their academic advisor or Student Success Specialist before registering. Students are encouraged to register as early as possible, as some courses fill quickly. A [Registration Step-by-Step guide](#) is available to assist students with the [GWeb Information System](#). Students should regularly check the [University Schedule of Classes](#) to ensure they have the most up-to-date list of available courses.

The Registrar sets [deadlines](#) by which students can add, drop, and withdraw from classes, which depends on the number of weeks in the course's term. Refund policies also vary by the number of weeks in the course. The [course refund policy](#) is available through the GW Student Accounts Office and applies to both online and residential courses.

Some courses, like the CE, thesis, and dissertation, require advisor approval, and a [Registration Transaction Form](#) to register. If a student has difficulty contacting their advisor or has other questions prior to enrollment, they may contact the [OSA](#). Students may add, drop, or withdraw courses:

¹ The residential DrPH and DrPH@GW 12-week semesters are based on the on-campus academic calendar.

- Online through the [GWeb Information System](#)
- Using the [Registration Transaction Form-EZ](#) (RTF-EZ) which requires the signature of the course instructor
- Using the [Registration Transaction Form-Classic](#) (RTF Classic) which requires the approval of an academic advisor
- Submitting a [petition](#), along with substantial supporting documentation, to their academic advisor for course withdrawal consideration. Submission of a petition does not guarantee approval

Failure to withdraw by the stated deadlines can result in an extended financial obligation and the recording of a grade of *F* (Fail) or a notation of *Z* (Unauthorized Withdrawal). Students wishing to [withdraw from all courses](#) in a semester/term should see the policy and procedure on the [Student Accounts Office website](#).

Continuous Enrollment and Continuing Research

Continuous Enrollment² (0 credits) is used when a student is in an internship, practicum, completing incomplete work, or temporarily at another institution. During summer session, a student only needs to register for Continuous Enrollment if planning to meet their final graduation requirements in the summer (and therefore graduate). This may include defending their dissertation or presenting their CE. All other students are not required to maintain enrollment during the summer session. This status is generally limited to one year.

Continuing Research³ (1 credit) is used when additional credits are required to complete the degree, but the student cannot yet register for their next course for a specific reason such as needing to take comprehensive exams or conduct their dissertation research. Generally, it is required when students need to maintain their status during the following semester and cannot register for any program-required course. Continuing Research is charged at the prevailing tuition rate at the time of registration.

In limited circumstances, students may [petition](#) to register for Continuous Enrollment rather than Continuing Research. Each petition must be accompanied by an explanation and documentation of why the student should be eligible for Continuing Enrollment. Documentation must include a detailed timeline and summary of progress to date and a timeline for finishing the project. Submission of this documentation does not guarantee the petition will be granted. Such petitions will be considered by the academic advisor on a case-by-case basis, and for one term only. Work issues and financial reasons are not considered as meeting the threshold of “unusual circumstances.”

² UNIV 0981 Continuous Enrollment (0 credits)

³ PUBH 0920 Continuing Research - Master's (1 credit) and PUBH 0940 Continuing Research – Doctoral (1 credit)

The [DrPH Supplement](#) and [PhD Supplement](#) contain additional guidance for doctoral students regarding Continuous Enrollment and Continuing Research.

Transferring Credits

Graduate students may be eligible to transfer graduate credits from an accredited institution if they have not been applied to a previously earned graduate degree.⁴ Only courses with a *B* (3.0) or better are eligible to be transferred. Transfer approval is not guaranteed; advanced approval from an academic advisor is highly recommended, particularly prior to registering for any coursework outside of the student's enrolled program. **Not all graduate programs accept transfer credits.**

If a student wishes to be concurrently [enrolled in another school or institution](#) with the intent to transfer credits, they are required to submit a petition before registering for courses and adhere to the policy described [here](#).

Degree	Credit Maximum	Timeframe
Graduate Certificate	Up to 3 credits ⁵	Earned within the last 3 years
Master's ⁶	Up to 12 credits	Earned within the last 3 years
Doctoral (48 credit program) ⁷	Up to 12 credits	Earned within the last 6 years
Doctoral (72 credit program) ⁸	Up to 24 credits	Earned within the last 6 years

To request a credit transfer, students should submit one petition for each course they wish to transfer. Each request should contain:

- A completed [Graduate Records Petition Form](#)
- Syllabus of the course being transferred
- An official, sealed transcript showing the final grade of the course being transferred ⁹

⁴ Earned graduate degrees do not include (graduate) certificates.

⁵ In addition to a credit maximum, graduate certificate transfers are limited to a maximum of one course from outside GW.

⁶ GWSPH graduate certificate students may be eligible to transfer as many credits as meet program requirements—up to 18 credits—to a master's degree. GWSPH graduate certificate students wishing to transfer to a degree program may apply to do so via the online change of concentration [petition](#) after completion of three or more courses and a GPA of 3.0 or above.

⁷ The [maximum time to degree](#) for doctoral students will be adjusted, commensurate with the number of graduate credits transferred. For example, if students transfer a semester's worth of graduate credits, they will have one fewer semester to complete the PhD.

⁸ The [maximum time to degree](#) for doctoral students will be adjusted, commensurate with the number of graduate credits transferred. For example, if students transfer a semester's worth of graduate credits, they will have one fewer semester to complete the PhD.

⁹ Transcripts are not required if the transcript in question was already submitted as part of a SOPHAS application (and verified by SOPHAS) [or](#) the course was taken at GW.

- GWSPH course equivalent (students should speak with their academic advisor to identify an appropriate equivalent course)

Waiving and Replacing Required Credits

In particular circumstances, a GW student may waive a required course and replace that waived course with elective credits. If the GW professor teaching the required course that the student seeks to waive agrees that the student already possesses the requisite knowledge that the course provides (e.g., by having taken a similar course in another degree program), then the student may submit a [petition](#) and be granted permission to “waive and replace” the required GW course with an equivalent number of elective credits.

Doctoral students may [petition](#) to waive a required course listed in their program of study and replace the waived course with another course that better fits their training needs. Students interested in requesting such substitutions must seek the approval of their program director to ensure that replacement classes are at the appropriate level.

Independent Study

Graduate students may complete up to 6 credits of independent study coursework during their degree program. To enroll in an independent study course, a student must first develop an independent study project plan, which details the project, timeline, and grading elements. The project plan must be reviewed and approved by the faculty instructor (supervisor), the student’s program director, the instructor’s department chair, and assistant dean of student services. To register for an independent study, the student must submit their approved independent study project plan, contractual agreement for course completion, and [petition to Student Records](#).

Independent study projects cannot be used as a substitute for an available required course and cannot substantially cover the same subject matter that is available in a required or elective course.

Flexible Programming

GWSPH provides flexible academic program options for master’s-level students so they may customize their education to meet both professional and personal needs. Students may take courses in either online or residential formats. Residential students may take up to 15 credits online, and online students may take up to 15 credits on-campus without requiring a petition.

Degree Completion

A graduate student who fails to make adequate and timely progress toward degree completion through repeated leaves, repeated failure to complete an appropriate number of credits per semester/term, or “unacceptable progress” noted on their annual review (doctoral only) may be suspended. Students suspended on these grounds can apply for [readmission](#) after supplying sufficient evidence of academic promise.

The chart below outlines the maximum time to degree completion for each degree level.

Degree Level	Maximum Time to Degree
Bachelor (BS)	6 years
Graduate Certificate	2 years
Masters (MS, MPH, MHA)	5 years
Doctoral (DrPH, PhD)	7 years

Exceptions

A student who wishes to request an exception to university or school policies and procedures, or a change in program of study, must file a [petition](#) and be approved. Petitions and any necessary documentation should be submitted to the [GWSPH Student Records Office](#). The petition will be processed electronically by the appropriate faculty and/or staff before being returned to the student with a decision. These petitions may be used to:

- [Waive and replace](#) a required course
- Register for [Continuous Enrollment instead of Continuing Research](#)
- [Transfer credits](#)
- Extend the [time limit](#) for graduation
- Request a [leave of absence](#)
- [Withdraw](#) from a course after the deadline

Grades

The graduate grading system is available on the [University Bulletin](#).

Grade of F

Graduate students who receive a grade of *F* (Fail) are subject to suspension. If such students wish to remain enrolled, they must present cause for consideration by the senior associate dean for academic, student, and faculty affairs and the director of their degree program, as to why continued study should be permitted. Once a grade of *F* is earned, it remains a part of the student's permanent record and is calculated into the GPA.

A graduate student who earns a grade of *F* in a core or other required course and is permitted to continue in graduate studies, must repeat the course and achieve a minimum grade of *B*. The repetition does not, however, expunge the grade of *F*, which remains part of the student's record.

Grade of I

At the discretion of the instructor, the symbol *I* (Incomplete) may be recorded if a student, for reasons beyond their control, is unable to complete the work of the course during the term of enrollment. The student must provide the instructor with a satisfactory explanation for their inability to complete the required work of the course during the semester of enrollment. The instructor must be informed of and accept such reasons before the date when final grades are reported. A grade of *I* should be considered only if the following are true:

- The student has kept up with the class and has substantially completed the coursework for the class
- The student is passing the course at the time of the request (e.g., satisfactory in terms of coursework completed and attendance)
- The student has adequate reasons for asking for a grade of *I*
- The student would not need to essentially re-take the course (e.g., student would not need to "sit in" in the course in future terms)
- The faculty for the course is able to see the student through the remaining coursework or a representative from the department is willing to oversee the work

To finalize the approval of the *I* grade, both the instructor and student must complete the [Incomplete Grade Contract](#) before the last day of the semester/term. Incomplete work must be completed by a date agreed upon by the student and the instructor, which should be no more than one calendar year from the end of the term in which the student registered for the course. It is recommended that work be completed by the end of the term following the term in which the incomplete grade was issued. The final grade earned will replace the symbol of *I* on the official transcript. An incomplete that is not changed by the deadline noted in the contract will convert to an *F* and the GPA and academic standing recalculated accordingly.

A grade of *I* cannot be changed by reregistering for the course at GW or by taking its equivalent elsewhere. Students should meet with their academic advisor to discuss registration while working to finish an incomplete.

Additional information about incompletes is described in the [University Bulletin](#).

Grade of IPG

Graduate students are assigned the symbol *IPG* (In Progress) for all thesis, residency, advanced reading, independent study, internship/practicum, and dissertation research courses until the course requirements are completely fulfilled. Upon satisfactory completion, the *IPG* grade is replaced by the grade earned; the *IPG* no longer remains on the transcript.¹⁰ An *IPG* cannot be given for regular, semester-length courses.

Grade-Point Average

All courses taken for graduate credit after matriculation as a GWSPH degree candidate—including those accepted to transfer from non-degree status, but excluding those audited or taken for the grade of *CR/NC* (Credit/No Credit)—are used to calculate the GPA.

For the purpose of graduation from the university, GWSPH graduate students must maintain a minimum cumulative GPA of 3.0. The university sets the [eligibility criteria for graduation](#).

Grievances

All students have the right to file a grievance. The process varies depending on the type of grievance:

- Accessibility – The university is committed to making its physical and digital spaces accessible and usable to everyone, including people with disabilities. Barriers experienced that affect someone's ability to access GW facilities, services, websites, or other digital content should be [reported](#)
- Disability Policy Grievance Procedure – The [procedures](#) for when an individual wishes to grieve any determination under the [disability policy](#)
- Discrimination or Harassment – Individuals who believe they have been discriminated against or harassed based on a protected characteristic(s) defined in and covered by the [Equal Opportunity, Nondiscrimination, Anti-Harassment, and Non-Retaliation](#)

¹⁰ Upon satisfactory completion of coursework for dissertation research courses, DrPH students may receive an *IPG*; PhD students will receive a grade of *CR* (Credit).

[Policy](#) may submit reports via a centralized [Discrimination and Harassment Reporting Form](#)

- Academic Decision (including grades) – Each school has an [appeal process](#). The GWSPH policy is described below
- Privacy – The GW Privacy Office provides online forms to report [data incidents](#) or [privacy concerns](#)
- Research Misconduct – Reports of observed, suspected, or apparent misconduct in research should be submitted to the [research integrity officer](#)
- Sexual Harassment – The [Title IX Office](#) responds to reports of sexual harassment, sexual assault, stalking, dating and/or domestic violence, and provides supportive measures to individuals affected by these issues
- Student Behavior – [Reports of alleged student misconduct](#) (including academic dishonesty but excluding Title IX-related matters) can be submitted to Conflict Education and Student Accountability

Academic Grievance

A student may appeal an academic decision if they have cause to believe there has been an error in grading, inequity in the application of policies stated in the course syllabus, or arbitrary or capricious academic evaluation. Dissatisfaction with a grade is not grounds for an appeal.

Phase I: Informal Resolution

The student should first seek an acceptable resolution on an [informal](#) basis, prior to filing a formal appeal. This informal resolution discussion must occur within the first 30 calendar days of the start of the next term.

To begin the process, the student should seek an acceptable resolution with the instructor/course director or session leader (if applicable). If a satisfactory result has not been reached after the student has discussed the academic issue with the instructor/course director, the student should consult with the student's program director. If no resolution is reached with the program director, the student should contact the department chair. In cases where the course instructor is the program director or the program director is the department chair, the student may contact the next level in the program leadership, up to and including the senior associate dean for academic, student, and faculty affairs. If no resolution has been reached with the program director and/or department chair, the student may consult with the senior associate dean for academic, student, and faculty affairs (senior associate dean, *hereafter*).

If no resolution is reached as a result of these informal attempts, the student may consider filing a formal appeal with the senior associate dean.

Phase II: Initiating a Formal Appeal

A formal academic appeal will trigger a thorough review and could result in the student's grade remaining the same, being raised, or being lowered in the event the review determines that an error benefited the student.

1. To initiate the appeal process, the student must submit, in writing, a formal appeal letter with the following information to the dean within the first 60 calendar days from the start of the next term:
 - a. Description of the reason(s) for requesting an appeal
 - b. Detailed description of the timeline of events
 - c. Statement explaining the resolution sought by the student
 - d. The course syllabus and any documents relevant to the appeal
2. The senior associate dean will convene a group of three impartial faculty members from the GWSPH Student Academic Appeals Committee to review the student's appeal. This group will not include committee members from the instructor's department.
3. The senior associate dean must then notify the instructor of the appeal and provide a copy of the formal request. The committee will have two weeks to review the materials before meeting separately with the instructor and the student. The instructor and student will have the opportunity to make additional comments and answer questions from the committee.
4. The committee will deliberate and communicate its decision to the senior associate dean in a written report. The senior associate dean will convey the outcome to the student and the faculty member. **The committee's decision is final.**
5. If the committee finds in favor of the instructor's initial decision, there is no further appeal, except on procedural grounds. The student may request the senior associate dean to review the procedural aspects of the case, if applicable. Requests for review must be submitted in writing, including an explanation of the basis for the appeal, within 10 days after the committee report has been provided to the student.
6. If the senior associate dean concludes that procedural violations have occurred, then they may remand the case to the department or program for a re-hearing or may take other steps to afford the student an appropriate remedy.
7. All appeals must be resolved no later than the end of the term following the term in which the course was taken and the original grade was awarded. If the committee has not reported the outcome of the appeal process by the end of the semester/term, then the appeal will go directly to the senior associate dean to settle.

Honors and Awards

Students may be eligible for honors or awards, such as:

- Distinguished Scholar for the Milken Institute School of Public Health – Each year, this award is given to a GWSPH graduate who has excelled academically and shown commitment to scholarship through participation in research or other academic leadership activities.
- Delta Omega – Public Health master’s and doctoral students¹¹ may be eligible for admission to [Delta Omega](#), the national honors society for studies in public health. Eligibility criteria and application instructions are available on the [GW chapter webpage](#).

Student Rights and Responsibilities

[Conflict Education and Student Accountability](#) (CESA) engages across GW to foster equitable and restorative accountability to community standards through the promotion of individual rights and communal responsibilities, support of community members to identify and repair harm, and growth of community capacity for conflict management.

All students, upon enrolling in and while attending GW, are subject to the [Code of Student Conduct](#), which includes a Statement of Student Rights and Responsibilities. This code is the primary document governing non-academic student behavior. It defines prohibited conduct for students and student organizations and sets up a conduct system to address reported violations and preserve student rights.

GWSPH takes academic integrity issues seriously. It is the student’s responsibility to review, understand, and comply with GW’s [Code of Academic Integrity](#). This code sets the minimum standards for academic student conduct, defines the rights of students charged with an academic disciplinary violation, lists the procedures for resolving academic disciplinary matters, provides guidance for academic disciplinary sanctions, and addresses other issues regarding academic student conduct.

Use of generative artificial intelligence may only be used in accordance with [university guidelines](#) and course-specific policies.

Student Status

For the purpose of defining student status, graduate students taking:

- 9 or more credits per semester are considered to be full-time
- 4.5 to 8 credits per semester are considered to be half-time
- Less than 4.5 credits per semester are considered to be part-time

¹¹ Only MPH and DrPH students are eligible for Delta Omega.

Continuous Enrollment Status

Once enrolled in a degree program, students are expected to be registered continuously for at least one credit during all fall and spring semesters, and actively engaged in [fulfilling the requirements of the degree](#). During the summer session, students do not have to be enrolled unless they are completing degree requirements or graduating during the summer. Some activities, such as [Study Abroad](#), allow a student to maintain their continuous enrollment status.

Doctoral students must maintain their enrollment status until they have successfully completed all doctoral program requirements, including dissertation defense, final approval, and submission of their dissertation. Students scheduled to defend their dissertation or dissertation proposal during the summer term must be registered in the summer session.

Students who fail to maintain their enrollment status will fall out of status; students who fall out of status must apply for [readmission](#) to the applicable program.

Federal and institutional financial aid resources may have separate enrollment requirements. Students should contact [GWSPH Student Financial Services](#) if they have questions.

Leave of Absence

Students who need to interrupt the active pursuit of the degree can petition to take a [Leave of Absence](#) (LOA) for a period of no more than one calendar year during the program. Students who discontinue active enrollment in degree studies without being granted a leave of absence, or students who are granted a leave but do not return to active study at the close of the period of approved absence, are no longer considered in active status. Requests are managed on a case-by-case basis. Students registering for a LOA will incur the prevailing registration fee, if applicable, per university policy.

While the university does not have an official parental leave policy for students, LOA requests are reviewed on a case-by-case basis. Students seeking parental leave are encouraged to speak with their program directors and advisors prior to submitting such a LOA request.

In some cases, students may need to register for [UNIV 0981 Continuous Enrollment](#) (0 credits) in order to maintain their active enrollment status. Continuous Enrollment differs from LOA in that Continuous Enrollment implies that the student is still studying and making progress towards their degree completion while LOA means that the student is stepping away momentarily from their studies. Therefore, students on LOA do NOT have access to school resources (e.g., library, on-campus housing, student loan deferrals, financial aid). Students on LOA have had their [maximum time to degree completion](#) paused (delayed) until they return.

Enrolling at Another School or Institution

Once enrolled at GWSPH, graduate students are expected to complete course requirements at GWSPH. However, under limited circumstances, it is permissible to [transfer in credits](#) for coursework completed at another institution. If a student wishes to register concurrently at GW and another institution from which they wish to apply credit toward their GW degree, they must receive approval from their academic advisor in advance and submit a [petition](#). The student and any courses completed are subject to the [GWSPH transfer credit policy](#).

Half-Time and Full-Time Certification

Students who are registered for fewer than the requisite number of credit hours may be approved for [Half-Time or Full-Time Certification](#) if they are working on their CEs, dissertations, residencies, internships, or practicums, or preparing for comprehensive exams. Certification for graduate student financial aid is based upon the total number of credit hours a student is registered for in a given semester.

Academic Standing

Students should maintain good academic standing. Alternatives to good academic standing may include provisional admission, academic warning, academic probation, suspension, dismissal, and insufficient progress towards degree.

Good Academic Standing

Graduate students are considered in good academic standing if they have a GPA of 3.0 or higher in coursework counting toward their degree program, and are not suspended, on academic probation, or on provisional admission.

For doctoral students, after completing all coursework (i.e., conducting dissertation research), academic standing is determined by an annual review of progress towards the completion of the dissertation by the student's advisor. Examples of progress may include developing aims, writing a preliminary literature review on the dissertation topic, developing the dissertation proposal, defending the dissertation proposal, acquiring a dataset for the proposal, and/or conducting the dissertation research. Doctoral students who fail to make adequate progress will be put on [probation](#) or [suspension](#).

Students who are not in good academic standing will be notified by email, typically at the end of each academic term. Any student seeking to appeal academic decisions with respect to maintenance of good academic standing may do so through the appropriate academic dean (e.g., associate dean for MPH programs, associate dean for PhD/MS programs). Requests are reviewed on a case-by-case basis.

Provisional Admission

Graduate program applicants who are shy of numerical standards for admission, but who nonetheless show promise of successful graduate work, are occasionally granted provisional admission by the GWSPH Admissions Committee. While on provisional admission status, students are required to confer with their assigned advisor each semester/term prior to registration. Provisionally admitted graduate students must demonstrate their ability to maintain a minimum GPA of 3.0 in the first 9 credits of coursework attempted, and during this time are not allowed to receive a grade of *I* or lower than a *B*. Provisionally admitted students who do not meet these requirements are subject to suspension and cannot apply for readmission for at least one calendar year.

Academic Warning

The academic warning period extends from when a student attempts a minimum of 1 credit to a maximum of 8 credits (e.g., within the first 8 credits a student attempts). Graduate students whose cumulative GPA falls below 3.0 during this period are issued an academic warning notice at the end of the semester/term. Students who receive these warnings must take corrective measures to improve their GPA, such as meeting with their advisors. Grades of *I* and *B-* or below are not permitted during the warning period. At the end of the warning period (8 credits), the student's progress is reevaluated. If the student's progress is deemed unsatisfactory, the student may face an automatic suspension, probation, or continued warning.

Academic Probation

A graduate student whose GPA falls below 3.0 at any point after completing 9 credit hours, who fails to complete an appropriate number of credit hours per semester/term, or who receives "unacceptable progress" noted on their annual review (doctoral students only) will be placed on academic probation.

The academic probation period generally extends from when the student's GPA falls below 3.0 and when the GPA rises above 3.0 or through the completion of the next 12 credits of the student's program, whichever comes first. During the probationary period, the student's performance is monitored to determine suitability for continued study. Doctoral students who receive an "unacceptable progress" must complete a set of requirements agreed upon by the appropriate associate dean,¹² student, and academic advisor. Grades of *I* and *B-* or below are not permitted during the probation period and are grounds for automatic suspension or continued probation. Students on academic probation are not eligible to apply for graduation.

¹² associate dean of PhD/MS programs (for PhD) or associate dean for applied public health (for DrPH)

At the end of the probation period, the student's progress is reevaluated. A student who fails to raise their GPA to 3.0 or above is subject to suspension. A student may have their probation period extended (in lieu of suspension) if satisfactory progress has been demonstrated, as determined by the senior associate dean for academic, student, and faculty affairs in consultation with the student's academic advisor.

To appeal an academic probation, students should email a formal appeal letter to the senior associate dean for academic, student, and faculty affairs along with any supporting evidence and references.

Suspension

A graduate student who receives an *F* or does not meet the conditions of probation (see above) is subject to suspension. Suspended students cannot register for or complete any courses at GW. Any outstanding grade of *I* at the time of suspension will become an *F*.

Suspended students may apply for [readmission](#) to a program after one full calendar year from the time of suspension. A student who is readmitted after a suspension continues on academic probation and must achieve a minimum GPA of 3.0 in the next 12 credits of graduate study. If a readmitted, on probation student fails to achieve this GPA, they will be suspended again and dismissed.

To appeal a suspension, students should email a formal appeal letter to the senior associate dean for academic, student, and faculty affairs along with any supporting evidence and references.

Dismissal

A student who has been suspended twice is not permitted to reapply to GWSPH and will be dismissed from the school.

Satisfactory Academic Progress

Students receiving federal student aid are subject to federal [Satisfactory Academic Progress](#) (SAP) requirements.

Readmission

Students who have been suspended or fallen out of active (continuous enrollment) status may apply for readmission to their program. To be readmitted, the student must submit evidence that suggests the probability of academic success.

The deadline for readmission petitions is no later than three weeks prior to the first day of class. Earlier submissions are strongly recommended to ensure processing before registration. It is advised that students seeking readmission identify when course registration begins each term to plan accordingly (see [Academic Calendar](#)). Students should not apply for readmission until all account holds have been rectified. If accepted for readmission, students are subject to the regulations and program requirements in effect of the time of re-enrollment.

The readmission process varies depending on if the student has been suspended or fallen out of active (continuous enrollment).

- Students who have been [suspended](#) from GWSPH must apply for readmission through [SOPHAS Express](#) after at least one academic year has passed
- Students who have fallen out of [active \(continuous enrollment\) status](#), apply for readmission by completing a [Graduate Admissions Petition](#)

International Student Status

International students on F-1 or J-1 visas are responsible for enrolling as full-time students (minimum 9 credits for graduate students) for the spring and fall semesters according to the U.S. Immigration and Naturalization rules governing registration requirements for international students.

In certain situations, a reduced workload can be allowed. To request approval for this, students should submit the F-1/J-1 [Request for Reduced Course Load Form](#) to the [GW International Services Office](#) (ISO). Students should also review the standards for [half-time and full-time status](#).

University Policies

The university has a number of [policies and regulations](#) that students should review on a regular basis.

GWSPH Student Responsibilities

Students are responsible for a number of pre-and post-enrollment activities. The following items require action on the part of the student and should be considered essential in the orientation and acclimation process. To access GW systems, the student should set up their [GW Identity](#).

Once a student has access to the GW system, they should:

Register for Classes

Prior to [registering for classes](#), students should reach out to their [academic advisor](#) and explore the [GWSPH website](#), paying particular attention to their program page and the school's [resource page](#).

Complete Academic Integrity Requirements

All GWSPH students are required to complete the online [GW Academic Integrity Activity](#). This requirement must be completed **within two weeks of starting coursework** at GWSPH.

Complete Human Subjects Research Training Requirements

All GWSPH students are required to complete training regarding human subjects protection regulation and the Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act of 1996 (HIPAA). To fulfill this requirement, a student must complete the [Collaborative IRB Training Initiative](#) (CITI) course in the protection of human research subjects. All GWSPH students are required to complete the Social and Behavioral Research or the Biomedical Investigator course, which can be found under Human Subjects Research Training. CITI coursework must be completed before the end of the student's first semester/term and is a requirement for graduation.

Documentation of completion (certificate) should be emailed to the [GWSPH Office of Student Records](#). Additional training requirements may be required for students who plan to conduct some types of research (e.g., clinical research).

Read the Weekly Student Newsletter

All enrolled GWSPH students receive a weekly newsletter, sent to their @gwu.edu email address. The Monday newsletter compiles all the important deadlines, events, and announcements for the coming weeks. It is advised that all students read the student newsletter each week to be aware of current events, activities, and updates.

Students may receive additional newsletters from their program and/or department. Students are also welcome to join the GWSPH community listserv, which distributes information on seminars, internships, fellowships, and professional conferences. To join this listserv, students should email Robin Delk (robin3@gwu.edu) from their GW email with "Subscribe to Listserv" in the subject field of the email. In the body of the email, students should write "Please add me to the student listserv."

Complete Pathways to Public Health (if applicable)

GWSPH students who enroll in any non-MPH graduate program (e.g., MHA, MS, PhD) without a prior degree from an CEPH-accredited school or program of public health or enroll in the DrPH program are required to successfully pass the zero-credit, self-paced, online course [PUBH 6080 Pathways to Public Health](#). There is no fee for this course. It is a required course for graduation and must be completed within the term the academic advisor recommends. This course provides content that complies with standard graduate learning objectives set by CEPH for all non-MPH programs.

All incoming DrPH students are required to complete the PUBH 6080 Pathways to Public Health course by **September 15**.

Complete the Graduate Teaching Assistantship Program (if applicable)

Students are required to take the [Graduate Teaching Assistantship Program](#) (GTAP) course in order to serve as Graduate Teaching Assistants (GTA). This zero-credit class is available online and must be completed prior to the semester in which the GTA is to occur. As most doctoral programs require GTAP, many students take this class in their first semester. Students should consult with their doctoral advisor or program director to register.

Participate in Professional Enhancement Activities

All degree-seeking students at GWSPH are required to attend a minimum of 8 hours of [professional enhancement](#) (PE) activities during their program.¹³ These activities supplement the academic curriculum and help prepare students to actively participate in the professional community. They also enhance practical knowledge and awareness of public health issues—either in general or in a student's specific area of study.

¹³ Programs that require more than 8 hours of PE will detail this requirement on their program guide.

Students fulfill this requirement by attending workshops, seminars, live webinars (recorded webinars or meetings do not fulfill this requirement), or other relevant professional meetings. If a student is unsure of whether an activity is appropriate as a PE activity, they should reach out to an advisor to obtain approval at least 48 hours prior to the PE activity. In the inquiry, the student should include information such as the name of the conference and objectives of the activity, so the advisor can determine if the activity is valid for PE credit. Once PE hours are complete, the student should submit their [documentation](#) to the [GWSPH Office of Student Records](#).

Plan for Applied Practice and Culminating Experiences

Most graduate students complete some sort of applied practice and culminating experiences as part of their degree requirements. These experiences may take on different names (e.g., APEx, DAPEx, practicum, internship, residency, fellowship, CE, Capstone, thesis, dissertation) but they all require advanced planning and preparation. For more information on these requirements, students should:

- Review their program guide
- Visit the [GWSPH Office of Applied Public Health](#) website, which offers resources for students preparing for an applied practice experience
- Discuss requirements with their program director, academic advisor and/or departmental Practice Teams
- Complete prerequisites, which may include coursework, orientations, [CITI training](#), and/or [Interprofessional Education Experience](#) (IPE).

Prepare to Graduate

Degrees are awarded three times per year, at the end of spring, summer, and fall semesters. The formal commencement ceremonies occur annually in May and include the University Hooding Ceremony (specifically for doctoral graduates on campus), the Milken Institute School of Public Health Celebration (on campus), and University Commencement (on the National Mall).

Students are eligible to graduate after they have completed all degree and non-academic requirements (e.g., CITI training, PE hours), have no financial obligations to the university, and have a minimum cumulative GPA of 3.0. The degree designation (i.e., BS, MS, MPH, MHA, DrPH, or PhD) can be used after the student's name when all degree requirements are completed.

To ensure a smooth graduation process, students should maintain regular communications with their academic advisors, review and complete program requirements in a timely manner, and be responsive to emailed alerts. For more information, students should visit the [GWSPH](#)

[Graduation website](#). Students are required to complete the online [Application for Graduation](#) to be eligible for graduation.

Become an Alum

Upon graduation, students join the ranks of accomplished GW alumni. Alumni are automatically granted membership to the [GWSPH Alumni Association](#) and [GW Alumni](#) (university association).

Alumni are encouraged to stay up-to-date on GWSPH events, job opportunities, featured alumni, and other information through the Alumni Newsletter and [GW Public Health LinkedIn page](#). To subscribe to the Alumni Newsletter, students should make sure their [preferred email address](#) is up-to-date. Students will automatically start receiving the Alumni Newsletter after graduation to their listed preferred email address.

GW alumni have lifetime access to career services, discounts and special offers, and learning opportunities. The [Alumni Course Audit Program](#) allows GW alumni the opportunity to attend a wide selection of GW residential courses on a not-for-credit basis for a reduced price. See all benefits and perks on the [university website](#).

Earn Certifications (optional)

The table below highlights some of the accrediting bodies and recommended certifications that may complement students' academic degrees. Students interested in becoming members or certified are encouraged to speak with an academic advisor.

Organization	Certifications
National Board of Public Health Examiners	Certified Public Health (CPH)
National Commission for Health Education Credentialing Inc.	Certified Health Education Specialist (CHES) Master Certified Health Education Specialist (MCHES)
American College of Health Care Administrators	Fellow of the American College of Health Care Administrators (FACHCA)
American College of Healthcare Executives	Fellow of the American College of Healthcare Executives (FACHE)

Organization	Certifications
<u>National Strength and Conditioning Association</u>	Certified Strength and Conditioning Specialist (CSCS) Certified Special Population Specialist (CSPS) Certified Personal Trainer (NSCA-CPT) Tactical Strength and Conditioning (TSAC-F)
<u>American Council on Exercise</u>	Multiple
<u>International Society of Sports Nutrition</u>	Certified Sports Nutritionist from the International Society of Sports Nutrition (CISSN)
<u>American College of Sports Medicine</u>	Multiple
<u>National Environmental Health Association</u>	Multiple
<u>Board of Certified Safety Professionals</u>	Multiple

Student Life and Other Resources

Counseling and Psychological Services

University Student Center | 800 21st Street, NW | Ground Floor | Washington, D.C. 20052
Phone: 202-994-5300 | Email: counsel@gwu.edu

The [GW Counseling and Psychological Services](#) (CAP) works collaboratively with students to provide compassionate, comprehensive, and inclusive mental health services that foster emotional and personal development. Through counseling, outreach, campus partnerships, and education and training, CAP engages with the entire GW community to promote a campus culture of holistic well-being. CAP counselors provide a safe, non-judgmental and confidential environment for students to discuss concerns, and are committed to respecting and promoting the value of diversity at the university, as well as providing culturally sensitive counseling and psychological services to the GW community.

Safety and Security

Academic Center | 801 22nd Street, NW | Washington, D.C. 20052
Emergency Phone: 202-994-6111 | Non-Emergency Phone: 202-994-6110
GWSPH Security Desk | Phone: 202-994-8800

The [GW Police Department](#) (GWPD) provides residential hall security and patrol services to the Foggy Bottom and Mount Vernon campuses and oversees security at the Virginia Science and Technology Campus (VTSC). GWPD also coordinates safety and security for a variety of on-campus special events, including Commencement, Alumni and Families Weekend, and dignitary visits.

For up-to-date safety, security, and university operating status, students should visit the [campus advisories website](#).

Student Organizations

[Student organizations](#) provide students with an opportunity to explore interests, sharpen skills, and learn about themselves and others while enhancing the academic mission of the university. GW's 500+ student organizations offer students opportunities to get involved and create community.

Public Health Student Association

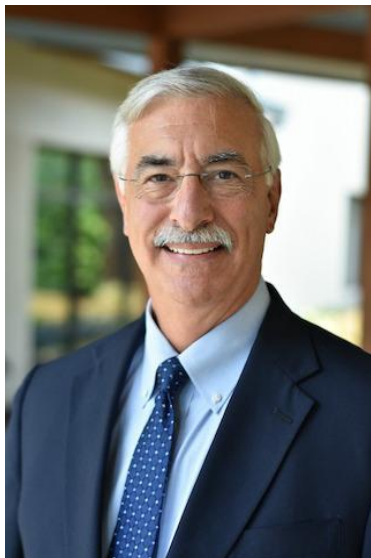
The [GW Public Health Student Association](#) (PHSA) comprises current GWSPH graduate and undergraduate students. PHSA organizes community service, networking, social, educational, and professional events. Joining the PHSA is an excellent opportunity for students to develop their interests in public health and to get involved in the D.C. and GW public health communities.

University Student Services Offices

Students have access to the following services offered by the university.

- [Academic Resources for Athletes](#)
- [Academic Technologies](#)
- [Center for Interfaith and Spiritual Life](#)
- [GW Center for Career Services](#)
- [Disability Support Services](#)
- [First-Generation Students](#)
- [Gelman Library](#)
- [GW Bookstore](#)
- [GWorld Card Services](#)
- [Himmelfarb Library](#)
- [Information Technology Services](#)
- [International Services Office](#)
- [Multicultural Services](#)
- [Nashman Center for Civic Engagement and Public Service](#)
- [Office of Military and Veteran Student Services](#)
- [Printing Services](#)
- [GW Student Financial Assistance](#)
- [Student Health Services](#)
- [Writing Center](#)

DrPH Supplement



Dear DrPH students:

The Doctor of Public Health (DrPH) program at The George Washington University Milken Institute School of Public Health (GWSPH) is a leadership degree. We train public health thought leaders and practitioners ready to shape public health policy and practice and lead organizational change in the U.S. and worldwide.

Consequently, we have created the DrPH Student Supplement to serve as a vital resource during your DrPH leadership journey. This Supplement and the GWSPH Graduate Student Handbook will be updated as needed and can be found on the [GWSPH website](#).

DrPH students are expected to be knowledgeable about the policies and procedures of the DrPH Program. The DrPH supplement is secondary to the GWSPH Graduate Student Handbook, and tertiary to the GW University Bulletin. Information in this Supplement is accurate as of August 2025. The university, GWSPH, and the DrPH program reserve the right to change courses, programs, and fees, or to make other administrative and policy/procedure.

Bottom line: I am very impressed with the level of detail within the DrPH supplement. It consists of five (5) chapters that contain extremely detailed information on your program of study (courses), the role of your advisor, the dissertation portfolio, the DrPH Applied Practice Experience (DAPEX), comprehensive exam, how to select a dissertation chair/committee, graduation requirements, and much more. Needless to say, the DrPH Supplement is a must read for your success as a doctoral student at GWSPH.

If you have questions on your DrPH journey, please reach out to the DrPH program office or your advisor.

Very Best,

Gene Migliaccio, DrPH
Associate Dean for Applied Public Health and Doctor of Public Health Program
Professor of Global Health
geno@gwu.edu

University and school policies and procedures, as outlined in the University Bulletin, Student Handbook, and GWSPH website apply to DrPH students.

Chapter 1 – Milken Institute School of Public Health

Students should review the appropriate sections in the Graduate Student Handbook.

- [The Milken Institute School of Public Health](#)
- [School Leadership](#)

Chapter 2 – DrPH Leadership and Administrative Overview

DrPH Leadership and Faculty

Program Director

To provide oversight, the DrPH program director works with a DrPH committee to govern the operations of the program. The director of the DrPH program is responsible for all administrative affairs of the program, including administration of academic conduct, standards, and requirements, and serves as the chair of the DrPH governance committee. In addition, the director is responsible for oversight and recommendations for admissions and fellowship support, matching advisors with students, approving DrPH dissertation committee chairs and members, advising dissertation committees on interpretation of policies and requirements, and ruling on all petitions in accordance with GWSPH guidelines.

Associate Program Director

The associate DrPH program director supports the program director in all functions as described above and addresses day-to-day administrative issues affecting students and advisors. In the absence of the DrPH program director, the associate DrPH program director will serve as the chair of DrPH governance committee meetings.

DrPH Governance Committee

The DrPH governance committee provides governance of the schoolwide DrPH program. The committee is comprised of the DrPH program director, the associate DrPH program director, a faculty representative from every department of GWSPH, and up to three student representatives (two students in pre-candidacy and one student in post-candidacy).

The committee is responsible for advising and decision-making on a number of topics, including admissions, student funding, DAPEX, curriculum, student progress, dismissals, comprehensive exam, and dissertation. Sub-committees are formed as necessary.

Current Members of the DrPH Governance Committee	
Gene Migliaccio , DrPH, MPH Associate Dean for Applied Public Health Director, DrPH Program Professor, Global Health geno@gwu.edu	Jen Skillicorn , DrPH, MPH Associate Director, DrPH Program Adjunct Professor, Health Policy and Management skilli_j@gwu.edu
Ricky Allen , PhD, MHSA, MDiv Adjunct Professor, Health Policy and Management rdallen@gwu.edu	Adam Ciarleglio , PhD, MS Associate Professor, Biostatistics and Bioinformatics aciarleglio@gwu.edu
Abigail Garvey Wilson , PhD, MPH Teaching Assistant Professor, Epidemiology algw@gwu.edu	George Gray , PhD, MS Associate Dean for MPH Programs Professor, Environmental and Occupational Health gmgray@gwu.edu
Feygele Jacobs , DrPH, MS, MPH Professor, Health Policy and Management feygelej@gwu.edu	Geraldyn Johnson , DDS, MPH Adjunct Professor, Global Health gsjohnson@gwu.edu
Derek Licina , DrPH, MPH Adjunct Professor, Global Health licinadj@gwu.edu	Karen McDonnell , PhD Associate Professor, Prevention and Community Health kmcdonne@gwu.edu
Nino Paichadze , MD, MPH Associate Research Professor, Global Health npaichadze1@gwu.edu	Emily Peca , DrPH, MA Adjunct Professor, Global Health epeca@gwu.edu
Jack Sandberg , PhD, MA Professor, Global Health jsandber@gwu.edu	Amita Vyas , PhD, MHS Professor, Prevention and Community Health avyas@gwu.edu
Nasreen Al-Quaid, MS Student Representative, DrPH Cohort '24 naa169@gwu.edu	Kathleen Newton, MHA Student Representative, DrPH Cohort '23 knewton1@gwu.edu

Current Members of the DrPH Governance Committee	
Tracie Seward, MA Student Representative, DrPH Cohort '22 tseward@gwu.edu	

Faculty

Since the DrPH program is a schoolwide program, students have access to diverse faculty who cover various areas of public health. The faculty who teach in the DrPH program come from GWSPH, the School of Medicine and Health Sciences, and the School of Law. To learn more about DrPH faculty, students should visit the [DrPH Faculty Directory](#).

Faculty Advisor

The role of the DrPH faculty advisor is pivotal to the student’s progression through the pre-candidacy phase. The DrPH faculty advisor role supports the school’s commitment to student development by:

- Guiding the student throughout the program and providing support with sequencing, scheduling, and program administrative support (e.g., signing off on forms). Any variation from the established program of study requires the approval of the DrPH faculty advisor and possibly the DrPH program director.
- Mentoring the student in their development as a scholar and professional, including addressing interpersonal and presentation skills as necessary.
- Guiding the student to consider the focus of their DAPEx and dissertation, exploring various potential topics and questions, and weighing the feasibility, advantages, and disadvantages of each.
- Guiding the student’s development in the core competencies for doctoral students (e.g., knowledge of foundations, critical literature reviews, inquiry and research methods, clarity of written and oral thought, professional development, technological skills, knowledge of the specialty area).
- Setting clear expectations and guiding the student toward achieving a high level of quality in all written work.
- Guiding the student’s preparation for the comprehensive examination.
- Serving as a resource as the student selects a dissertation committee chair, preceptor, and other committee members.

The DrPH faculty advisor advises students primarily during the first two years of the program. Faculty advisors help the student identify faculty members who have aligned academic and practice-based interests. These faculty members may be potential dissertation committee members. DrPH faculty advisors may continue to work with the student through the

dissertation project either in the role of committee chair or member; however, it is not presumed that the DrPH faculty advisor will serve as an advisor for the student's dissertation.

Academic Advisor

Academic advisors may assist students with forms processing, course registration, university policy support, and general educational guidance. Academic advisors may be contacted through the DrPH program office at drphadmin@gwu.edu. Ultimately, students are responsible for their own course of action, however faculty and academic advisors will be supportive and assist in any ways they can.

Dissertation Chair

The dissertation chair serves as the DAPEx and dissertation advisor when the student has identified their DAPEx project idea and selects their committee chair. At this point the chair also becomes the student's new faculty advisor and supports the student's dissertation work comprehensively. The chair must be a full-, part-time, or adjunct faculty at GWSPH. See additional details in [Chapter 5](#).

Registration

Students should review the appropriate sections in the Graduate Student Handbook.

- [Adding, Dropping, and Withdrawing from Courses](#)
- [Continuous Enrollment Status](#)
- [Leave of Absence](#)
- [Academic Advising \(DegreeMAP\)](#)
- [Complete Pathways to Public Health¹⁴](#)

Like all GWSPH students, DrPH are required to maintain active (continuous enrollment) status upon matriculation. Generally, only fall and spring semester registrations are required to maintain active status, but during the summer sessions of first and second years, DrPH students must register for specified core class(es) as well. Students may register for additional classes during the summer session if desired. In subsequent summer semesters, students may opt to register for one or more summer classes, but it is not required.

The type of registration depends on the student's progress in the program:

¹⁴ All incoming DrPH students are required to complete the PUBH 6080 Pathways to Public Health course by **September 15**.

- **Dissertation Portfolio:** Students must take the eight dissertation portfolio courses, in order: PUBH 8700, 8703, 8705, 8707, 8709, 8711, 8713 and 8715.
 - DrPH students receive credit for PUBH 8709 Dissertation Portfolio: Dissertation Proposal Defense when they have successfully defended their proposal, as evidenced by the submission of a signed [Dissertation Proposal Defense Report Form](#) to the DrPH program office at drphadmin@gwu.edu.
 - DrPH students receive credit for PUBH 8715 Dissertation Portfolio: Dissertation Defense when they have successfully defended their final dissertation, as evidenced by the submission of a [Dissertation Defense Report Form](#) to the DrPH program office at drphadmin@gwu.edu.
 - Students must be registered in PUBH 8715 Dissertation Portfolio: Dissertation Defense or Continuous Enrollment (UNIV 0982) in the term in which the dissertation is defended, including the summer term, if that is when the defense is scheduled.
- **Continuous Enrollment (UNIV 0982):** If all other program requirements have been met and the program director approves, students **may** be eligible to register for Continuous Enrollment (UNIV 0982) for up to one academic year.
- **Continuing Research (PUBH 0940):** If a student requires more time to complete their dissertation, the student must register for one credit of Continuing Research (PUBH 0940), which requires a tuition payment of one full credit hour to maintain active status, in a fall or spring term. Continuing Research credits cannot be used to satisfy any of the credit requirements for the DrPH.

Communications

Students should review the appropriate section in the Graduate Student Handbook.

- [Read the Weekly Student Newsletter](#)

In addition to the weekly student newsletter, all DrPH students receive a monthly newsletter from the DrPH program. This newsletter provides information on the DrPH community, lists opportunities for DAPEx, posts dissertation presentations, and features profiles on DrPH students and happenings of the [National Association for Doctors of Public Health](#) (NADrPH).

Chapter 3 - DrPH Curriculum Overview

The mission of the interdisciplinary DrPH program is to educate and train public health thought leaders and practitioners ready to shape public health policy and practice discourse to lead organizational and societal change in the U.S. and worldwide. This program delivers a practice-based curriculum to equip public health leaders with skills for the development, implementation, and evaluation of efficient public health programs and policies, and resolution of complex systematic problems.

The DrPH program training utilizes health policy and global health opportunities exclusive to Washington, D.C. to prepare students for senior-level public health leadership roles in the U.S. and globally. Focusing on leadership and practice, the DrPH program provides some curriculum flexibility to meet the diverse needs of students through rigorous coursework in global health, environmental and occupational health, health policy and management, prevention and community health, exercise and nutrition, biostatistics, and epidemiology.

The DrPH degree is designed to promote the principles of academic public health practice. Longstanding and recent challenges (e.g., COVID-19 pandemic, racism, violence, inadequate national public health infrastructure) illustrate the need for public health professionals who can provide the leadership to expand and strengthen the U.S. and global public health systems. The DrPH degree is designed to prepare professionals with the necessary skills to provide this leadership.

In this 48-credit doctoral program, students will take:

- 35 credits of required foundational coursework
- 13 credits of dissertation portfolio coursework

For a full list of program competencies, required curricula, and sequencing schedules, students should refer to their [program guide](#).

Chapter 4 - DrPH Phases

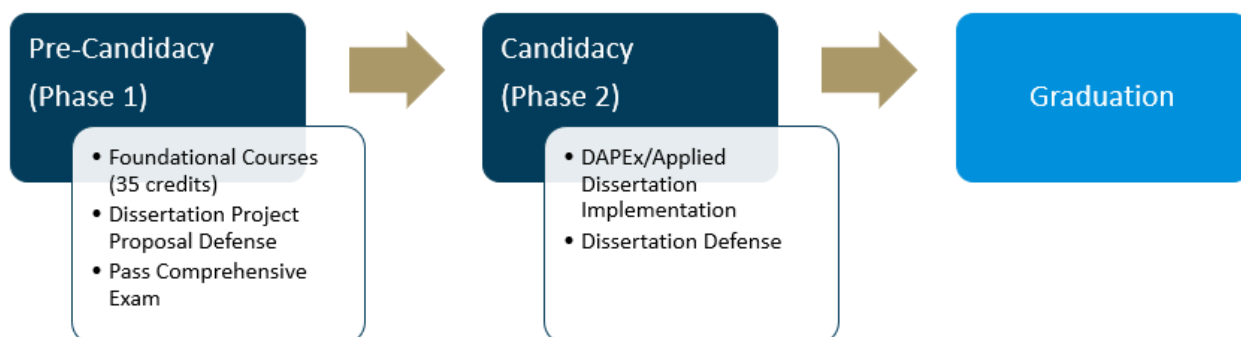
Timeline for Completion of the Program

Students should review the appropriate section of the Graduate Student Handbook.

- [Degree Completion](#)

It is expected that most, if not all, students will successfully fulfill all requirements of the DrPH program in three to five years. The program is designed to enable full-time students to complete all requirements and graduate within three years. Part-time students are expected to complete the program within five years. Part-time students are expected to take a minimum of two courses each fall and spring semester and two courses each summer for the first two years and to complete the remaining coursework in their third and fourth years.

Phases of the DrPH Program



The DrPH degree is divided into two phases: pre-candidacy and candidacy. Upon satisfactory completion of the requirements associated with pre-candidacy, including successfully completing the comprehensive exam and defending the dissertation proposal, the student moves to the candidacy phase and *only at this time can refer to themselves as a doctoral candidate*.

Pre-Candidacy Phase

1. Foundational Coursework

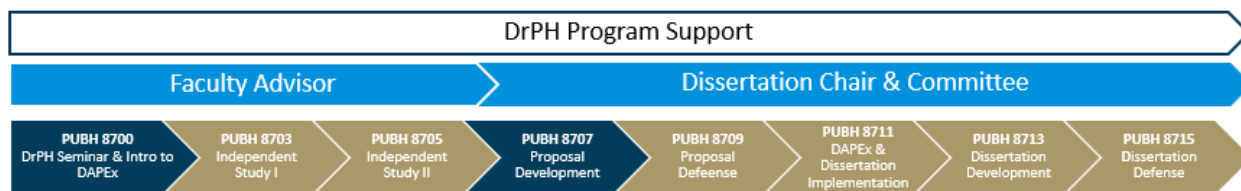
Students should review the appropriate sections of the Graduate Student Handbook.

- [Adding, Dropping, and Withdrawing from Courses](#)
- [Continuous Enrollment Status](#)
- [Academic Standing](#)
- [Academic Advising](#)

Students should refer to their [program guide](#) for a complete list of foundational courses and expected sequencing. This will help students navigate their path of study and timeline. Foundational coursework must be completed prior to sitting for the comprehensive exam.

2. Dissertation Project Proposal Defense

Students are required to take a series of courses related to the DrPH dissertation portfolio starting in the first semester and ending when the student successfully defends their dissertation. These courses support DrPH students as they navigate the dissertation process. The figure below shows the dissertation portfolio sequence. The two courses highlighted in dark blue are didactic courses. The other courses are either independent studies with support from the student's committee members or hybrid courses with a mix of independent work and live sessions.



The dissertation portfolio courses completed in the pre-candidacy phase are PUBH 8700, PUBH 8703, PUBH 8705, PUBH 8707, and PUBH 8709.

During the pre-candidacy phase, students will develop the DAPEx portion of their dissertation project in conjunction with an approved preceptor and site. Students will also form a dissertation committee to help link the DAPEx to and guide the written portion of the applied dissertation. Once the dissertation proposal is developed and defended successfully, the student is approved to move forward with dissertation project implementation. More information can be found in [Chapter 5](#).

3. Comprehensive Examination

The comprehensive exam assesses the knowledge of general public health concepts and attainment of the skills outlined in the DrPH competencies. The exam challenges students to synthesize theory, concepts, research, and practice. Students become eligible to sit for the comprehensive exam after all foundational coursework has been completed. Upon successful completion of the exam, students officially enter the doctoral candidacy phase of the program.

The timeline for each student to take the comprehensive exam will be determined in consultation with the faculty advisor and the DrPH program office. GWSPH will administer the comprehensive exam twice a year in May and December (*exact dates to be determined*).

Students who do not complete or fully pass the comprehensive exam will be offered the opportunity to retake the exam one additional time. Additional coursework may be recommended. The second attempt at the comprehensive exam must be taken within one year of the initial exam. Failure to complete or pass the comprehensive exam will be grounds for dismissal from the DrPH program.

Pro Tip: Students are encouraged to download and save all course materials from the course platform (GW Blackboard and/or 2U Digital Campus) at the end of each term. Access to completed courses may be lost prior to taking the comprehensive exam.

Candidacy Phase

4. DAPEx/Applied Dissertation Project Implementation

The objective of the dissertation project implementation is to demonstrate that the candidate has synthesized the knowledge gained during the pre-candidacy phase and is able to apply this knowledge to addressing a concrete and substantial applied public health issue, opportunity,

and/or problem. The DAPEx will serve as the foundation for the applied dissertation. The written dissertation is a problem- or issue-based inquiry that will involve applied research on a selected public health policy and practice issue. Details are available in [Chapter 5](#).

5. Dissertation Defense

Once the candidate's dissertation chair and committee agree the candidate is ready, a defense date will be set. Details are available in [Chapter 5](#).

6. DrPH Degree Certification and Graduation

Students should review the appropriate sections in the Graduate Student Handbook.

- [Prepare to Graduate](#)

Requirements, policies, and procedures to apply for graduation are detailed in the [University Bulletin](#) and on the [GWSPH graduation website](#). Students are encouraged to review and make sure they have completed the [Checklist for Graduation](#).

Students should review their [program guide](#) for a list of DrPH program requirements.

Chapter 5 – The DrPH Dissertation Portfolio Guide

A. Introduction

At GWSPH, the DrPH program's focus on practice goes beyond just addressing a requirement. Practicing DrPH competencies is how students learn what is necessary to move their own professional practice and leadership skills forward. This is the impetus for the practice experience dissertation project, where students participate in a major project from an academic-practice perspective. This integration of practice into the dissertation allows students to hone their attention to fully exploring a given public health problem, challenge, or opportunity that is of interest to them.

This alignment meets two CEPH accreditation requirements for practice and dissertation work: an integrated experience which includes the practice project, and an academic document that identifies, describes, and defends the scope of work. The term "dissertation" references the elements related to the DAPEx and the written dissertation document that are both essential components of the dissertation portfolio. The DAPEx project may also be referred to as the dissertation project. The two terms can be used interchangeably to refer to one and the same project.

To best support students as they move through the development and defense of their project and dissertation, the program has developed the dissertation portfolio to promote practice by integrating the DAPEx throughout the curriculum and linking it to the dissertation through a

series of courses that build sequentially on one another. The DAPEx is the practice-based project and the dissertation is a written document describing and defending the project through an academic lens. Students are required to take eight courses, collectively known as the dissertation portfolio courses, that provide tailored support as they navigate the dissertation process.

The objective of the dissertation is to demonstrate that the student has synthesized the knowledge and skills gained through their coursework and can apply this knowledge to addressing a concrete and substantial applied public health issue, opportunity, and/or problem. This program asks that students conduct a project with a partner site that addresses a public health problem and has public health outcome or impact in mind. It is the expectation that students will work independently, under the guidance of a dissertation committee, to plan and implement their project and prepare a written dissertation demonstrating the ability to analyze and solve a complex public health practice-based problem. A student's interpretation of the project and its results through their recommendations and/or product development must make a substantive, original contribution to the field of public health research and practice.

B. Dissertation Portfolio Courses

Students are required to take several courses that provide tailored support as they navigate the dissertation process from idea generation during the first semester to the final dissertation defense at the end of the program.

Students should refer to their [program guide](#) for information on the dissertation portfolio classes. Course descriptions are in the [University Bulletin](#).

- PUBH 8700 DrPH Seminar and Intro to DAPEx
- PUBH 8703 Independent Study I
- PUBH 8705 Independent Study II
- PUBH 8707 Dissertation Proposal Development
- PUBH 8709 Proposal Defense
- PUBH 8711 DAPEx and Dissertation Implementation
- PUBH 8713 Dissertation Development
- PUBH 8715 Dissertation Defense

Students will reach specific milestones in each of the dissertation portfolio courses. Accompanying forms and deadlines are listed in the table below.

Action	Form	Deadline
Practice plan approval	DAPEx Practice Plan Template	Draft due prior to PUBH 8707

Action	Form	Deadline
Committee approval	<u>Dissertation Committee Approval</u>	Submitted when committee is finalized and prior to proposal defense
Request proposal defense date and submit copy of the proposal	<u>Proposal Defense Request</u>	Three weeks before proposal defense
Proposal defense outcome	<u>Proposal Defense Report</u>	Five business days post-defense
Request dissertation defense date and submit final draft	<u>Dissertation Defense Request</u>	Five weeks before the dissertation defense
Dissertation defense outcome	<u>Dissertation Defense Report</u>	Five business days post-defense

Reminder: A committee cannot be changed after the dissertation draft is circulated for final defense, *unless* unanimous written consent is obtained.

C. Dissertation Committee

The dissertation committee supplies intellectual depth, field perspective, and timely guidance. Dissertation committees must consist of at least three members, including the chair. The chair must be a full-time, part-time, or adjunct faculty at GWSPH. The preceptor serves as one of the committee members, given their support and effort in the work. The third member should complement the strengths of the other two members and fill in any gaps in terms of academic or practice experience (e.g., content or methods) to fully support the student and their project.

Role	Preferred Credentials	How the Role Usually Helps
Chair	Full-time, part-time or adjunct GWSPH faculty; doctoral degree	Guides scholarly direction; integration; readiness decisions
Preceptor	Senior professional at partner site; doctoral degree preferred	Ongoing mentorship; support and linkages to practice-based components
Third Member	GW faculty or external expert; doctoral degree	Adds methodological or topical depth

Role	Preferred Credentials	How the Role Usually Helps
Optional Reader(s)	Subject specialists; voting members	Targeted feedback on specific sections

Selecting dissertation committee members is an important decision. Students should select faculty who bring some combination of content knowledge, methodological expertise, prior experience mentoring students, and a willingness to work closely with the student as an advisor throughout the dissertation phase. Students should meet with faculty early in the dissertation portfolio sequence to learn about faculty interests and strengths, and to identify faculty who might serve as a dissertation chair. As students sharpen their interests and get to know faculty across the school, they will identify an individual to serve as their chair. Often, the student will seek guidance from the chair about other members who might serve on the committee. It is not a given that faculty members will accept this request; it depends on their interest and alignment with the project as well as their bandwidth to serve in this role. Students may need to have an alternative option(s) in mind.

The timeline for selecting a dissertation committee chair and other committee members varies by student. Some students work closely with a faculty member throughout their coursework and begin discussing possible dissertation topics early in the DrPH program with that faculty member in mind as the chair. In other cases, students “shop around” for a dissertation chair and other committee members through meetings with many different faculty, learning about the broad range of public health interests and capabilities of faculty within the school.

As a matter of practical advice, students should identify and work with a faculty mentor or potential chair as their dissertation topic evolves in order to receive feedback on feasibility, resource constraints, and public health impact. It is also important to identify a mentor (whether that person becomes a chair, a committee member, or an informal advisor) to discuss the evidence and/or data sources that will inform or be necessary to conduct the dissertation project. Sometimes, identifying the data sources needed to complete the project will clarify the question of who would be a helpful and appropriate dissertation committee chair.

Students are required to have a dissertation chair identified, as well as an abstract and approval of acceptance from course faculty, prior to enrolling in PUBH 8707 Dissertation Portfolio: Proposal Development. Full-time and part-time students following the recommended course sequencing should plan on taking PUBH 8707 during the fall semester or spring semester of their second or third year. This means that during PUBH 8703 (spring, first year) and 8705 (summer, first year), students will seek to identify their dissertation topic, identify a potential dissertation chair, and draft out their dissertation abstract.

Dissertation chairs and most committee members have doctoral level training and commonly hold a PhD, DrPH, ScD, MD, JD, or other related terminal degree. Ideally, all members of the dissertation committee should have doctoral level training, although exceptions to this rule can be made on a case-by-case basis by the DrPH program leadership, especially in regards to the

academic training of the preceptor committee member.¹⁵ The chair and other members have some combination of training, expertise, and mentoring experience to provide the necessary guidance and support during the student's dissertation phase. Some members of the committee may be chosen because of their depth of knowledge about the student's topic, while others may participate on the committee primarily because of their expertise in relevant research and applied methods.

The [Dissertation Committee Approval Form](#) identifies the chair and committee members and is approved by the DrPH program leadership. The signed form is submitted to drphadmin@gwu.edu as soon as the committee is solidified. This form does not include the names of potential readers, which are optional.

Students who are working on dissertation proposals are responsible for maintaining ongoing and regular communication with the dissertation chair and committee members. Students are encouraged to discuss expectations about communication with the chair and committee members early in the process to facilitate progress and keep the project on track. The dissertation process works best when the student and dissertation committee have agreed upon a style and frequency of communication (e.g., bi-weekly or monthly meetings; memoranda from the student providing updates on the student's progress; online or in-person meetings). Additionally, agreements on deadlines for submission by the student and review by the committee should be clarified and respected.

Dissertation Chair

Dissertation chairs help students develop a focused, rigorous, and manageable project that will meet the resource, data, and time constraints of the program. While the student is responsible for the formulation of the project, including specific aims or goals, design, hypotheses or research/practice questions, and technical approach, the chair is expected to provide constructive input and timely feedback to help the student develop their dissertation proposal.

The chair is an essential advisor who should have the expertise to guide the student throughout the project and dissertation. The chair may take on varying roles during the process, depending on the student, dissertation topic, project approach, and other factors. For example, chairs often serve as:

- **Advisor** - The dissertation committee chair is the principal advisor who works with the student on all or most chapters and likely will completely examine and approve the proposal draft chapters and materials prior to submitting them to the rest of the committee for review and comment. In this case, the chair is an expert in the field of

¹⁵ If a committee member does not have a doctoral degree, the student must submit a curriculum vitae (CV) for review and consideration to their committee and then to the DrPH program leadership.

study who can provide advice and mentoring on methodologies and analyses and has significant expertise in the dissertation topic. The chair may be a full-time, part-time, or adjunct faculty member.

- **Coordinator** - The chair serves as a leader or administrator of the committee to ensure that the student meets all requirements, conditions, and timelines. The chair may not necessarily have the expertise to review all chapters of the dissertation and consequently, the student will also rely on the other committee members and advisors as necessary for the initial review of specific areas or chapters. The chair will provide guidance on their areas of specific expertise, whether it is the topic, the methods used, the analysis, etc. Chairs who serve in a “coordinator” role are often more senior faculty members.
- **Director** - The chair will lead the student through each part of the dissertation as the dissertation is likely a piece of a larger body of work that they are currently working on. Here the chair is intimately involved with the student in the selection of the methods, direction of the analysis, and the ultimate outcome of the dissertation. Other committee members serve as more of a review board or provide targeted advice on components of the dissertation. The chair will lead committee decisions. In doing so, the chair will need to understand and take into consideration the needs and goals of the site partner and preceptor.

Chair roles and responsibilities vary based on expertise and preferred mentoring style, prior working relationship with the student, time constraints, availability, and many other factors.

In general, the chair is expected to regularly review student progress and serve as a mentor, assuring that the dissertation process moves forward smoothly in accordance with GWSPH guidelines. The chair will carefully review the dissertation proposal and provide detailed written comments to the student, be available to discuss these comments, and review a revised proposal prior to determining that the student is ready to defend the proposal before the full committee and outside readers.

Dissertation Preceptor

The dissertation project must be supervised and supported by a qualified preceptor who is able to mentor and support the student throughout the entire practice and dissertation experience, serve on the student’s dissertation committee, and also help to evaluate the student’s project and professional competence. The preceptor must be in a position related to the practice setting and able to ensure the quality of the practice experience. The preceptor will work closely with the student, provide guidance, and help facilitate the student’s work with the partner site. The preceptor should serve in the role of being the point person at the partner site who helps the student integrate into and supports the student's implementation of the agreed upon scope of work at the partner site. The preceptor can provide background information, guidance, and feedback in relation to the agreed upon scope of work and pre-defined learning objectives.

Dissertation Committee Readers (Optional)

As of December 2023, the decision was made to make readers optional on a dissertation committee. Students may discuss this change with their dissertation chair. The role of a dissertation reader is to review the final dissertation draft prior to the final defense, participate in the final defense by asking questions, and serving as a voting member at the dissertation defense.

If students choose to have readers, the readers attend the dissertation defense and actively participate as an examiner along with the dissertation committee members. Readers are not official members of the dissertation committee and do not review draft chapters of the dissertation. Readers do not provide written or oral feedback on the dissertation to the student or committee members prior to the dissertation defense. Readers receive the full dissertation draft for review prior to the dissertation defense along with the members of the dissertation committee, generally about four to five weeks prior to the dissertation defense date. Readers are voting members at the dissertation defense. Readers should have relevant expertise to provide a critical review of the dissertation and may be selected because of their expertise, content, or practice-related skills and experience. Readers may come from GW, local sites, government agencies, other universities, or other settings. Readers are required to have doctoral-level credentials or the equivalent, although exceptions can be made depending on the relevance to the student's topic.

Readers are selected in consultation with the chair. Often, students suggest individuals as readers to the chair after consultation with other faculty or outside expert researchers or practitioners. Readers must be approved by the dissertation chair and must agree to participate in the dissertation defense. Readers must be available to attend the dissertation defense. Readers can attend the dissertation defense remotely, if not available to attend in-person. This is a decision made by the student, the dissertation chair, and the reader and may require logistical support to ensure that technical issues do not delay the defense. Students and the committee chair may discuss the selection of readers when first developing a dissertation proposal; at other times, readers are not identified until a student is closer to finishing a draft dissertation.

D. Dissertation Project: DAPEx

The goal of the DAPEx is to advance the development of higher-level applied competencies and critical thinking relevant to the student's area(s) of specialization. The DAPEx is an opportunity to apply principles of leadership and management, and public health theories and methodologies learned through the program's coursework to real-life situations. Each student identifies at least five competencies, with at least one competency coming from the Leadership, Management and Governance category. Students must identify these competencies in their practice plan, discuss how they are addressing these competencies through their reflective report, and be prepared to describe the alignment of these competencies with their DAPEx during their proposal and final defenses.

The DAPEx must be a mutually agreed upon and beneficial scope of work between the student, preceptor, and partner site. This scope of work must be supported by the student's dissertation committee which will include the committee chair, preceptor, and one other committee member. All opportunities must be approved by the student's dissertation committee and will receive final confirmation and documentation after the student's proposal defense.

Full-time students usually undertake the DAPEx in the summer of their second year; part-time students may go at a slower pace. The dissertation project does not have a requirement for a minimum number of hours engaging with the partner site and completing their agreed upon scope of work. Rather, the practice plan and defense readiness drive the number of hours spent by the student in order to meet the agreed upon goals, deliverables, and competencies. Students should review their [program guide](#) for information on dissertation portfolio sequencing and suggested timelines.

Key components of the DAPEx include:

Preceptor	
Key Details	Site must benefit directly from student's work. Preceptor mentors the student and verifies competency mastery and work product completion.
Requirements	Preceptor must be able to mentor and support throughout the entire dissertation project experience, including serving on the student's committee. Preceptor must be in a position related to the practice setting, serve as point person, and ensure quality of the experience. Qualifications: Ideally have doctoral level training and hold a PhD, DrPH, ScD, MD, JD, or other relevant degree. Equivalent work experience may alternately be assessed given years of experience, seniority, leadership, or accomplishments. In this case, the committee chair in collaboration with DrPH program leadership can review their CV for consideration.

Practice Site	
Key Details	Student is responsible for identifying an appropriate site and securing commitment from the preceptor. Students are advised to consider sites external to their school or program. ¹⁶ If the student is considering an opportunity at their place of employment, the scope of work must be distinct from their current role.
Requirements	Work must benefit the site. There is no financial compensation for the work completed for the DAPEx site. The scope of work is distinct from current professional roles held by students.

Practice Plan and Scope-of-Work	
Key Details	The practice plan identifies the partner site, preceptor, project title, project summary, ¹⁷ five competencies to be addressed during the work, planned primary activities, timeline, and benefits for the partner site.
Requirements	The practice plan requires concurrence from committee chair and preceptor. The plan is first submitted to determine the student's readiness to take PUBH 8707 Proposal Development. A final version will be submitted during PUBH 8711 (if the exact scope of work shifts, the student, preceptor, and committee members must agree on a revised scope).

DAPEx Deliverables

At the conclusion of the DAPEx/dissertation project, students are required to submit the following final products. All deliverables must be uploaded to PUBH 8711 DAPEx course platform.

Deliverable 1: Illustrative Work Product

Acceptable examples of work products for partner sites include, but are not limited to:

- Community health assessment
- Program logic model
- Monitoring, evaluation, and learning plan
- Impact evaluation report
- Policy analysis or brief
- Strategic communications toolkit
- Training curriculum and facilitator guide

¹⁶ There may be some appropriate opportunities for applied, practice-related work through centers and institutes at GWSPH which should be considered by students.

¹⁷ Brief description of one to three paragraphs

- Data dashboard
- Mobile-app prototype
- Predictive-analytics script
- Grant proposal
- Technical guidance

Deliverable 2: Reflective Report (3-6 pages, single-spaced)

Section	Guiding Prompts
1. Background	Host organization, public-health issue, situational context
2. Objectives and Scope	Project goals, selected competencies, rationale
3. Activities and Methods	Key tasks, data sources, collaboration
4. Competency Demonstration	How each competency was met with examples
5. Leadership and Lessons Learned	Decision-making, stakeholder engagement, personal growth
6. Implications for Practice	How work product will be used; recommendations
7. Abstract	150–250-word public summary

International DAPEx Partner Sites

Experiences will often be with sites in a student’s geographic area but this is not a requirement. If the student plans to travel outside of the U.S. to conduct the DAPEx, additional advanced planning is required.

All travelers must use [GW Passport](#) to register university-related travel (including DAPEx) and propose travel to high-risk destinations. The [GW Office of International Programs](#) provides information on completing a high-risk travel exception, which is typically needed for a destination with a [Department of State Advisory Level 4 for Graduate Students/Faculty/Staff Travelers](#).

Registering travel with the university ensures that students have the appropriate trip coverage and protections while abroad on university business. The policy pertaining to the university's travel insurance and coverage can be found [here](#). All requested student travel should be clearly described in their practice plan. The scope of work should be approved by the DrPH program and [ORE](#) prior to registering the trip through the [Office of International Programs](#) (OIP). If students are traveling to a Level 4 country, then the student's scope of work and travel documentation will need additional school-level approval that is incorporated into the OIP High Risk Destination review.

All travels must be registered with OIP at least 30 days prior to departure.

Students with F-1 Visas

[Curricular Practical Training](#) (CPT) is required before international (F-1) students can begin their DAPEX. CPT is permission granted to F-1 students to engage in off-campus employment or an internship (e.g., DAPEX) related to the degree program prior to degree completion. International students must be in active status for one academic year before they are eligible to apply for CPT. International DAPEX sites MUST have a U.S. office or address in order for the CPT to be approved for a student who is physically in the U.S. during the practicum. This means that even if the site is virtual, if the site does not have a U.S. address/location, then the student's CPT will not be approved. Students with an F-1 visa should discuss these requirements with their advisors. If a student with an F-1 visa is NOT within the U.S. for the DAPEX experience, then they do not need CPT nor a site that has a U.S. address.

The [International Services Office](#) (ISO) and [GWSPH Career Services](#) are actively involved in the CPT process.

E. Dissertation Project: Applied Dissertation

The applied dissertation (written component) converts the insight and data generated during the DAPEX into a formal scholarly product. Students will write the first three chapters of their dissertation and will defend this content as part of their dissertation proposal defense. Below is guidance for the first three chapters. Students should have a conversation with their committee members as to what format they will choose for their final dissertation, either: the five-chapter dissertation or the two-paper manuscript. More details about these two formats can be found below.

The Dissertation Proposal

The dissertation proposal should provide a clear and thorough plan of the proposed research/practice. The dissertation proposal is sometimes referred to as the first three chapters of the dissertation, although this may vary by the scope of work. Generally, the dissertation proposal includes:

- **Chapter 1 (Introduction):** An introduction and a statement of the public health problem or issue, which describes the nature, magnitude, and history of the problem or issue being studied and the potential significance of the proposed research and the relevance to public health. The statement should answer the question: How is this topic and approach significant and/or original? Including a problem or opportunity statement can be a helpful way to frame this succinctly. This chapter should also serve as an introduction and roadmap for the rest of the dissertation. It may include research/practice questions or aims.

- **Chapter 2 (Literature Review):** A literature review which details prior research in this area and provides a historical and/or conceptual framework. The review includes relevant literature published to date on the topic and supporting theory, if applicable.
- **Chapter 3 (Methods):** The study approach or methods with clear, concise, and specific details explaining the practice and dissertation questions and/or hypotheses, methods or approach and design, human subjects review, and limitations of the work. This section describes the tools and analyses that will be used in the research or practice-based approach, the data sources, and analytical plan. The analysis plan provides a detailed discussion about how the data will be managed and analyzed to address the research question(s). This plan may be adapted for more practice-based approaches. The plan should include a timetable for the project that accounts for all phases of the dissertation study, a discussion of potential challenges to meeting that timetable, and ways to address the challenges. A statement should also be included on the expected contributions and a discussion of the limitations of the study.

Proposal Review Process and Proposal Request Form

All committee members must **review** the entire dissertation proposal and provide **written feedback** prior to the decision to move forward with the student's dissertation proposal defense. The chair and committee members must assess the student's **readiness** to move to the proposal defense phase before the defense can be scheduled.

Prior to the defense, the [Dissertation Proposal Defense Request Form](#) should be completed and submitted to drphadmin@gwu.edu. *This form should be sent at least three weeks prior to the scheduled proposal defense.*

The version of the proposal that is sent to the committee members prior to the proposal defense should reflect at least one full round of review by the full committee and revision by the student. This revised version must be sent to the dissertation committee for review *at least four calendar weeks prior to the scheduled proposal defense*. The **review period** prior to the defense should be agreed upon by all committee members, taking into account vacation periods or other considerations that could necessitate a longer review period.

Dissertation proposal committees may meet as a group prior to the dissertation proposal defense to address any issues that may arise. Although this is not required, it is strongly recommended and common. The student should discuss the meeting schedule or style with the chair and committee members.

The Dissertation Proposal Defense Format

The dissertation proposal defense consists of a formal oral presentation to their committee in a closed session. Presentations should include sufficient detail to give the committee members confidence that the student can accomplish what is proposed, the dissertation project is methodologically rigorous, and the topic and approach will make a valuable contribution to the DAPEx site and broader field of study.

The proposal defense is scheduled for two hours. During the first 20 minutes the student presents an overview of the proposal. This requires that the student be prepared to present the entire proposal (with the use of a PowerPoint slide presentation and handouts, if appropriate) in sufficient detail to provide an overview of the project and identify key study objectives and methodological approach.

The members of the committee will then have the opportunity to question the student on any aspect of the proposal. The student must be prepared to explain the details of the proposed project and defend key decisions made in the design of the project. The student may also be asked to consider challenges to completing the project, the potential contribution of the work to the field, various assumptions included in the approach, or other aspects of the research or practice-based dissertation. All members of the dissertation committee must attend the proposal defense.

The Outcomes of the Dissertation Proposal Defense

There are three possible outcomes of the proposal defense:

- Approval
- Approval with revisions
- Reject, re-defense required

If the dissertation committee approves the proposal, either no changes are required, or the changes are so minor as to not warrant additional review. If the committee approves the proposal with revisions, the student will be required to make moderate to substantial modifications to the proposal and perhaps to respond to a series of questions or suggestions from the committee. The terms of the revisions should be agreed upon immediately following the defense with the student and committee present. In cases where the proposal is approved with revisions, the dissertation chair provides a written memo to the student describing the required changes and specifying the review process required to approve the proposal. For example, the committee may decide that the chair can be the sole reviewer for purposes of the revised proposal or may prefer that committee members also review all or part of the proposal revisions. In most cases, the committee does not meet as a group but goes through the revision approval process electronically. If substantial changes are required, however, the committee may determine that it is necessary to meet by phone or in person to discuss the revisions.

If the committee rejects the proposal, the student has one additional opportunity to re-defend the proposed project after the student has addressed all of the outstanding issues raised by the committee. This re-defense follows the same processes used in the initial defense.

Once the dissertation proposal has been approved by the committee and any required changes have been addressed and approved by the chair and committee members, the student moves to the final dissertation phase.

The signed [Dissertation Proposal Defense Report Form](#) must be signed by all dissertation committee members, indicating the committee's decision. The signed form must be submitted within a week following the proposal defense to drphadmin@gwu.edu.

Dissertation Compliance and Institutional Review Board Requirements

Students should review the appropriate section in the Graduate Student Handbook:

- [Complete Human Subjects Research Training Requirements](#)

In addition to the CITI training, students will have additional requirements if they are engaging in research involving human participants or their data. In these circumstances, students are required to articulate these research activities in their dissertation practice plan and complete research questionnaires prior to beginning the work. Students who are conducting research should work closely with their chair and review the [GWSPH research policy and procedure guidance website](#) as well as the [Human Subjects Determination Policy](#) for the school as their projects will be required to go through the GWSPH research oversight process and possibly the GW Institutional Review Board (IRB). This process can be lengthy.

Students should review the definition of a human subject, as defined by the [GW Office of Human Research](#). Because of the potential for conflict of interest, investigators do not have the authority to make an independent determination that human subjects research is exempt. For student projects, only the student's academic institution, GW in this case, can make the determination.

Key points regarding human subjects research determination and the DAPEx proposal include:

- All student projects outside of activities limited to the classroom need to be entered into [the portal](#).
- This process allows the [ORE](#) to support the educational journey while ensuring compliance with GW policies.
- This portal is managed by ORE. For general questions about the process, students should email sphstudentirb@gwu.edu.

In order to ensure full compliance with regulations and GW policies, ***students may not begin their DAPEx until they have received a determination*** by email that they are approved to do so. GWSPH's oversight team and the university's IRB will not approve studies retroactively.

Dissertation DAPEx Implementation

Students should review the appropriate section in the Graduate Student Handbook:

- [Continuous Enrollment and Continuing Research](#)

Upon successful defense of their dissertation project proposal during PUBH 8709, the student should enroll in PUBH 8711 DAPEx and Dissertation Implementation.

Once the student has completed their DAPEx, they can enroll in PUBH 8713 Dissertation Portfolio: Dissertation Development. Upon successful completion of PUBH 8713, students enroll in PUBH 8715 Dissertation Portfolio: Dissertation.

Dissertation and Defense

There are two formats for the dissertation. Students may prepare a five-chapter dissertation or a two-paper manuscript. This decision should be made in consultation with the dissertation committee chair and members. Regardless of which option the student chooses, all students must prepare a dissertation using one of the formats described below and defend the dissertation before the dissertation committee.

Option One: Five-Chapter Dissertation

In this option, students may format their dissertation as either an applied practice dissertation or a research dissertation. Both formats are outlined below.

The applied practice dissertation essentially builds upon the format of the dissertation proposal, with revisions, as appropriate, to the first three chapters (introduction/background, literature review, methods). The applied practice dissertation also includes chapters on:

- **Chapter 4 (Results):** The applied practice chapter includes detailed findings and often includes numerous graphs, tables, or other visual displays describing the findings. It may also include a summary of a primary work project that was developed for the dissertation such as a strategic plan, organizational assessment, change management plan, program design, or policy analysis. This chapter should summarize the work that was done and include the work product.¹⁸ Practice dissertations generally include all

¹⁸ Depending on the length, students may want to put the actual work product in as an appendix.

results in one chapter; in some cases, however, it may be preferred to provide findings and results based on different methods in separate chapters.

- **Chapter 5 (Discussion):** The dissertation must include a thorough and well-developed chapter with a discussion of the findings/results of the research, the implications of the results and/or approach for the field, and the context in which the findings/results may be interpreted. This chapter often ties together the previously discussed findings and addresses next steps for further development or research. This chapter may also include implications and recommendations.
- **Conclusions:** Some dissertations may include a final concluding chapter that summarizes the work, its value to the field, its limitations, next steps, and other relevant issues. In some dissertations, the discussion chapter is separate from the chapter on implications and conclusions. All applied and practice dissertations must include a full discussion of the findings and approach, implications of the work product, and conclusion. The precise format (number of chapters) should be addressed by the student and the dissertation committee.
- **Appendices:** Any questionnaires, data, and other materials from student research should be included as appendices to the dissertation.

The research dissertation essentially builds upon the format of the dissertation proposal, with revisions, as appropriate, to the first three chapters (introduction/background, literature review, methods). The research dissertation also includes chapters on:

- **Chapter 4 (Results):** The results chapter includes detailed findings and often includes numerous graphs, tables, or other visual displays describing the findings. Research dissertations generally include all results in one chapter; in some cases, however, it may be preferred to provide results based on different methods in separate chapters.
- **Chapter 5 (Discussion):** The dissertation must include a thorough and well-developed discussion of the findings/results of the research, the implications of the results and/or approach on the field, and the context in which the results may be interpreted. This chapter often ties together the previously discussed findings and addresses next steps for further research.
- **Conclusions:** Some dissertations may include a final concluding chapter that summarizes the work, its value to the field, its limitations, next steps, and other relevant issues. In some dissertations, the discussion chapter is separate from the chapter on implications and conclusions. All research dissertations must include a full discussion of the findings and approach, implications of the research, and conclusion. The precise format (number of chapters) should be addressed by the student and the dissertation committee.
- **Appendices:** Any questionnaires, data, and other materials from student research should be included as appendices to the dissertation.

Option Two: Two-Paper Dissertation

The two-paper dissertation option requires students to prepare two, peer-review quality manuscripts based on their dissertation research. The two publishable papers will each stand on their own merit although typically they are linked by a unifying theme. These two papers form the basis of the dissertation defense. Selection of paper topics, research approach, development of manuscripts, and submission of papers should take place with input and review by the dissertation committee. The two manuscripts, along with a dissertation report that includes the dissertation proposal plus a summary chapter describing the scope of the completed research, its limitations, and the implications of the work, comprise the body of work that will be reviewed at the dissertation defense.

In consultation with the dissertation committee, the student will identify what needs to be included in the dissertation summary chapter and the topics for the two papers. Students often prepare a methods paper as one of the two papers; however, if the two papers do not include one on methods, then a detailed description of the methods used in the dissertation research must be included in the summary chapter or as appendices.

While there is not a specified page length for these papers, it is expected that, collectively, the papers will contain as much substantive information as is usually expected in a dissertation.

Students who choose the two-paper option should have a discussion with their dissertation committee chair, members and others, as appropriate, to determine authorship of each of the papers developed as part of the dissertation. The student should be lead author on at least one of the two papers; the student may be lead author on both papers, although it is also common for students to be second author on at least one of the papers. In all cases, authorship should be discussed and determined (at least for first and second author) prior to development of each manuscript.

Dissertation Review and Dissertation Defense Scheduling

Students should review the appropriate section in the Graduate Student Handbook:

- [Continuous Enrollment and Continuing Research](#)
- [Prepare to Graduate](#)

Now in the candidacy stage, candidates must determine when to schedule a final dissertation defense. To do so, the members of the dissertation committee must assess the student's **readiness** to defend. The chair will take the lead in making this decision. The candidate should work closely with all members of the dissertation committee as they finalize their project and prepare manuscripts or traditional dissertation chapters. Candidates must submit the full dissertation draft to the dissertation committee for review and written comments at least once, allowing enough time for the student to respond to comments and make revisions for additional review by the dissertation committee. Usually, committee members review multiple

drafts. A 30-day review period is generally required for feedback from dissertation committee members. After at least one full round of review with comments and revisions the committee may recommend that the candidate is ready to defend the dissertation. Students should take review periods into consideration when developing their dissertation plan and timetable.

As the time approaches to defend the dissertation, the candidate should work with the committee, outside readers (if any), and program administration to schedule a defense. This includes setting a date and time for the dissertation defense, and reserving a location and the necessary equipment/technology for presenting the dissertation slide deck and/or other materials (different locations may have different capabilities in terms of technology or technical support).

The request for scheduling a defense **must be made at least 30 days** from the planned defense and students **must** submit the final dissertation draft, including manuscripts for the two-paper option, to all committee members a **minimum of 30 days** before the dissertation defense date.

Candidates need to work with the DrPH program office to coordinate the logistics and advertisement of the dissertation defense. If the student is scheduling an in-person defense, the DrPH program office will help candidates reserve a room in GWSPH for their defense. Thirty days prior to the planned defense, candidates must send the following materials to drphadmin@gwu.edu:

- Signed [Dissertation Defense Request Form](#) (if this form is submitted late, the defense will need to be rescheduled)
- Date and time of the dissertation defense
- Zoom link (if the defense is hybrid or remote)
- Copy of the dissertation abstract
- Copy of dissertation draft
- Preferred headshot

Candidates may defend their dissertation any time during the year. Students should plan to defend their dissertation at least two months before their planned spring, summer, or fall graduation. For example, a student is targeting a May graduation, they must be finished with the dissertation defense no later than the third week of March to allow for any revisions that may need to be made and still graduate in May.

Attendance of all dissertation committee members and any optional readers is required for the defense. The chair of the committee presides over the defense. The dissertation chair typically plays the role of advocate for the student. While chairs may participate in questioning the candidate, the chair often abstains. If the chair engages in questioning, then the questions should be clarifying, integrative, and/or forward-looking. The dissertation defense presentation is open to the public so other students, faculty, guests, friends, and family may attend.

The Format of the Dissertation Defense

The defense begins with the student formally presenting the dissertation research, generally in a 20-minute presentation with handouts and/or slides. Following the student's presentation, the dissertation committee members and outside readers conduct several rounds of questions on any aspect of the candidate's study. The examiners engage the student in a rigorous and collegial fashion about the study. The candidate is expected to respond to these questions in a thoughtful and thorough manner. The oral defense provides the candidate with the opportunity to expand upon the salient characteristics of the dissertation. They identify areas for additional exploration, evaluate the methods, discuss their study's strengths and limitations, and place the work in a larger public health context.

Following the examination period, the dissertation committee goes into closed session to discuss the candidate's defense, decide on whether the candidate passed, and identify any required revisions to the dissertation. The oral dissertation defense is generally scheduled for two hours.

The Outcomes of the Dissertation Defense

There are three possible outcomes of the dissertation defense:

- Pass with no revisions
- Conditional pass
- Fail; must re-defend

Committee members will determine whether the dissertation is approved in its current form, approved with modifications, or not approved. All members of the committee must participate in the oral examination.

If applicable, the student and the dissertation committee will identify a timetable and process for revisions as soon as deliberations are complete and the student is informed of the decision.

[The Dissertation Defense Report Form](#) must be signed by all voting members of the committee and the readers. It should be submitted to drphadmin@gwu.edu.

Candidates must be registered throughout the time they are working on the dissertation. This includes the semester(s) in which the student defends, completes revisions, and submits this final dissertation. Candidates cannot be cleared for graduation if they are not currently registered.

Submitting the Dissertation

The doctoral candidate must complete any revisions and receive final approval from the dissertation committee before submitting the dissertation electronically to ProQuest/UMI. The [Electronic Thesis/Dissertation](#) (ETD) replaces the bound dissertation, which is no longer

accepted at GW. At the time of approval, the DrPH program leadership will concurrently issue credit for the student's dissertation research credits to Student Records.

All doctoral candidates are required to submit the final dissertation (with all approved changes) in the semester they apply for graduation. The deadline for submission in ETD for fall, spring, and summer graduations changes with each academic year, typically between two to four weeks prior to degree conferral dates. The submission deadlines can be found on the [ETD website](#). It is highly recommended that students upload their final document **at least 5 business days prior** to the ETD submission deadline.

Doctoral candidates should review formatting guidelines prior to submitting the final dissertation to the dissertation committee. ETD has specific formatting requirements that are the responsibility of the doctoral candidate. The final dissertation cannot be submitted to ETD unless it conforms to these requirements. Any submissions that do not meet these requirements will be returned to the student.

Task	Deadline	Notes
ETD upload (PDF)	One week post-defense	Must follow GW ETD template
ProQuest deposit	Same day as ETD upload	Choose embargo if journal submission pending
Graduation Clearance Form	University deadline	Verify Continuous Enrollment if edits extend beyond term