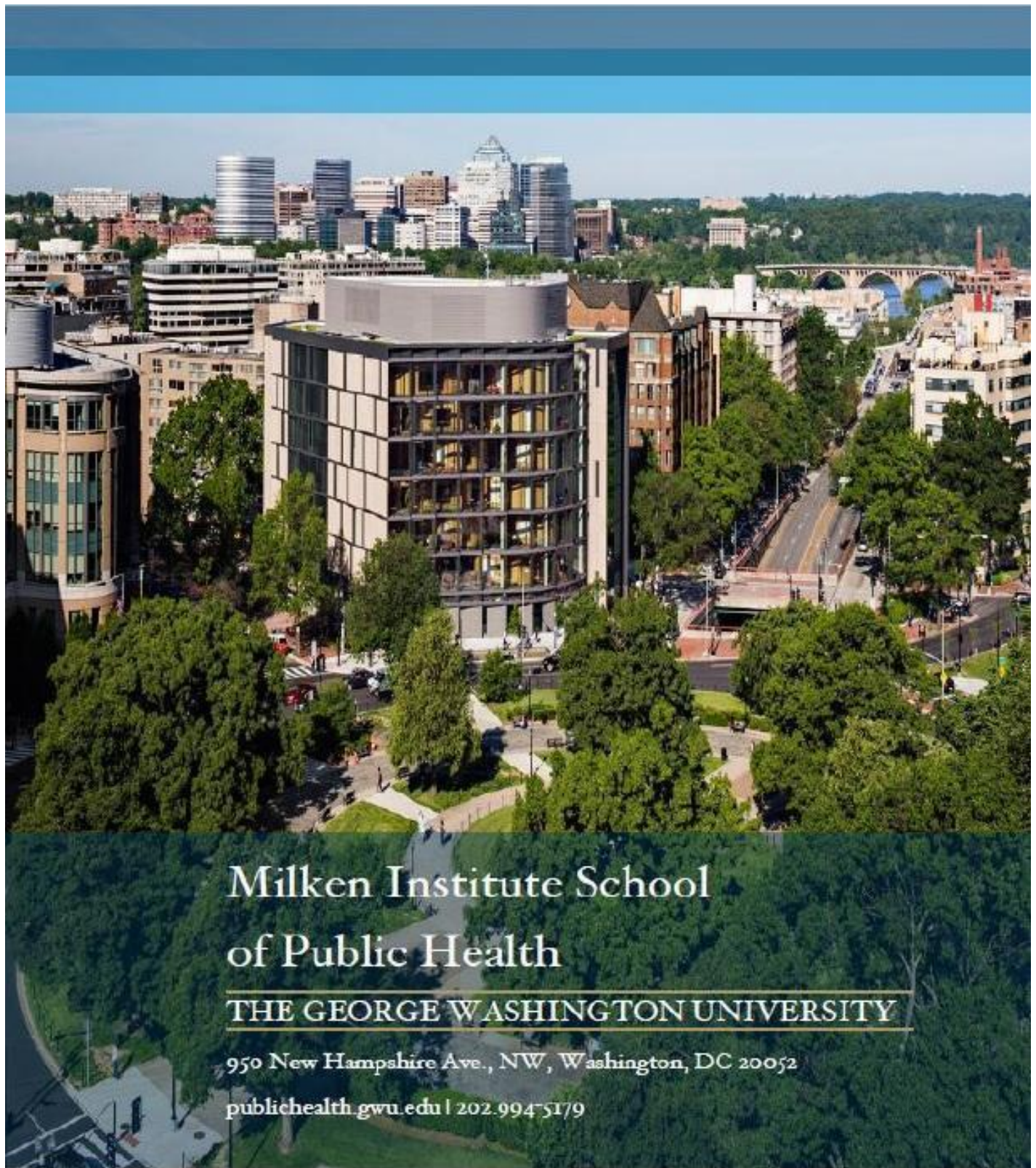




Milken Institute School of Public Health

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](#)

PhD Supplement

The PhD Student Supplement serves as a resource for all Doctor of Philosophy (PhD) students in GWSPH. It includes information on the policies and procedures for navigating through the PhD programs.

The PhD Student Supplement is supplementary to the GWSPH Graduate Student Handbook, as well as individual PhD program guides. This PhD Supplement and the Graduate Student Handbook will be updated as needed and can be found on the [GWSPH Student Resources](#) page.

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

PhD Programs Overview

The PhD degree offered by GWSPH prepares students to assume roles as public health researchers and leaders in academia and other public health settings. The PhD degree is the terminal research degree in the professional discipline of public health. Consistent with this advanced professional orientation, the PhD degree prepares future public health researchers to apply critical thinking and rigorous research methods to a complex, wide range of practical public health problems.

The PhD degree is designed to train future researchers and scholars in the generation of knowledge in the applied, interdisciplinary field of public health. Current events consistently illustrate the need for public health researchers who can conduct research to improve U.S. and global public health. The PhD degree is designed to prepare professionals with the necessary skills to effectively address future research needs.

GWSPH currently offers 7 PhD programs in the following public health disciplines:

Program Name	Department	Program Director(s)
Environmental Health	Environmental and Occupational Health 950 New Hampshire Ave NW, 4 th floor	Kate Applebaum , ScD, MSPH Associate Professor kapplebaum@gwu.edu 202.994.8043 Kelvin Fong , DSc, MS Assistant Professor kelvin.fong@gwu.edu

Program Name	Department	Program Director(s)
<u>Epidemiology</u>	<u>Epidemiology</u> 950 New Hampshire Ave NW, 5 th floor	<u>Heather Young</u> , PhD, MPH Professor and Department Vice Chair youngh@gwu.edu 202-994-6518
<u>Exercise Physiology and Applied Nutrition</u>	<u>Exercise and Nutrition Sciences</u> 950 New Hampshire Ave NW, 2 nd floor	<u>Rob van Dam</u> , PhD Professor rvandam@gwu.edu
<u>Global Public Health Science</u>	<u>Global Health</u> 950 New Hampshire Ave NW, 4 th floor	<u>Emily R. Smith</u> Associate Professor and Interim Department Chair 202-994-3589 emilysmith@gwu.edu
<u>Health Data Science</u>	<u>Biostatistics and Bioinformatics</u> 800 22nd St NW, 7 th floor Biostatistics Center 6110 Executive Blvd Rockville, MD 20852	<u>Bioinformatics</u> <u>Keith A. Crandall</u> , PhD, MA Professor 571-553-0107 kcrandall@gwu.edu <u>Biostatistics</u> <u>Guoqing Diao</u> , PhD, MS Professor gdiao@gwu.edu <u>Toshi Hamasaki</u> , PhD, MS Professor thamasaki@gwu.edu
<u>Health Policy</u>	<u>Health Policy and Management</u> 950 New Hampshire Ave NW, 6 th floor	<u>Avi Dor</u> , PhD Professor 202-994-4202 avidor@gwu.edu <u>Leighton Ku</u> , PhD, MPH Professor lku@gwu.edu

Program Name	Department	Program Director(s)
<u>Social and Behavioral Sciences</u>	<u>Prevention and Community Health</u> 950 New Hampshire Ave NW, 3 rd floor	<u>Jeffrey “Bart” Bingenheimer</u> , PhD, MPH Associate Professor 202-994-3610 <u>bartbing@gwu.edu</u>

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

- [School Leadership](#)

PhD Advising

PhD Faculty Advisor

Doctoral study is a multifaceted and complex challenge that begins with thoughtful planning and deliberate execution of a timeline with the guidance of a faculty advisor. The experience culminates with the awarding of the PhD degree to candidates who successfully complete the program requirements. Progression through the PhD degree requires dedication, commitment, and persistence.

PhD students are assigned to a faculty advisor (advisor) following admission. Advisors guide the student in the selection of their coursework plan, research opportunities, professional and leadership development, dissertation research topics, and the selection of dissertation research committee members, among other topics. In addition to routine academic and research advising (with a minimum of one meeting per semester depending on stage in the PhD program), the advisor will meet with the student to set annual objectives, as well as a timeline for program completion, typically in the fall. Based on this meeting, the advisor will provide the PhD program director with an update on the student’s progress and goals for purposes of the annual review, including progress on objectives and timeline.

Students may change advisors during the program, but the advisor should be affiliated with the students’ PhD department. The advisor typically becomes the dissertation research committee chair or a member of the committee, but it is not required.

Advising roles include:

- Deciding on a timeline for the program, setting clear annual objectives, and guiding the student toward meeting those objectives.
- Guiding the student in the development of a program of study, including the selection of elective courses and professional research development work that enhances the dissertation research experience during the candidacy phase. The program of study is based upon the student’s entry knowledge, skills, and experiences, their career

objectives, and the expectations of the applicable field for scholarly professionals. Any variation from the program of study outlined in the program guide requires the approval of the program director.

- Mentoring the student in their development as a scholar and professional, including addressing interpersonal skills as necessary.
- Guiding the student in later semesters to consider the focus of the dissertation research, exploring various potential topics and questions, and weighing the feasibility, advantages, and disadvantages of each.
- Guiding the student's preparation for the comprehensive examination.
- Serving as a resource as the student selects a dissertation research committee chair and committee members.

Annual Review

An annual review is conducted at the beginning of every fall semester for doctoral students who have completed at least one year of their program. On the [Doctoral Annual Review Form](#), students indicate the progress they have made in the previous academic year and set objectives and timelines for the next year. Additionally, the student's advisor reviews the student's progress and determines whether acceptable progress has been made. Finally, the program director reviews and signs the form. The form is submitted to the Office of PhD/MS Programs at officephdms@gwu.edu. Students can also choose to include the optional [PhD Advising Worksheet](#) as part of their annual review process with their advisors.

Timeline for Completion

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

- [Degree Completion](#)
- [Continuous Enrollment Status](#)
- [Continuous Enrollment and Continuing Research](#)
- [Academic Standing](#)
- [Leave of Absence](#)

Typically, students complete most coursework over a two-year period. Most students take the comprehensive exam in the summer of the second year of the program and defend their dissertation proposal in their third year. A student who transfers into the PhD program with credits may be on a shorter timeline. While PhD programs allow for seven years, students are encouraged to maintain a schedule that will enable them to complete the program in less than five years. Progress towards completion will be monitored and an annual review will take place each year in order to ensure timely progress is being made against objectives set annually by the student and advisor. A graduate student who fails to make acceptable progress toward the PhD degree may be placed on probation, suspended, or removed from the program. For

students in the dissertation phase of the program (e.g., writing their dissertation proposal, conducting dissertation research), progress will be assessed by their committee chair and advisor annually. Students should consult their program guide and advisor for developing a timeline. The timeline will vary by student depending on the background of the student and goals within the program.

PhD Phases

The PhD degree is divided into two phases: pre-candidacy and candidacy. During pre-candidacy, a student completes the required didactic courses for the degree and then takes the comprehensive examination. Upon satisfactory completion of the degree course requirements, including successfully completing the comprehensive exam, the student moves to the candidacy phase.

PhD students are expected to pursue opportunities to contribute knowledge to their field of study through peer-reviewed publications. PhD students routinely collaborate with faculty as co-authors on publications and also sometimes use class assignments to conduct research and analysis for a publishable research report. These opportunities are available throughout all phases of a student's doctoral experience.

Pre-Candidacy Phase

Program Planning: The Program of Study



As a first step, the student should plan carefully with their advisor and program director. The student and the advisor will discuss the student's interests, goals, and experiences and prepare a program of study. A timeline for completion of coursework will also be discussed and agreed upon.

There are three categories of doctoral, didactic courses associated with the pre-candidacy phase:

- Required core courses and research methods
- Required department and specialization specific courses
- Elective courses

Students should review their program guide for additional details on specific course requirements and electives.

Coursework



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

- [Adding, Dropping, and Withdrawing from Courses](#)
- [Enrolling at Another School or Institution](#)
- [Waiving and Replacing Required Credits](#)
- [Exceptions](#)

Students are ready to register for classes once a program of study has been developed in consultation with the program guide and advisor. Students should review their program of study each semester with their advisor for accuracy and relevance. Any changes to the program of study must be approved by the advisor and/or program director.

All PhD students take courses in six core disciplines. Students should consult with their program guide for specifics. Most PhD students register for PUBH 8001 PhD Seminar: Cross-Cutting Concepts in Public Health and PUBH 8475 Ethics in Domestic and International Research in their first semester. Students with prior training should consult with their program director or advisor on waiving and replacing courses.

Core Discipline	Course
Current Topics and Debates in Public Health	PUBH 8001 PhD Seminar: Cross-Cutting Concepts in Public Health
Responsible Conduct of Research and Ethics	PUBH 8475 Ethics in Domestic and International Research ¹⁴
Statistical Methods	PUBH 8418 Applied Statistical Analysis or PUBH 6862 Applied Linear Regression Analysis for Public Health

¹⁴ PUBH 6421 Responsible Conduct of Research may be accepted with program director approval

Core Discipline	Course
Design of Health Studies	PUBH 8416 Study Design and Evaluation Methods Or PUBH 6495 Field Trial Methods and Application or PUBH 6247 Design of Health Studies
Grant and Proposal Writing	PUBH 8435 PhD Dissertation Proposal Development
Dissertation Research	PUBH 8999 Dissertation Research

Comprehensive Examination



The comprehensive exam assesses the broader knowledge of general public health concepts and the ability to approach a research topic relevant to the student's specialty area. The exam challenges students to synthesize concepts, research, and practice in the student's specialty area. Students take the comprehensive exam once core and specialty field required courses are completed, as determined by the program guide. The exact date of the comprehensive exam is determined in consultation with the program director. Students should request accommodations associated with the comprehensive exam from the [Disability Support Services](#) (DSS). Accommodations must be requested in advance of the comprehensive exam and must be accompanied by documentation from DSS.

Once students pass the comprehensive exam, they are officially admitted into the candidacy phase. Students who fail to complete or pass the comprehensive exam will be offered the opportunity to retake the exam in accordance with their PhD program policies. The second exam must be taken within 12 months of taking the initial exam, as determined by each department. Failure to complete or pass the comprehensive exam during the retake will be grounds for termination from the PhD program. Students should submit the [PhD Comprehensive Exam Pass Form](#) to officephdms@gwu.edu once they have received the results of their comprehensive exam.

Candidacy Phase

It is the expectation that doctoral candidates will work independently, under the guidance of their dissertation research committee, to prepare an oral and written dissertation. The objective of the dissertation is to demonstrate that the candidate has synthesized the knowledge gained during the pre-candidacy phase and is able to apply this knowledge to the

resolution of a concrete and substantial public health research problem. The dissertation also demonstrates that the candidate has mastered research methods to successfully conduct scientific research.

The dissertation should uniquely contribute to the student's specialty area. Dissertation research will:

- Use appropriate and scientifically rigorous methods
- Propose new research and result in new knowledge acquisition
- Advance public health knowledge and/or contribute to public health policy and practice either domestically or internationally

The research should advance existing knowledge and, in some cases, the results may lead to identification or assessment of feasible solutions or recommendations to the selected public health problem, appropriate to the context in which they occur. Candidates are expected to demonstrate competencies in structured scientific inquiry, and research design and analysis, including qualitative and/or quantitative methods.

Dissertation Proposal



Soon after passing the comprehensive exam (if not before) all doctoral candidates will identify a dissertation topic and write a proposal outlining the research plan. In conjunction with writing their dissertation proposal, they will select a chair for their dissertation research committee and select the members of their research committee. The committee consists of at least three but no more than five members. All members of the dissertation research committee must have completed doctoral level training (e.g., PhD, DrPH, ScD, MD, etc.), although exceptions to this rule can be made on a case-by-case basis by the program director. The committee chair must be a GWSPH faculty member and must be a full-time member of the student's home department. The committee chair serves in the role of advocate for the candidate during the proposal and dissertation defense.

Students must identify and confirm their dissertation research committee members and submit the [Dissertation Research Committee Approval Form](#) to officephdms@gwu.edu. If a member of the proposed dissertation research committee is not a full-time GWSPH faculty member, students must provide their institutional affiliation, highest academic degree, and CV.

Students are required to have a potential committee chair identified, as well as a dissertation topic, and a general research approach, prior to enrolling in PUBH 8435 PhD Dissertation Proposal Development (2 credits). The proposal should provide a clear, concise, and thorough

plan of the proposed research. If a student is not ready to defend the proposal immediately following PUBH 8435, they may enroll in PUBH 8999 Dissertation Research.

The format of the dissertation proposal should include a proposal for **at least three manuscripts** that are of publishable quality as agreed upon by all members of the student's committee. In some PhD programs, a traditional dissertation format is accepted as an alternative to the three papers.

The dissertation proposal should include, at minimum, the following content:

- Statement of the problem – describes the nature and history of the problem or issue being studied
- Specific aims
- A literature review/background – details prior research in this area and provides a historical and conceptual framework
- Research methods – clear, concise, and specific details explaining research questions and hypotheses, methods and designs, human subjects review, and limitations
- A statement of the expected contributions and a discussion of limitations of the research
- An anticipated timetable that accounts for all phases of the dissertation research, a discussion of potential challenges to meeting timetable and ways to address the challenges

The format of the dissertation proposal defense is approximately two hours in length, including a presentation and Q&A. The student's dissertation research committee attends the proposal defense. Other students, faculty, and/or family and friends can attend the proposal defense, though this depends on the custom of the PhD program. There will be an oral proposal presentation. This will be followed by an open Q&A and then a private examination from the student's dissertation research committee. Then the student's dissertation research committee deliberates without the student present. The decisions are as follows:

- Accept without modifications
- Accept with modifications
- Reject, re-defense required

Students should submit the [Dissertation Proposal Defense Request Form](#) when they are ready to defend their proposal. Upon completion of the proposal defense, students should submit the [Dissertation Proposal Defense Report Form](#).

Students should review their program guide for additional details and guidance.

Dissertation Research



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

- [Half-Time and Full-Time Status](#)
- [International Student Status](#)
- [Continuous Enrollment and Continuing Research](#)

With their advisor's approval and after successfully passing the comprehensive exam, PhD students may enroll in PUBH 8999 each semester when they begin working on their dissertation proposal. Students who are conducting dissertation research may also enroll in PUBH 8999. Candidates should consult their program guides for the required number of dissertation research credits which are typically taken over the course of two to three years. There are sections for PUBH 8999 for each of the PhD programs. Once all coursework and dissertation research credit requirements are met, students should register for Continuing Research (PUBH 0940) each fall and spring semester until they complete and defend their dissertation. Note that students must be enrolled in at least one credit each semester, with the exception of the last semester where Continuous Enrollment (UNIV 0982) **may** be appropriate (see below for more details).

Students who are not eligible to enroll in PUBH 8999 must register for other course offerings or enroll in one credit of Continuing Research (PUBH 0940). Students must be registered for a course in the summer in order to defend their dissertation or dissertation proposal. All [forms](#) and detailed descriptions can be found online.

- [Dissertation Research](#): PhD candidates who are writing their dissertation proposal may register for PUBH 8999 Dissertation Research. Generally, students may register for one or more dissertation research credits per semester when they have entered candidacy. Students should consult their PhD program guide for program-specific details. **To ensure enrollment for the duration of the program, students may wish to register for at least one dissertation research credit per semester and then register for all remaining dissertation research credits in their last semester.**
- [Continuing Research \(PUBH 0940\)](#): PhD students who have met the coursework requirements, but have not yet successfully defended their dissertation, must register for one credit of Continuing Research (PUBH 0940), which requires a tuition payment of one full credit hour. Enrollment is required to maintain active status as a student. PhD students working on their dissertation research who enroll in PUBH 0940 can submit a request for FTC. Credit(s) earned from PUBH 0940 do not count towards the dissertation research credit requirement or any other curricular requirements for completion of the PhD degree.

- **Continuous Enrollment:** PhD students who have successfully defended their dissertation may register for UNIV 0982 Continuous Enrollment (0 credit) with approval from their PhD program director. Continuous Enrollment can only be used by students in their last semester, as they complete their final dissertation defense submission steps and prepare to graduate. UNIV 0982 Continuous Enrollment cannot be used to satisfy the requirements for FTC. Students should consult their PhD program guide for program-specific details.

The table below summarizes the courses required for each dissertation research phase.

Course	Credits per semester	Count towards degree (Yes/No)	Can be used for FTC (Yes/No)	Reason to Enroll
PUBH 8999 Dissertation Research	1-3	Yes	Yes	Used for dissertation research. Maximum credits per semester are not limited to 3
PUBH 0940 Continuing Research	1	No	Yes	Used to maintain student status once all other credit requirements are met
UNIV 0982 Continuous Enrollment	0	No	No	Used to complete final submission and graduation steps if a student needs more time after a successful dissertation defense

Students should review their program guide for additional details and guidance on the development of written doctoral thesis.

Dissertation Defense



The dissertation defense is scheduled once the dissertation write-up is completed and has followed the [formatting requirements](#) for the final document. The student must provide a final full copy of the dissertation document to all dissertation research committee members at least four weeks prior to the scheduled dissertation oral defense.

For the dissertation defense, the dissertation research committee is made up of at least five members. At least three committee members follow the rules for the composition of the

proposal defense. The other two members may be external readers. Like full committee members, external readers attend the defense and can vote on whether the student passes the dissertation. The dissertation defense is approximately two to three hours in length. The student's dissertation research committee, readers, and other students, faculty, and/or family and friends can attend the defense. During this time, there will be a dissertation presentation with the full audience present. This will be followed by an open Q&A and then a private examination by the student's dissertation research committee and readers. The student's dissertation research committee deliberates without the student present. The committee chair may participate in questioning the candidate, but it is often the case that the committee chair abstains from the rounds of questioning. The decisions are as follows:

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

Disposition of the Dissertation

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 [Electronic Thesis/Dissertation](#) (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 five 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.

PhD Degree Certification and Graduation



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

- [Prepare to Graduate](#)
- [Become an Alum](#)

PhD Frequently Asked Questions

The PhD program has prepared responses to [frequently asked questions](#) (FAQ).

PhD Academic Forms

Academic forms for PhD students are included on the following pages.