

Program Director

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Mission

The PhD in Health Policy is focused on understanding and critically assessing the political, legal, economic, and social aspects of health policy and management and learning to apply innovative research tools to analyze processes and outcomes in the health care delivery and public health settings to inform policy decision-making. Special emphasis is placed on US health policies, systems, and population health.

Goals

Knowledge acquired in this PhD program will prepare candidates for work in academic, non-academic, and public research institutions, as well as in decision-making capacities in the field.

The objectives of this specialty field are to:

- Equip candidates with the research and analytic methods they need to analyze and evaluate the social, economic, legal and health aspects of public and private policies.
- Provide advanced training in health policy analysis using cutting edge quantitative and qualitative methods
- Gain familiarity on existing data sources and data collection methods pertaining to health programs and behaviors.
- Synthesize information on population health, legislative processes, finance and insurance schemes to motivate policy analysis

Program Requirements

PhD students are required to pass a written comprehensive examination, and complete a dissertation. For the comprehensive examination student must demonstrate advanced knowledge of health policy and public health research methods. The written examination is taken at completion of all core courses. Prior to the dissertation, students must initially submit a written proposal and pass an oral presentation. In the completed dissertation, the student must design and execute an original research study that contributes new knowledge to the field and demonstrates proficiency in using advanced analytic methods. Dissertation progress will be monitored by the program directors while extensions beyond the 4th year are likely, students must complete their dissertations by the 7th year. Failure to meet this timeline may result in termination, unless extension granted by the program directors. Although the program is designed for full-time study, adjustments can be made for part-time students.

Admissions Requirements

The PhD in Health Policy engages in a multidisciplinary approach designed to develop a range of competencies needed to undertake sophisticated research and analysis in the health policy field. The program is especially suited for individuals who completed or are near completion of a Master's degree in public health, public policy, economics, demography, or allied fields from an accredited institution. Strong applicants who completed a bachelor's degree in such fields will also be considered. Qualified applicants with degrees from institutions in foreign countries are also eligible for admission. While not strictly required, it is highly recommended that applicants submit scores from the Graduate Record Exam (GRE) taken within five years up to the date of application. Admission to this program is highly selective and successful applicants will need to have strong academic credentials. Students must maintain a GPA of 3.0 to remain in the program.

Competencies

Students take courses in multiple subjects designed to develop broad analytical and assessment skills in multiple subjects, as applied to health policy, and complete a dissertation analyzing a specific question or questions. Upon completion of the program, students will demonstrate ability in the core competencies listed at the end of this document. Students can learn from and work with multi-disciplinary faculty in the Department of Health Policy and Management, as well as other faculty in the school and university. Upon completion of the program students will demonstrate ability in the core competencies listed at the end of this document.

Milken Institute School of Public Health

THE GEORGE WASHINGTON UNIVERSITY

Doctor of Health Policy (PhD)
Program of Study
2026-2027

Course Distribution Summary

Total Credits = Minimum 48 Credits

Core Courses = 37 Credits

- Public Health Core Courses = 10 Credits
- Health Policy Core Courses = 19 Credits
- Research = 8 Credits

Approved Elective Courses = 11 Credits

- Health Policy
- Global Health
- Epidemiology and Biostatistics
- Methods for Social Sciences
- Microeconomics
- Behavioral Health and Prevention

CORE COURSES

The matrix below describes core courses, seminars and electives for the PhD program in Health Policy. Two prerequisites (basics of economics and statistics) are assumed prior to admission. Students without prior public health training will be required to take the zero-credit Pathways to Public Health online module before the end of their first two years. This program requires a minimum of 48 (post Master's Degree) credit hours. *If students have taken courses similar to the core courses before, other courses may be substituted with permission of course faculty and program advisors.* Students must maintain a GPA of 3.0 to remain in the program. Full time students will be expected to complete most course work in the first two years, but part-time students may take longer. Students admitted to the program will be expected to complete all requirements (including successful completion of the dissertation) within seven years of beginning.

Required School Core Curriculum (10 Credits)

Required Public Health Fundamental Courses		Credits	Semester Offered	Description
PUBH 6080*	Pathways to Public Health	0	All	Online short course introducing key concepts and terms for public health study.
PUBH 8001	PhD Seminar: Cross Cutting Concepts in Public Health	1	Fall	This course exposes PhD students to current issues and debates in the public health field, as well as to interdisciplinary perspectives within public health that inform the understanding of these issues.
PUBH 8418	Applied Statistical Analysis (Generally taken first semester in program)	3	Fall	This doctoral course addresses how to use quantitative and statistical methods of data analysis for public health and health policy research. Students will design, implement and interpret analyses of public data bases. Students will complete an original statistical analysis. Prerequisite: PUBH 6002 or a one semester statistics course
PUBH 8416	Study Design and Evaluation Methods	3	Spring	This course will expose doctoral students to advanced methods in evaluation and study design. We will focus on analyzing different kinds of study designs, in terms of their feasibility, inferences that can be drawn, and the pros and cons of alternative designs. Prerequisite: PUBH 8418 or similar course.

PUBH 8475	Ethics in Domestic and International Research	1	Fall	This course will raise awareness about responsible conduct of research including strategies for preventing irresponsible research practices inclusive of unacceptable research practices as well as research misconduct. The course meets requirement for individuals engaged in NIH and NSF funded research and focuses on a conceptual understanding of responsible conduct of research as key to human and societal development.
PUBH 8435	PhD Dissertation Proposal	2	Fall, Spring	This course will advise and assist doctoral students in developing and defending their Dissertation Proposal. Drafts of the sections of the proposal will be submitted and reviewed in class and in detail by the instructor. Students should have selected a dissertation committee chair at the beginning of the course and begin meetings. Prerequisites: Pass comprehensive exam.
Required Health Policy Core Curriculum (19 Regular Course Credits Plus 8 Dissertation Research Credits)				
Required Health Policy Core Courses		Credits	Semester Offered	Description
PUBH 8620	Foundations of US Health Policy (generally taken in 1 st semester in program)	2	Fall	This course for doctoral students provides a broad orientation to and understanding of the legal basis for the U.S. health systems. It orients them to some key legal principles, court cases and statutes, and traditional legal interpretation. (Strongly suggest that students have prior experience with health policy analysis, such as in PUBH 6325 (Federal Policymaking and Advocacy) or PUBH 6356 (State Health Policy)).
PUBH 6340	Health Economics and Finance	3	Summer, Fall, Spring	Covers economic principles as they apply to health services financing and public health policy: provider payment policy and cost containment, supply of health providers and services, individual demand for health care services, and cost-benefit analyses and economic incentives to promote public health goals. Prerequisite: PUBH 6352 (Basics of Economics) or equivalent
PUBH 8405	Advanced Health Economics Research	3	Fall	Examines core ideas the stem from economic theory, such as risk, product differentiation, market failure and moral hazard. Develops an understanding of how health economics research is conducted, and how it is applied to public policy.
PUBH 8622	Health Care Payments and Delivery Models	3	Spring	Covers the principal models of payment for hospital and physician services and for drugs and devices. Through an interactive process, students learn how to distinguish models and derive predictions about their impact on the use, cost, price, and quality of health care services and products. Assess the properties of these models in terms of their efficiency and impact on equity and convey to policy and analytical audiences. Prerequisite: PUBH 8405

PUBH 8722	Public Health Policy Analysis	3	Summer	Develops skills for analysis of health policies and programs and to communicate analytic information to decision makers and the public using case-based discussions and assignments to apply policy analysis to key issues in health policy.
PUBH 8417	Qualitative Research Methods & Analysis (May substitute PPPA 8023, Mixed Methods Research)	3	Spring	Techniques for designing and conducting qualitative research and for analyzing and reporting qualitative data relevant to program development and implementation, community assessment, and policy analysis.
PPPA 8022	Econometrics for Policy Research II (suitable alternative advanced courses may be substituted, such as ECON 8379, PUBH 8419, PSC 8121 or other course with permission of program director and instructors)	at least 2	Spring	Advanced multivariate data analyses of complex datasets and programs, including advanced cross-sectional techniques, time-series analysis, and the use of panel data. Evaluation of results, and dissemination of findings to relevant stakeholders. Prerequisites: PUBH 8418
PUBH 8999	Health Policy and Management PhD Dissertation Research	At least 8 in total	Summer, Fall, Spring	Independent study courses taken as the student conducts dissertation research. Students must be enrolled for at least 1 credit per semester to stay enrolled at GW. Prerequisites: PUBH 8435; May be taken in increments of 1 to at least 8 credits. Must be approved by program directors and dissertation chair (if known)

ELECTIVE COURSES

11 Credits Minimum (Total program cr = 48)

All courses listed below require program advisor approval

Below is a list of recommended elective courses for the PhD program in health policy and management. In addition to choosing electives from the list, students may also choose other doctoral level courses offered at the university, with the permission of their program advisor. Some of these courses may require prerequisites or approval of the instructor, especially courses taken outside of the School of Public Health.

General Public Health Course		Credits	Semester Offered
PUBH 8401	Foundations of Public Health Leadership and Practice	3	Fall
Health Policy Courses:		Credits	Semester Offered
PUBH 6325	Federal Policymaking and Policy Advocacy	2	Fall, Spring
PUBH 6335	Public Health and Law	3	Fall, Spring
PUBH 6356	State Health Policy	2	Fall
PUBH 6361	Health Workforce Policy	2	Varies
PUBH 6370	Medicare/Medicaid Law and Policy	2	Spring
PUBH 6374	Pharmaceutical Policy	2	Fall
PUBH 6376	Primary Health Care Policy	2	Varies
PUBH 6399	Benefit Cost Analysis in Health Care	2	Spring
PUBH 6717	Predictive Analytics (online)	3	Fall
Global Health Courses:		Credits	Semester Offered
PUBH 6441	Global Health Organizations and Regulations	3	Fall
PUBH 6442	Comparative Global Health Systems	2	Fall
PUBH 6445	Quantitative Methods for Impact Evaluation	2	Fall
Epidemiology & Biostatistics Courses:		Credits	Semester Offered

PUBH 6244	Cancer Epidemiology	2	Spring
PUBH 6245	Infectious Diseases Epidemiology	2	Spring
PUBH 6262	Geographic Information Systems	2	Summer, Fall, Spring
PUBH 8366	Biostatistical Methods	3	Fall
PUBH 8365	Design of Medical Studies	3	Spring
PUBH 8419	Measurement in Public Health and Health Services Research	3	Spring
PUBH 8875	Linear Models in Biostatistics	3	Spring
Public Policy and Public Administration Courses:		Credits	Semester Offered
PPPA 6005	Public Budgeting, Revenue and Expenditure Analysis	3	Summer, Fall, Spring
PPPA 6015	Benefit-Cost Analysis	3	Fall, Spring
PPPA 8100	Literature of Public Administration	3	Varies
PPPA 8197	US Social Policy	3	Fall
Methods for Econometrics and Social Sciences Courses:		Credits	Semester Offered
PUBH 8472	Survey Research Methods	3	Fall
PSC 8132	Network Analysis	3	Varies
PUBH 8526	Structural Equation Modeling	3	Spring
PPPA 8023	Mixed Methods in Research Design	3	Fall
PPPA 8022	Econometrics for Policy Research	3	Fall, Spring
PUBH 6886	Statistical and Machine Learning for Public Health Research	3	Spring
Microeconomics Courses:		Credits	Semester Offered
ECON 8363	Public Finance I	3	Varies
ECON 8341	Labor Economics I	3	Spring
ECON 8345	Industrial Organization I	3	Varies
Behavioral Health and Prevention Courses:		Credits	Semester Offered
PUBH 6501	Evaluation of Health Promotion/Disease Prevention Programs	3	Fall, Spring
PUBH 6399	Population Health & Public Health	2	Varies
PUBH 8434	Behavioral Medicine and Public Health	3	Spring

Course Descriptions and Registration information can be found on the website: <http://publichealth.gwu.edu/academics/>

* Pathways to Public Health course (PUBH 6080). As an accredited School of Public Health, curriculum in all graduate academic programs must provide a foundation in public health. If a student already holds a degree from a CEPH-accredited program or school of public health, this course will be waived. Otherwise, this zero-credit, free, online course should be completed within one year of matriculation.

Broad Competencies and Goals

Upon completion of the PhD in Health Policy, students will demonstrate functional competence to:

- Critically assess pertinent policy, legal, regulatory, economic, and social frameworks of U.S. health and public health policy and reforms, and apply that understanding to analyze current issues.
- Apply theories and conceptual models to help develop testable hypotheses in health policy research, select appropriate research designs and methods, and apply pertinent quantitative and qualitative methods to conduct health policy research, using responsible research methods.
- Analyze health system features, such as payment and delivery system characteristics, and assess their relationship with and effects on health outcomes, such as utilization, costs, behaviors and clinical outcomes.
- Identify and select data sets related to health policy, outcomes, management and markets and utilize them to assess public policies.
- Produce descriptive and analytical written papers and oral presentations that apply core elements of policy analysis and research to key issues in health policy, including health services and public health policy.

PhD Graduation Requirements

All students accepted to this PhD program must follow the policies and regulations outlined in the [GW Bulletin](#) and the [GWSPH Student Handbook](#). This includes, but is not limited to:

- Minimum Grade Point Average (GPA)
- Minimum Course Grades
- Continuous Enrollment
- Maximum Time to Degree
- Required Minimum Degree Credits
- Transfer Credit Policy
- CITI Training
- Integrity Quiz and Plagiarism
- Professional Enhancement (PE) Hours
- PUBH 6080 Pathways to Public Health
- Graduate Teaching Assistantship Program
- Comprehensive Examination
- Culminating Experience (Dissertation)

PhD Advising Notes

Graduation

While degrees are awarded at the end of each semester, formal commencement ceremonies occur only in May, including the doctoral hooding ceremony. Students are eligible to participate in graduation activities only after they have completed all degree requirements and have no financial obligations to the University. Students may include PhD designation after their name upon completion of all degree requirements.

Comprehensive Examination

Once the course of study is completed, students are required to pass the comprehensive exam to be officially admitted to the candidacy phase.

Dissertation

Students are required to enroll in [PUBH 8435](#) Dissertation Proposal Development plus 8 credits in dissertation research. Once the proposal has been successfully defended and the dissertation research credit requirement has been met, the oral defense may be scheduled.