

BEFORE YOU APPLY – FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

for the Milken Institute School of Public Health (SPH) DrPH in Health Behavior Program

Below are some questions prospective students may have about the application process of the DrPH program in Health Behavior. We recommend that you review this document, our website, and faculty webpages before applying to the program. Please reach out to the program director at drphhb_director@email.gwu.edu should you have additional questions. You may also schedule a phone meeting with the program director [here](#). Please note that all applications get full consideration, even in the absence of advanced discussions with faculty members and the program director. We look forward to receiving your application.

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Application Process

1. ***How do I apply to the program?***

All students must apply online through the SOPHAS portal (GW institution code is 5268). The program accepts students every other year on even years only. Applications will be accepted beginning August and are due no later than December 1. Applications will be reviewed by the program director and admissions committee after the December 1st deadline.

2. ***What are the requirements to apply?***

The program requirements for the DrPH in Health Behavior are:

- a. Applicants must have a Master's degree. A MPH from an accredited Council of Education for Public Health (CEPH) is strongly preferred but not required.
 - b. 3 letters of recommendation from an academic professor or work supervisor.
 - c. GRE scores taken with 5 years of program application date. GW institution code is 5268.
 - d. Official transcripts from all academic institutions.
3. ***I do not hold an MPH degree, can I still apply?***
- An MPH from an accredited CEPH school is strongly preferred for the program but is not required. Applicants who do not have a MPH may be required to take additional coursework at the graduate level that may not apply toward the minimum 48 credits required for the DrPH.

You are encouraged in your application materials to discuss how relevant experiences in health behavior have provided you with a sufficient foundation to pursue doctoral education in these areas. You also are encouraged to discuss why you may have shifted your interests to health behavior to help the admissions committee evaluate your preparation and focus related to a doctoral degree in your chosen area.

4. ***I do not hold an MPH degree, is this program a good fit for me?***

That is a difficult question for us to answer without your full application packet in front of us including your personal statement, academic background and letters of recommendation. While an MPH would indicate a prospective student has the necessary understanding, background, interests and foundation to pursue doctoral training in health behavior, it is not required. Also see questions 1, 3, and 5 for program related requirements in the Program Information section.

If your Master's degree is in a related or complementary field, we would encourage you to describe your related experiences as well as to preempt any questions a committee member might have relative to your application that a DrPH in Health Behavior is the

appropriate degree to help you reach your career goals. This could be in the selection of your letter writers, your personal statement, and potentially in an interview should you be selected.

If you are deciding between the PhD and the DrPH, take a look at the program guides, as well as [question 1 below](#) and this might help you further understand the distinctions between the programs and which might be the best fit for your career goals.

5. *What should I mention in my personal statement?*

It is helpful for you to show that you have done your due diligence about the program and why it is a good match for you. You also are encouraged to specify which skills and experiences you could bring to a doctoral cohort. You might consider mentioning two or three faculty members whose content area is a good fit for yours and explaining why.

6. *How Should I structure my personal statement?*

A personal statement should be concise, well-written and organized (and should be approximately 1-2 pages single-spaced). It is your opportunity to set yourself apart from other applicants. Your statement should engage the reader with a compelling story (relevant to your program), transformative public health experience, or aspiration that sets the theme for the rest of the statement. Before you write your statement, review and research the program and department so that you can tailor your statement accordingly.

Your personal statement should contain an introduction, current interests, relevant public health practice experience, public health leadership qualities, future career goals and aspirations, and a statement about why you believe there is a mutual fit (i.e., how your experiences and background would contribute to a doctoral cohort, as well as why GW is a good match for you). You also are encouraged to identify at least 2 or 3 faculty members whose area of expertise align and describe how mentorship from those individuals would contribute to your personal and professional goals. Be sure to conclude your statement by connecting back to the theme (and check for typos, grammatical errors and misspellings).

7. *What if my public health practice and work experiences have been non-traditional or of a shorter duration?*

We do not require a specific length of time that an applicant has been working in the public health field following a Master's degree. We know that many of our applicants have work experiences that could be considered non-traditional such as starting a non-profit organization. We encourage applicants to think about (and include in their personal statements) the public health practice experiences that they believe have prepared them for a DrPH program and how the program can provide them with skills, mentoring, and information to further their professional careers as leaders in public health practice.

8. *Whom should I ask for my personal recommendations?*

It is recommended that at least one of your recommendations come from an academic faculty member from the institution which granted your master's degree. The remaining recommendations can come from work or other professional supervisors who can speak to your work experience, and skills that have prepared you for doctoral study. For applicants who have been out of school for several years, it may be beneficial to submit four recommendations with three recommendations coming from work to highlight your strong public health experience and one coming from an academic reference.

9. ***What are the average GRE scores for the program?***

Students in recent doctoral cohorts averaged 64th percentile in quantitative and 88th percentile in verbal. Please note while GRE scores are important, applications are reviewed as a whole package.

10. ***When does the application portal open?***

The SOPHAS application will open in the beginning of August in the year prior to program matriculation. For example, if you are applying in Fall 2018, the application will be available August 2017.

11. ***When does the application portal close?***

The SOPHAS application will close December 1 in the year prior to program matriculation. For example, if you are applying in Fall 2018, the application will close December 1, 2017. Please make sure to have all requirements uploaded to SOPHAS by December 1st. The decision committee will not review incomplete applications.

12. ***Does the program offer funding to students?***

The George Washington University does offer some tuition assistance and stipends to our doctoral students. However, these funding packages are not guaranteed and are often competitive. The University does offer grants and internships for which some of our students apply. This information can be found on the [Career Services Website](#). Some students work as Teaching/Research Assistants in the department and the program also sends out newsletters that often contain information about scholarships and funding opportunities for our students.

13. ***Where can I find information about faculty interests and research?***

You can visit the faculty research tab on our website or go to [PCH faculty profile page](#) to learn more about the PCH faculty interest and current research projects.

14. ***Am I required to talk with a faculty members and/or the program director before I apply?***

As you can imagine with a competitive program like ours, we receive many inquiries. Unfortunately, faculty cannot make time to talk with everyone at this stage of the application process. That is why we have put together this list of FAQs which cover most of the questions we have heard from applicants like you. Should you have

additional questions after reviewing these FAQs, the Program Director would be happy to talk with you. [Click here to schedule an appointment.](#)

Given the focus of the DrPH program of training leaders in public health, we want to ensure that you have guidance and input from a number of faculty in the program. Students will be assigned a content area mentor *after* they are admitted and you are not required to secure that one-to-one match prior to the admissions process. It is important for us to know that there are good mentorship matches for you. Therefore, you are encouraged to look at the [PCH faculty profile page](#) to see which faculty might be a good mentor match for you and mention that in your personal statement (please see [question 5](#) above).

If you do decide to apply, and you were among the top candidates in our pool, we would invite you to do several phone, Skype, or in person interviews where you would have an opportunity to get all of your questions answered.

Interview Process

1. ***Do I have to do an interview to be considered for the program?***
All selected applications for the DrPH in Health Behavior are required to take part in an interview. The interview will be an in-person or videoconference interview.
2. ***When will I find out if I have been selected for an interview?***
Those applicants selected for an interview will be contacted in late January to early February for an interview.

Program Information

1. ***What is the difference between the DrPH program and the PhD program?***
The Doctor of Public Health program is designed to prepare individuals for leadership positions, and is more practice oriented. The Doctor of Philosophy program prepares students for careers as advanced researchers and academicians.

The DrPH program in Health Behavior trains public health leaders to apply their research and analytic skills to a range of implementation, evaluation, and advocacy needs of various cultural and socioeconomic groups and communities. The program aims to prepare individuals to assume national and international leadership positions in global health, health behavior, and health policy. Those who are interested in being directors or leaders of a NGO, Non-profit, or government agency are particularly encouraged to apply.

The PhD in Social and Behavioral Sciences prepares professionals to make significant scholarly contributions to the scientific and evidence base of public health. The PhD will train strong theoretical, methodological, and practical scholars, whose contributions could be as practitioners or academics.

2. ***How many students are typically offered admission?***

Class sizes will range from 2-8 per cohort per program.

3. ***Do I have to attend the program full-time?***

For the DrPH program, students are not required to have full-time status. Many of our DrPH students are working while completing the program. Some DrPH students keep their full-time jobs while attending the program and take a smaller course load, e.g., 6 credits/semester. Some students work within the department as research assistants on grant projects or as teaching assistants.

4. ***How do I go about learning more about the faculty?***

We have compiled [a list of faculty interests](#) (and suggest you also look through the departmental website) to see which faculty you feel would be a good mentor for you (see question 5 below). We would encourage you to list 2 or 3 faculty members in your personal statement as we look at that information when we assign content area mentors to each student.

5. ***Do I get assigned a mentor?***

The program director, Melissa A. Napolitano, PhD., provides overall advising for all students. Prior to matriculation, the program director will recommend a content area mentor (CAM) based on areas of interest. The CAM will advise the student on their coursework plan, overall progress, leadership, research, and program evaluation opportunities, generally on research and coursework, and may (or may not) ultimately serve as the dissertation chair. The Dissertation chair will be chosen at the end of the 2nd or beginning of the 3rd year of program.

6. ***How long do I have to complete the program?***

Students must complete the degree in 7 years; many of our students, particularly those who are full time, will complete their degree in 4 or 5 years.