

SOCIAL WORK, MASTER OF (M.S.W.)/PUBLIC HEALTH, MASTER OF (M.P.H.) [DUAL DEGREE]

Advanced study in social work and public health is available through a dual degree program co-sponsored by the School of Social Work and the Department of Family Medicine and Population Health/Division of Epidemiology in the School of Medicine.

The dual degree M.S.W. and M.P.H. program allows students to earn two degrees with a minimum of 84 credits rather than the 105 credits necessary if the two degrees were pursued separately. This efficiency lowers the overall cost of tuition while also reducing time to earning both degrees.

Program goals

The objectives of this dual degree program are to:

- Prepare graduates to work with individuals, families, groups, communities and/or organizations
- Advocate for social, health care and economic justice in a diverse and multicultural society
- Promote physical and mental health across the life course

Potential benefits offered by participation in the dual degree program include student competency in:

- Advocating for policy change to promote social justice and improve the health of vulnerable populations
- Applying a systems-thinking approach to enhance the delivery of health and social services in a community
- Applying theoretical principles to develop community-based interventions targeting health behavior change and designed to reduce risk factors contributing to poor health outcomes
- Assessing the effectiveness of programs to improve societal conditions and health issues
- Applying research methods to advance the science of health equity

The diplomas for this dual degree program are awarded simultaneously, after completion of the requirements for each degree program. Students receive both degrees upon graduation from VCU.

Student learning outcomes

See each degree program page for student learning outcomes.

Other information

Advising

The student is assigned an adviser from each program to develop a plan of study. Advisers coordinate regarding program curriculum as appropriate. Primarily, the coordination occurs to ensure that M.S.W. students complete a social work field placement that aligns with requirements of the M.P.H. program. In addition, advisers coordinate guidance to ensure that the M.P.H. integrated learning experience (capstone project), which frequently is based on work of the social work field placement, meets the requirements of the M.P.H. program. Advisers share curriculum sequencing documents for advising students

in registration for course work to ensure consistency and uniformity in their guidance.

Admission requirements

See the individual program pages for admission deadlines and other requirements.

In addition to the **general admission requirements of the VCU Graduate School**, the School of Social Work has established the following minimum criteria for admission to the 60-credit hour full-time or part-time format:

1. A bachelor's degree from an accredited college or university
2. A cumulative GPA of 3.0 on a 4.0 scale for all undergraduate course work
3. Completion of the following prerequisites: two three-credit courses in the social and behavioral sciences (e.g., psychology, sociology, anthropology, political science, economics), or health sciences, biological sciences or humanities.

Applicants who have not completed all the liberal arts prerequisites may be considered for admission but must have completed the prerequisite courses prior to enrollment and must provide official transcripts to document their completion. Courses may be completed at a community college or four-year institution. In addition to the academic requirements, the applicant must demonstrate commitment to social welfare and social justice. This should be reflected in (1) the professional statement and (2) the applicant's background, social work employment, internships and volunteer work in community agencies serving vulnerable and/or oppressed populations.

Application procedure

Students may apply to both programs simultaneously and must apply to each program separately. Since admitted students begin the program's first year exclusively in the M.S.W. curriculum, a student in the social work master's may also choose to apply to the M.P.H. program while in the first months of the M.S.W. curriculum. Applications to the M.P.H. program are through SOPHAS, which requires a fee; in addition, a supplemental application is required to VCU and also requires a fee. Applications to the M.S.W. program are through VCU's graduate programs portal and require a fee.

Degree requirements

Students are required to complete a minimum of 48 M.S.W. credit hours and a minimum of 36 M.P.H. credit hours for the dual degree program, so that a student can complete both programs with 84 credits rather than 105 credits to complete the programs separately.

In the standalone M.P.H. program, the curriculum includes 25 credit hours of required core courses, nine credit hours of concentration courses (for either the applied public health concentration or the epidemiology concentration), and eleven credits of electives. Six of the 25 required core courses are applied practice and integrative learning courses, including a three-credit hour capstone project that examines a relevant public health topic.

In the dual degree, these courses within the M.S.W. curriculum count toward the M.P.H. degree:

Course	Title	Hours
SLWK 601	Human Behavior in the Social Environment I (satisfies M.P.H. elective)	3

SLWK 606	Policy, Community and Organizational Practice II (satisfies M.P.H. elective)	3
SLWK 793	Concentration Field Instruction I (satisfies M.P.H. applied practical experience/EPID 693)	3

The standalone M.S.W. program includes 30 credits of generalist course work, 24 credits of concentration courses and six credits of electives.

These courses within the M.P.H. count toward the M.S.W. degree:

Course	Title	Hours
HCPR 601	Introduction to Health Policy (satisfies SLWK 710)	3
Applied public health concentration courses		
EPID 571	Principles of Epidemiology (satisfies concentration-specific research course/ SLWK 706 or SLWK 714)	3
EPID 600	Introduction to Public Health (satisfies specialization elective)	3
EPID 628	Public Health Program Planning and Evaluation (satisfies SLWK 707 or SLWK 715)	3
Epidemiology concentration courses		
EPID 548	Applied Data Analysis Lab (satisfies SLWK 707 or SLWK 715)	3
EPID 571	Principles of Epidemiology (satisfies concentration-specific research course/ SLWK 706 or SLWK 714)	3
EPID 606	Epidemiologic Methods (satisfies specialization elective)	3

Degrees are awarded simultaneously, upon completion of degree requirements for both programs.

Curriculum requirements for the dual degree

Course	Title	Hours
M.S.W. requirements		
• Generalist courses		
SLWK 601	Human Behavior in the Social Environment I (satisfies M.P.H. elective)	3
SLWK 602	Policy, Community and Organizational Practice I	3
SLWK 603	Power, Privilege and Oppression	3
SLWK 604	Social Work Practice with Individuals, Families and Groups I	3
SLWK 605	Social Work Practice with Individuals, Families and Groups II	3
SLWK 606	Policy, Community and Organizational Practice II (satisfies M.P.H. elective)	3
SLWK 609	Foundations of Research in Social Work Practice	3
SLWK 610	Human Behavior in the Social Environment II	3
Field instruction (select one option)		6
SLWK 693 & SLWK 694	Generalist Field Instruction I and Generalist Field Instruction II	
SLWK 695	Block Generalist Field Instruction	

• Concentration requirements (select one concentration)		18
Administration, planning and policy practice		
SLWK 710	Concentration Social Policy (satisfied by HCPR 601)	
SLWK 711	Strategies for Social Work Planning and Administrative Practice	
SLWK 712	Social Work Planning and Administrative Practice I	
SLWK 713	Social Work Planning and Administrative Practice II	
SLWK 714	Research for Social Work Administration, Planning and Policy Practice I (satisfied by EPID 571)	
SLWK 715	Research for Social Work Administration, Planning and Policy Practice II (satisfied by EPID 548 or EPID 628, depending on concentration)	
Clinical practice concentration		
SLWK 703	Mental, Emotional and Behavioral Disorders	
SLWK 704	Clinical Social Work Practice I	
SLWK 705	Clinical Social Work Practice II	
SLWK 706	Research for Clinical Social Work Practice I (satisfied by EPID 571)	
SLWK 707	Research for Clinical Social Work Practice II (satisfied by EPID 548 or EPID 628, depending on concentration)	
SLWK 710	Concentration Social Policy (satisfied by HCPR 601)	
• Field instruction (required for either concentration; select one option)		6
SLWK 793 & SLWK 794	Concentration Field Instruction I and Concentration Field Instruction II	
SLWK 795	Concentration Block Field Instruction	
SLWK 796 & SLWK 797 & SLWK 798	Concentration Field Instruction Extended Semesters I and Concentration Field Instruction Extended Semesters II and Concentration Field Instruction Extended Semesters III	
• Electives		6
Students may select a minimum of six credit hours of electives from the M.P.H. concentration of the student's choice. EPID 600 or EPID 606 satisfies three credits toward electives.		
M.P.H. requirements		
• M.P.H. core requirements		
BIOS 543	Graduate Research Methods I	3
EPID 571	Principles of Epidemiology	3
EPID 580	Public Health Ethics	1
EPID 593	Foundations of the Public Health Profession	2
EPID 604	Principles of Environmental Health	3
EPID 693	Public Health Internship (satisfied by SLWK 793)	3
EPID 694	MPH Capstone Project	3

HCPR 601	Introduction to Health Policy	3
IPEC 501	Foundations of Interprofessional Practice	1
SBHD 605	Introduction to Social and Behavioral Health	3
• Concentration requirements (select one concentration)		9
Applied public health concentration		
EPID 600	Introduction to Public Health	
EPID 628	Public Health Program Planning and Evaluation	
SBHD 632	Health Disparities and Social Justice	
Epidemiology concentration		
BIOS 544	Graduate Research Methods II	
EPID 548	Applied Data Analysis Lab	
EPID 606	Epidemiologic Methods	
• Electives (minimum)		11
Select courses according to the area(s) of interest in public health; SLWK 601 and SLWK 606 satisfy six credits toward electives.		
Total Hours		84

The minimum number of graduate credit hours required for this dual degree is 84.

Sample plan of study

Students in the dual M.S.W./M.P.H. program spend the first year immersed in the M.S.W curriculum. Beginning in the fall of the second year, student registration is primarily in the M.P.H. curriculum, with a small proportion of courses in the M.S.W. program. During the third year, students focus on their two-semester M.S.W. final field placement while completing any remaining M.P.H. course work and developing the integrative learning experience requirement for the M.P.H. program known as the capstone project. This project frequently stems from the student's work in the final year field placement, which is selected with coordination between the two programs to ensure that it aligns with both M.S.W. and M.P.H program expectations.

General sequence of dual degree program

Year one

Fall semester		Hours
SLWK 601	Human Behavior in the Social Environment I	3
SLWK 602	Policy, Community and Organizational Practice I	3
SLWK 603	Power, Privilege and Oppression	3
SLWK 604	Social Work Practice with Individuals, Families and Groups I	3
SLWK 693	Generalist Field Instruction I	3
Term Hours:		15
Spring semester		
SLWK 605	Social Work Practice with Individuals, Families and Groups II	3
SLWK 606	Policy, Community and Organizational Practice II	3
SLWK 609	Foundations of Research in Social Work Practice	3

SLWK 610	Human Behavior in the Social Environment II	3
SLWK 694	Generalist Field Instruction II	3
Term Hours:		15

Year two

Fall semester

BIOS 543	Graduate Research Methods I	3
EPID 571	Principles of Epidemiology	3
EPID 580	Public Health Ethics	1
EPID 593	Foundations of the Public Health Profession	2
HCPR 601	Introduction to Health Policy	3
Term Hours:		12

Spring semester

Choose course sequence appropriate for M.P.H. concentration.

BIOS 544 or EPID 600	Graduate Research Methods II or Introduction to Public Health	3
EPID 548 or EPID 628	Applied Data Analysis Lab or Public Health Program Planning and Evaluation	3
EPID 606 or SBHD 632	Epidemiologic Methods or Health Disparities and Social Justice	3
SBHD 605	Introduction to Social and Behavioral Health	3
SLWK 726	Social Work Practice and Health Care	3
Term Hours:		15

Year three

Fall semester

IPEC 501	Foundations of Interprofessional Practice	1
SLWK 703 or SLWK 711	Mental, Emotional and Behavioral Disorders or Strategies for Social Work Planning and Administrative Practice	3
SLWK 704 or SLWK 712	Clinical Social Work Practice I or Social Work Planning and Administrative Practice I	3
SLWK 793	Concentration Field Instruction I	3
MPH elective		3
Term Hours:		13

Spring semester

EPID 694	MPH Capstone Project	3
SLWK 705 or SLWK 713	Clinical Social Work Practice II or Social Work Planning and Administrative Practice II	3
SLWK 794	Concentration Field Instruction II	3
EPID 604	Principles of Environmental Health	3
MPH elective		2-3
Term Hours:		14-15
Total Hours:		84-85

The minimum number of graduate credit hours required for this dual degree is 84.

Contacts

Lisa S. Anderson, M.P.H.

Director of Educational Programs, Division of Epidemiology, Department
of Family Medicine and Population Health

lisa.s.anderson@vcuhealth.org

(804) 628-2512

Sarah K. Price, Ph.D.

M.S.W./M.P.H. combined program coordinator, School of Social Work

skprice@vcu.edu

(804) 828-0579

Additional contact

Juan Lu, Ph.D., M.P.H., M.D.

Associate professor graduate program director, M.P.H. Program

juan.lu@vcuhealth.org

(804) 828-9786

Program websites: familymedicine.vcu.edu/epidemiology/epidemiology-graduate-programs/mph-program/dual-degrees/ and socialwork.vcu.edu