Student learning outcomes

1. Integrated knowledge of public health: Students will demonstrate knowledge of the current elements of public health, at a level assessed by program faculty as competent or higher, according to the program rubric.

2. Demonstration of focused knowledge and skills: Students will demonstrate more detailed knowledge and applied skills in the individual area of scholarship, including familiarity with the research literature and the ability to evaluate and critique publications, at a level assessed by program faculty as competent or higher, according to the program rubric.

3. Development of competencies: Through program course work and applied experiences, students will develop competence in the discipline of public health as demonstrated through annual self-assessment of performance on the M.P.H. program competencies and faculty assessment of (1) student competence in semi-annual student reviews and (2) student performance in the program's integrated learning experience, the capstone project.

4. Training in appropriate public health skills/knowledge: Through didactic study and two separate applied experiences in professional public health settings, students will gain knowledge and skills required to perform as public health practitioners and/or researchers.

The M.P.H. program trains students to develop educational competencies established by the program's accrediting body, the Council on Education for Public Health. These competencies may be viewed on the Department of Family Medicine and Population Health website (https://familymedicine.vcu.edu/epidemiology/epidemiology-graduate-programs/mph-program/competencies/).

VCU Graduate Bulletin, VCU Graduate School and general academic policies and regulations for all graduate students in all graduate programs

The VCU Graduate Bulletin website documents the official admission and academic rules and regulations that govern graduate education for all graduate programs at the university. These policies are established by the graduate faculty of the university through their elected representatives to the University Graduate Council.

It is the responsibility of all graduate students, both on- and off-campus, to be familiar with the VCU Graduate Bulletin as well as the Graduate School website and academic regulations in individual school and department publications and on program websites. However, in all cases, the official policies and procedures of the University Graduate Council, as published on the VCU Graduate Bulletin and Graduate School websites, take precedence over individual program policies and guidelines.

Visit the academic regulations section for additional information on academic regulations for graduate students.

Degree candidacy requirements

A graduate student admitted to a program or concentration requiring a final research project, work of art, thesis or dissertation, must qualify for continuing master's or doctoral status according to the degree candidacy requirements of the student's graduate program. Admission to degree candidacy, if applicable, is a formal statement by the graduate student's faculty regarding the student's academic achievements and the student's readiness to proceed to the final research phase of the degree program.

Graduate students and program directors should refer to the following degree candidacy policy as published in the VCU Graduate Bulletin for complete information and instructions.

Visit the academic regulations section for additional information on degree candidacy requirements.

Graduation requirements

As graduate students approach the end of their academic programs and the final semester of matriculation, they must make formal application to graduate. No degrees will be conferred until the application to graduate has been finalized.

Graduate students and program directors should refer to the following graduation requirements as published in the Graduate Bulletin for a complete list of instructions and a graduation checklist.
Visit the academic regulations section for additional information on graduation requirements.

Other information
School of Medicine graduate program policies

The School of Medicine provides policies applicable to all programs administratively housed in the school. Information on master's programs is available elsewhere in this chapter of the Graduate Bulletin.

The M.P.H. program student handbook is available upon request.

Apply online at sophas.org (http://www.sophas.org/) and submit a VCU supplemental application following instructions available at sophas.org.

Admission requirements

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Degree</th>
<th>Semester(s) of entry</th>
<th>Deadline dates</th>
<th>Test requirements</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>M.P.H.</td>
<td>Fall</td>
<td>Mar 1</td>
<td>GRE; TOEFL or IELTS for international students</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In addition to the general admission requirements of the VCU Graduate School (http://bulletin.vcu.edu/academic-regs/grad/graduation-info/), to be considered for admission, applicants must meet the following requirements:

1. Prior degree: Students must hold a bachelor's degree from an accredited institution, with a minimum GPA of 3.0 on a 4.0 scale in all undergraduate and any other graduate study. Official copies of transcripts for all prior degrees earned must be submitted to the VCU Office of Graduate Admissions.
2. GRE: Applicants must provide current GRE test results (taken within the past five years).
3. TOEFL: International students must submit TOEFL or IELTS scores. Minimum TOEFL score is 600 (paper-based), 250 (computer-based) or 100 (internet-based); IELTS minimum score is 7.0. The PTE is also accepted with a minimum score of 65. Test score requirements may be waived for international students who have received a medical degree (M.D.) in the U.S. Contact the program coordinator for more information.

Students must also submit the following materials with their applications:

1. Letters of recommendation from three individuals who can assess applicant qualifications for graduate school; at least one academic reference is required, but two are preferred. Most appropriate are letters from past professors or work supervisors.
2. Current version of curriculum vitae or resume. Include experience and/or education relevant to study in public health.
3. Personal statement covering the following issues in two to five pages:
   a. Description of the applicant’s career goals
   b. Why the applicant wishes to pursue an M.P.H. degree
   c. How an M.P.H. degree will help the applicant achieve her/his career goals
   d. Description of applicant’s particular areas of interest in public health (e.g., maternal and child health, epidemiology)
   e. Why VCU’s M.P.H. program best fits the student’s public health interests
   f. What applicant plans to do in the first few years after graduation

Degree requirements

The mission of the Master of Public Health program is to provide exceptional public health training; conduct cutting-edge, translational research; promote health equity and community wellness; and foster lifelong inquiry and discovery that improve human health. The program prepares students committed to public health careers in the public, private or nonprofit sectors through a rigorous curriculum to help students develop analytic and critical-reasoning skills to improve population health. The M.P.H. program boasts experiential learning, a highly interactive environment, accessible and approachable faculty and student involvement in significant projects.

In addition to general VCU Graduate School graduation requirements (http://bulletin.vcu.edu/academic-regs/grad/graduation-info/), a minimum of 45 credit hours of formal course work is required, including:

1. 25 credits minimum of core didactic course work
2. 14 credits of concentration course work, including elective course selections
3. An internship, typically conducted in the summer between the first and second year
4. A capstone project planned and implemented in the second year of the program

Note that some elective courses may not be available in certain years or may require instructor permission for registration.

Curriculum requirements

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Course</th>
<th>Title</th>
<th>Hours</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>BIOS 543</td>
<td>Graduate Research Methods I</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BIOS 544</td>
<td>Graduate Research Methods II</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EPI 547</td>
<td>Applied Data Analysis Lab I</td>
<td>1.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EPI 548</td>
<td>Applied Data Analysis Lab II</td>
<td>1.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EPI 571</td>
<td>Principles of Epidemiology</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EPI 580</td>
<td>Public Health Ethics</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EPI 593</td>
<td>Foundations of the Public Health Profession</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EPI 604</td>
<td>Principles of Environmental Health</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HCPR 601</td>
<td>Introduction to Health Policy</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IPEC 501</td>
<td>Foundations of Interprofessional Practice</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SBHD 605</td>
<td>Introduction to Social and Behavioral Health</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Required additional courses

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Course</th>
<th>Title</th>
<th>Hours</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>EPI 600</td>
<td>Introduction to Public Health</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EPI 603</td>
<td>Public Health Policy and Politics</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EPI 622</td>
<td>Maternal and Child Health</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Elective courses

Select a minimum of five credit hours of course work chosen according to the area(s) of interest in public health. These may include the following courses:

BIOS 535 Behavioral Measurement
The minimum total of graduate credit hours required for this degree is 45.

Public health internship: The public health internship is a supervised experience designed to expose M.P.H. students to a real-world public health practice setting, such as a governmental public health agency or nonprofit organization, requiring them to integrate classroom knowledge and skills in practical applications in a professional environment. Each student intern works with a practice site supervisor who assigns tasks, instructs the student in new skills and evaluates the student's progress. Students work a minimum of 180 hours in a professional public health organization.

Capstone project: The culminating work in the M.P.H. program is the capstone project. The project is a practical experience that allows the student to apply what has been learned in the didactic components of the curriculum to a focused project. The goal is to enhance the student's academic experience through the application of public health concepts and skills in a supervised experience. Students are required to synthesize the literature; analyze, assess or evaluate quantitative or qualitative data; and in general apply theory and integrate knowledge gained and principles in situations that approximate some aspects of professional practice. With this mentored experience, students are able to both broaden their skills and hone their proficiency in a specific area of public health. The major product of this culminating experience is expected to vary depending on the educational goals of the student, but could include one of the following:

1. Manuscript suitable for publication in a peer-reviewed journal
2. Comprehensive disease-related report and analysis
3. Policy analysis report
4. Needs assessment for a specific population
5. Development, implementation and analysis of target population surveys
6. Program evaluation

At a minimum, the capstone experience will require the integration of multiple major competencies used by a public health professional. In fulfilling the capstone requirement, each candidate must: (a) submit a formal written paper of sufficient depth and rigor and (b) satisfactorily complete a poster presentation of the project chosen as the basis for the written paper at an appropriate venue (e.g., research forum, refereed conference, etc.) approved by the M.P.H. program director.

Students are expected to maintain satisfactory academic progress on the capstone project; such progress entails completing the capstone project according to the timeline included in the student's proposal for the capstone project (typically in no more than one to two semesters). Exceptions beyond this time limit must be approved by the student's adviser and the graduate program director, based on the student's submission to the adviser of a written explanation for the delay in
progress. This written explanation must include a plan for completing the project, developed by the student with adviser input and approval.

**Satisfactory academic progress**

Satisfactory academic progress in the M.P.H. program may be assessed on multiple factors. These factors include professional conduct including communication with the adviser about capstone project progress or other relevant work; honor policy adherence and academic conduct; and continuous enrollment compliance. Students are notified of faculty assessment of their progress and performance in the program via semi-annual advising letters provided after the fall and spring semesters. In addition, special advising letters may be issued outside of this cycle if additional guidance or notification of unsatisfactory academic progress is necessary.

**Non-curricular program requirements**

In addition to course work, students are required to complete the following non-curricular requirements for the M.P.H. degree:

1. Documented attendance at 12 public health seminars
2. Twenty hours of community-based service-learning

**Contact**

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lisa.s.anderson@vcuhealth.org
(804) 628-2512

**Program website:** epidemiology.vcu.edu/education/mph (http://www.epidemiology.vcu.edu/education/mph/)