

**Multidisciplinary Master of Public Health
Student Handbook**

Academic Year 2022-23

MMPH Program | Student Handbook

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Mission and Objectives of the MMPH Program

The mission of the Multidisciplinary Master of Public Health (MMPH) degree program is to prepare doctoral-level health professionals to practice in community, public, and global health settings using not only population-based concepts but also skills and knowledge centered around health education, health promotion and disease prevention. This educational program provides advanced public health training that students can incorporate and apply to a public or private setting. This program is designed to foster a comprehensive overview to bridge the gaps between public health disciplines and sub-disciplines. The MMPH is uniquely designed for individuals with advanced degrees (MD, RN, DDS, DO) and allows for the freedom to design a customizable MPH degree. In other words, in addition to the Pitt Public Health core curriculum (21 credits), MMPH students choose electives from varied public health departments to form an area of focus relevant to their research and/or practice interests. Students are also required to develop five advanced competencies that specifically apply to their program and personal goals. Upon completion of the MMPH, students will have an understanding of statistics, health policy, research design as well as the ability to contribute to new research in their chosen fields of interest.

Office of the Multidisciplinary Master of Public Health

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Prerequisites for Admission

- In addition to the standard Pitt Public Health admission requirements:
The applicant must have an earned a doctoral degree in a health science OR be two years through a doctoral/master's-level clinical health training in the United States.
- The GRE, or US clinical equivalent, is required. For applicants who already have a doctorate at an American university, but do not have documentation of their GRE scores, this test requirement may be waived at the discretion of the MMPH director. For graduates of foreign universities, the GRE is required.
- Admission to the MMPH program occurs in fall, spring, or summer term. Applications are reviewed when the application and all supporting documents are received.

For **graduates of foreign medical or dental schools** to be considered, they must satisfy one of the following criteria:

- hold a valid dental or medical license in the United States or be eligible for dental, or medical licensure in the United States, e.g., passed all necessary examinations and completed an approved residency program,
- currently be enrolled in a residency or fellowship program, or
- be an outstanding candidate with appropriate clinical and/or research training to justify consideration for admission, i.e., a visiting scholar clinician who will return to their native country.

More information on the application process is available on the Pitt Public Health website at: <https://www.publichealth.pitt.edu/apply>.

I. Program of Study

The Multidisciplinary Master of Public Health (MMPH) is a 42–credit degree program. Incoming students must consult with the program director to ensure they receive appropriate advanced standing credits for graduate degrees earned prior to admission or relevant graduate degrees pursued concurrently with the MMPH. In many cases, incoming students may be awarded a maximum of six (6) transfer credits based upon prior education.

A. MPH Core Requirements

Course Name		Credits
BCHS 2509	Social & Behavioral Sciences and Public Health	3
BIOST 2011 or BIOST 2041	Principles of Statistical Reasoning	3
	Introduction to Statistical Methods I	3
EOH 2013	Environmental Health and Disease	2
EPIDEM 2110	Principles of Epidemiology	3
HPM 2001	Health Policy and Management in Public Health	3
PUBHLT 2015	Public Health Biology	2
PUBHLT 2022	The Dean's Public Health Grand Rounds [2 terms required]	0
PUBHLT 2033	Foundations in Public Health	1
PUBHLT 2034	Public Health Communications	2
PUBHLT 2035	Applications in Public Health	2

For further details on the MPH core curriculum, refer to the school's [academic handbook](#). When planning to complete core courses, refer to the school's [core curriculum schedule](#).

B. Coursework and Advisement

The MMPH curriculum is composed of the MPH core courses but is otherwise flexible. The MPH core curriculum meets the CEPH's MPH foundational competencies, and students are required to complete an additional five advanced competencies. Students work with the program director to identify their advanced competencies (skill areas on which to concentrate their study) and complete the Advanced Competencies Tracking Sheet (see Appendix B). The director will suggest courses to satisfy their proposed advanced competencies.

Throughout the time in the program, students are to meet with the program director, at minimum, twice a year. The program director is available at any time to help direct the trajectory of an individual's study plan and advise on course, practicum, essay, and graduation requirements.

C. Practicum and e-Portfolio

All students are required to complete a practicum (or internship) to graduate. Practica are individually arranged between the student, practicum preceptor, and the MMPH program director. Depending on student interest, the practicum can blend the student's existing clinical or professional work with an additional experience that has a public health focus.

The practicum requires a minimum of 200 hours. Depending upon other course credits, students will register for 1-3 practicum credits. The practicum also requires students to produce two products (deliverables) to be completed for the benefit of the organization or agency where it is completed. Students must demonstrate attainment of at least five competencies during this experience. At least three of the competencies must be from the list of CEPH MPH foundational competencies, and at most two other competencies can be from the student's personal list. The [Practicum Learning Agreement](#) must be completed before initiating the practicum experience. Evaluation of the practicum experience is completed by the program director, student, and preceptor. Forms for the practicum are available on the school's website (<https://www.sph.pitt.edu/academics/forms-handbook/academic-handbook>).

MPH students are required to document their practicum experience by submitting an MPH Practicum e-Portfolio. The e-portfolio is a tool to document your completion of competencies during your practicum experience. Students are responsible for completing the requirements of the e-Portfolio. The academic advisor is responsible for verifying that all required paperwork has been submitted and that all necessary school and departmental competencies have been met. For the latest requirements on the practicum e-portfolio, please visit: <https://www.publichealth.pitt.edu/home/academics/academic-handbook-degree-requirements/mphe-portfolio>.

D. Essay Requirement

All MMPH students must complete a master's essay (1-2 credits of PUBHLT 2002 - essay) before graduation. The essay may be based upon the practicum experience or another related or unrelated research product, program proposal, or literature review. The essay topic, competencies, and committee members must be chosen in concert with the advisor as early as possible. The timeline for the MPH essay submission is on the school's [graduation page](#). Research involving human subjects must be approved by the University of Pittsburgh's Institutional Review Board.

Your essay committee must consist of a minimum of two University of Pittsburgh graduate-level faculty members – a primary advisor and at least one additional reader. One of the two members must be on the [core faculty list](#) of a Public Health department; the second reader/committee member cannot be on the same core list. The second reader may be on the core list of a second Public Health department or may be a faculty member with an appointment in another school at the University.

Students will confer with their advisor about the essay in the semester prior to the one in which they plan to graduate. Students are required to select at least three competencies, 2 CEPH foundational MPH competencies and 1 personal advanced competency, that will be integrated and synthesized in their essay. Students complete an [ILE agreement form](#) to document the competencies they will address in their essay prior to the start of their essay writing.

Students will request faculty members to serve as committee members/readers no later than the end of the semester prior to the one in which students plan to graduate.

The MMPH program administrator will submit the committee request on behalf of the student to the Office of Student Affairs for final approval.

It is expected that multiple preliminary drafts will have been reviewed by all or some of the readers before a final draft is submitted. The preliminary draft should be sent to committee members no later than one month before the essay upload deadline. The final document must be submitted to all readers for review and comments at a minimum of two weeks before the essay upload deadline.

Upon submission of the essay, the student will complete an [ILE assessment form](#) with their advisor indicating the competencies attained in their essay. The student advisor signs off on the synthesis and integration of competencies in the essay.

The MPH essay must be in accordance with the specifications found on the Pitt Electronic Theses & Dissertations page (<https://etd.pitt.edu/>). For additional information regarding essay format and requirements, and committee composition please read the Pitt Public Health [graduation page](#).

Students have the option to complete a master's thesis in place of the master's essay. Students opting to complete a thesis instead of an essay will be required to have three committee members, and the student will defend an oral presentation along with the written thesis. Examples may be found online at: d-scholarship.pitt.edu.

E. School of Dental Medicine Requirements

Students may complete a maximum of eight (8) credits from the following list of courses that will apply only to the MPH and not to a degree in the School of Dental Medicine:

- a) Contemporary Issues in Dental Public Health | CDENT 5916 | 2 credits
- b) Independent Study | CDENT 5900 | 2-3 credits
- c) BCHS Practicum (*for Bridging the Gaps only*) | BCHS 2503 | 1-3 credits

Students enroll in courses with assistance from the School of Dental Medicine student services staff. New MMPH students meet first with the MMPH director to formulate their plan of study. Throughout the course of the program, students continue to meet with the program director, as needed.

Students are to complete a course enrollment form each term of study, submitting a copy of the form to the MMPH administrator. If any permission numbers for the entrance to a course are required, students must obtain them from the corresponding department/program staff. When registering for courses with variable numbers of credits, make sure to specify the correct number of credits. For example: if you are registering for a 3-credit practicum course (PUBHLT 2029, 1-3cr), you will need to manually change the unit to 3 credits because PeopleSoft is automatically set to 1 credit. Dental residents will follow this same procedure.

Students who are pursuing the MMPH simultaneously with the DMD at the University of Pittsburgh may fulfill the MMPH practicum requirement by completion of 130 - 160 hours in the dental school Scope 1 and Scope 2 experiences. Scope 1-community service experiences will include projects with potential public health relevance.

These experiences will then be more directly applied during Scope 2 of their clinical experience. These more extensive experiences of Scope 1 and 2 should account for 130-160 hours, fulfilling the majority of practicum requirements. The MMPH director and Dr. Rubin may approve additional public health experiences, which may include community projects such as Bridging the Gaps, high school career mentoring, providing oral hygiene instruction to refugees and immigrants, missionary work, etc. Students should register for one credit of MMPH practicum during the period in which they are completing the final hours of the practicum project.

For those students who wish to develop a comprehensive alternative practicum project, the MMPH program can approve meritorious proposals that would fulfill the 200-hour minimum requirement. The MMPH program director and Dr. Rubin must approve such alternative projects.

Residents in the Department of Periodontics and Preventive Dentistry pursuing the MMPH simultaneously with the Certificate in Periodontics may fulfill the MMPH practicum requirement by completing the approximately 250-hour rotation at the Veterans Administration Hospitals of Pittsburgh. As part of their training, periodontics residents serve veterans of the U.S. armed forces eight hours each week for eight months, providing

periodontal and preventive dental treatment services to patients of the VA Pittsburgh at its H.J. Heinz Division in Aspinwall, PA. The periodontics residents provide service by: educating veterans about periodontal disease and the relationship between periodontal inflammation and systemic health; teaching patients about the prevention of periodontal disease by treatment and diligent self-care at home; providing treatment follow-up care for veterans with active periodontal disease; and reinforcing self-care as an effective home routine to maintain established good oral health. This practicum experience may serve as one option for the master's essay required for the MMPH degree.

Residents should register for one credit of MMPH practicum during each semester they are in rotation at the Aspinwall, VA.

F. School of Medicine Requirements

The MMPH degree provides a foundation of public health training for medical students. Planning to obtain both degrees should begin as early as possible after matriculation into the School of Medicine. The schools of Public Health and Medicine will work closely together to ensure the integration of the two programs. The student would be able to join the program any time after completion of year one of medical school or after graduation but before residency training. The program targets, but cannot guarantee, fulfilling all degree requirements within an approximate one-year time span.

II. Policies and Procedures of Pitt Public Health

A. Forms and Deadlines

Registration for each term must be done with the advice of the student's academic advisor who is also required to sign off on all [enrollment forms](#) prior to the posted registration deadlines. Class schedules for the Pitt Public Health are available online at <https://psmobile.pitt.edu/app/catalog/classSearch>. Once completed and signed students should return their enrollment form to the Program Administrator so the advising hold can be removed. Students can register for courses through PeopleSoft only after their advising hold has been removed.

Please note that a student can add or drop classes without penalty until the add/drop deadline. Registration, add/drop, monitored withdrawal, and other important dates can be found on [Pitt's Academic Calendar](#).

B. Application for Graduation

Each candidate for graduation must apply to graduate by submitting an application in PeopleSoft and a [Prior Degree Form](#). Completed forms can be sent to stuaff@pitt.edu.

Deadlines and instructions can be found at <https://www.sph.pitt.edu/academics/forms-handbook/academic-handbook/graduation-information>.

Students must be registered for at least one credit in the term in which they graduate. Degree requirements must be completed in the semester the student applies for graduation. If not, the student must re-apply for graduation in the term in which requirements are completed. Additionally, before a degree can be posted, all I and/or G grades must be reconciled.

There are four graduations per year: December, April, June, and August. However, the University holds one ceremony per year in late April or early May. Graduates of the previous June, August, and December are invited to participate in the spring ceremony. Diplomas are mailed to graduates a few months after graduation. The [graduation website](#) contains information on forms and applications, logistics and important dates for graduation. Familiarize yourself with this material before your last semester.

III. Pitt Public Health Academic Handbook

The school maintains an academic handbook that covers and lists many requirements for the MPH degree program in addition to school and/or university policies and procedures. The handbook is accessible on the school's website at <https://www.sph.pitt.edu/academics/forms-handbook/academic-handbook/graduation-information>.

IV. Departmental Contact Information

If you are seeking information about courses, permission numbers, faculty, or other opportunities please refer to the listing of departmental student services staff available at <https://www.sph.pitt.edu/admissions-aid/contact-admissions>.

V. Appendix

A. Plan of Study (example)

TOTAL MINIMUM PROGRAM CREDITS: 42

REQUIRED CORE COURSES

GSPH CORE	COURSE TITLE	CREDITS	TERM	GRADE
BCHS 2509	Social & Behavioral Aspects of Public Health	3		
BIOST 2011 Or BIOST 2041	Principles of Statistical Reasoning Intro to Statistical Methods I	3		
EOH 2013	Environmental Health and Disease	2		
EPIDEM 2110	Principles of Epidemiology	3		
HPM 2001	Health Policy and Management in Public Health	3		
PUBHLT 2015	Public Health Biology	2		
PUBHLT 2022	Dean's Public Health Grand Rounds	0		
PUBHLT 2022	Dean's Public Health Grand Rounds	0		
PUBHLT 2033	Foundations in Public Health	1		
PUBHLT 2034	Public Health Communications	2		
PUBHLT 2035	Applications in Public Health	2		
TOTAL		21		

TRANSFER CREDITS*

EQUIVALENT PITT COURSE	EQUIVALENT PITT COURSE TITLE	CREDITS	TERM
TOTAL		6	

*6 credits maximum. Pitt School of Dental Medicine may use Scope 1 and/or Scope 2.

ELECTIVES

COURSE NUMBER	COURSE TITLE	CREDITS	TERM	GRADE
TOTAL		10		

ESSAY REQUIREMENT

COURSE NUMBER	COURSE TITLE	CREDITS	TERM	GRADE
PUBHLT 2002	MMPH Essay	1-2		
PUBHLT 2029	MMPH Practicum	1-3		
TOTAL		5		
OVERALL TOTAL		42		

Waivers of program requirements, transfer credits, core courses, and electives must be made with the consent of the Program Director

B. MMPH Advanced Competencies Tracking Sheet (example)

The MMPH program rests on the core and crosscutting competencies that all public health master students develop through their specific programs. Additionally, all MMPH candidates identify specific advanced competencies that directly relate to the goals of their individual educational plans as noted in the student handbook. These competencies must be developed in concert with the MMPH program director and other faculty with expertise related to these advanced competencies.

These advanced competencies must be completed and submitted within the first six weeks of entering the MMPH program. Competencies may be modified as specific goals within the context of the program in consultation with the program director. **Competencies cannot be created from MPH core courses, they must be taught and assessed in didactic elective courses.** One advanced competency will be attained during the essay. **Students need five (5) or more advanced competencies.**

Competency: <i>Identify a specific advanced competency that directly relates to the goals of your individual educational plan</i>	Course number(s) and name(s): <i>Course number(s) and name(s) where the advanced competency is attained</i>	Describe specific assessment opportunity: <i>Provide a brief description of the competency assessment opportunity.</i>
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EXAMPLES:

Competency:	Course number(s) and name(s):	Describe specific assessment opportunity:
Identify and apply advanced epidemiologic analyses using descriptive and inferential statistical approaches	EPIDEM 2180 – Fundamentals of Epidemiological Methods	Thirteen homework assignments where students identify and apply advanced epidemiological analysis.
Describe strategies for engaging communities and systems in advancing research and improving health through collaboration, partnerships, and strengths-based approaches	BCHS 2554 – Introduction to Community Health	Second application paper - Students describe potential community partners for a community health needs assessment of a community of their choice, as well as how they will engage with these potential community partners and build trust and trustworthiness. Final paper - Students build upon this application paper to design a community assessment using a strengths-based approach, including identifying specific community partners and appropriate strategies for engaging with each.

Assessment of Competencies for Multidisciplinary Master of Public Health

STUDENT NAME:

Competency:	Course number(s) and name(s):	Describe specific assessment opportunity:
1.		
2.		
3.		
4.		
5.		

Multidisciplinary Master of Public Health Program

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