

The Gillings MPH Core Frequently Asked Questions

Why did the core MPH curriculum change?

The world and employers' needs are changing. We are global and connected; tools and methods have evolved and continue to evolve rapidly. The ways we work have evolved, too. Now, we typically work in teams and across disciplines to solve complex problems affecting different populations and individuals. The Gillings School has acknowledged these drivers of change and renewed our commitment to offering new, integrated core public health training that will keep us the leading #1 *public* school of public health in the U.S.

The New Gillings MPH Core

How is the new MPH Core different from the current required original core training?

The original core training consisted of five, 3-credit courses: Biostatistics (BIOS), Epidemiology (EPID), Environmental Health (ESE), Health Behavior (HB) and Health Policy and Management (HPM).

The new MPH Core is a 12-credit, 2-semester core training program:

- **Six credits, typically taken in the fall:** *Understanding Public Health Issues* (2 credits), *Methods and Measures for Public Health* (2 credits) and *Data Analysis for Public Health* (2 credits).
- **Six credits, typically taken in the spring:** *Conceptualizing Public Health Solutions* (2 credits) and *Developing, Implementing and Evaluating Public Health Solutions* (4 credits).

When will the new MPH Core begin?

The new Gillings MPH Core begins in fall 2018 for matriculating residential MPH and terminal MSPH students. We will implement an online version of the new MPH Core at the same time (fall 2018) for students in the School's online program, MPH@UNC. Students who matriculate before fall 2018, or are enrolled in a MS degree, will continue to take the five, 600-level, 3-credit courses from BIOS, EPID, HB, ESE and HPM.

Who takes the MPH Core?

Beginning in fall 2018, students entering the graduate professional public health degree programs (MPH and terminal MSPH programs) will take the new, integrated MPH Core and will have access to COMPASS (see below).

Should MPH and terminal MSPH students take the new MPH Core in their first year?

Yes. Since the new integrated MPH Core provides foundational public health knowledge, students in the professional public health degree programs are strongly encouraged to take it in their first year. Exceptions will be made on a case-by-case basis only.

Who will teach in the new MPH Core?

An interdisciplinary teaching team will collaborate on course content and teach the new, integrated 12-credit MPH Core. The integrated Core will feature instructors from different departments, as well as Gillings alumni and other public health practitioners, who will bring real-world expertise to course material and activities.

What other training do MPH students get?

Along with completion of the 12-credit new MPH Core training, all students will take concentration-specific training (e.g. at least 30 total credits in a concentration area, including an applied practice experience/practicum and integrative learning experience, plus electives), for a total of 42 credits.

How will the new MPH Core prepare students for higher-level classes in each department?

The new integrated MPH Core provides foundational knowledge in public health that will prepare students to take concentration-specific training in one of 11 concentrations. Departments will review the foundational knowledge and competencies covered in the new MPH Core to determine whether students need any additional preparation before moving on to advanced coursework in their selected concentration and how to provide it.

How many students will be enrolled in the residential MPH Core?

Initially, we expect to have approximately 250 students enrolled in the residential MPH Core each year. The online MPH@UNC program may also enroll 200-300 individuals. Both residential and online classes will have 15-25 students for many sessions.

Can students take electives with the new MPH Core?

Yes. Both fall and spring courses are 6 credits each. We fully expect students to take other concentration-specific required courses/electives (outside of their concentration) in addition to the 6 credits each semester.

Will the new MPH Core courses be offered online?

Yes. As stated above, we are implementing the MPH@UNC, with the new MPH Core as the foundation for several MPH concentrations. Tuition and fees for MPH@UNC will be different, so we are still working out the policies and procedures regarding how these online courses may be made available to residential students.

Can part-time students take the MPH Core?

Yes. We anticipate that part-time students enrolled in an MPH or MSPH program at Gillings will be able to take the new MPH Core as long as they sign up for 6 credits per semester.

COMPASS

What is COMPASS?

COMPASS means Core Online Modules to Promote and Accelerate Student Success. It is a series of brief, self-paced, online modules that provide an online introduction to the MPH degree program. The modules are designed to welcome and orient new students and to ensure that all students are prepared to succeed in the MPH Core. Each module is designed to be completed in a short amount of time (ranging from 15 minutes to a few hours). The modules include:

- Welcome
- UNC & Gillings Resources
- Ethics and Justice
- Quantitative Skills
- Honor Code and Plagiarism
- Writing, Citing & Efficiently Using the Library
- Leadership and Teamwork
- Research Ethics

Students are invited to complete these eight online modules up to and including the first week of classes in fall semester. (There also is a brief module on using the COMPASS Sakai site.) Instructors in all courses work together, both within and across semesters, to ensure that students can integrate core materials and skills to address public health problems and implement solutions.

Is COMPASS mandatory?

Yes. All MPH and terminal MSPH students will be required to participate in COMPASS.

Will students be charged or earn credit for participating in COMPASS?

No.

Will students need to come to Chapel Hill before fall semester opens to complete COMPASS?

No. Students enrolled in the residential or MPH@UNC online degree program will not be required to come to UNC's campus prior to the start of the fall semester to complete COMPASS. Students complete COMPASS online. We see COMPASS as a unique feature of the new MPH Core and hope that students will find that it is extremely helpful and fun. COMPASS self-paced modules are an opportunity to get a great start to the fall semester.

Will students be required to complete the COMPASS before fall semester begins?

Not necessarily. However, we encourage students to get started on COMPASS as early as possible. We understand that some students may have other obligations before they begin their studies at Gillings. Because several COMPASS activities and assignments early in the semester incorporate concepts first introduced in COMPASS modules, we ask students to complete it by the end of the first week of the first semester enrolled at Gillings.

Will students be graded on COMPASS assignments?

No. However, content in COMPASS is critical for students to review, especially:

- **Two Check-Ups** – one for quantitative methods and one for writing. These self-assessments can help students understand whether they need additional resources to succeed in the MPH Core. Core course facilitators will help match/connect students with those resources (e.g. getting help with online resources, tutoring in quantitative methods or help with writing).
- **Points** – Several assignments in the fall MPH Core courses incorporate concepts first introduced in COMPASS modules; and some COMPASS activities will have points attached to them that are awarded as part of students' grades in their fall MPH Core course.

Additional Considerations

Can students be exempt from the MPH Core?

We do not expect students to receive exemptions for MPH Core courses because this integrated training is considered the foundation of public health practitioner training at the master's level. That said, in rare cases, we may consider exceptions based on demonstrated mastery of the information, plus demonstrated skills in the kind of integrated, interdisciplinary work that is the focus on the new MPH Core training.

Can students apply for an exemption from *Measures and Methods for Public Health* and/or *Analysis for Public Health* courses?

Students with prior overlapping coursework in Epidemiology and Biostatistics may apply for exemption from *Measures and Methods for Public Health* and/or *Analysis for Public Health* courses. If they have demonstrated successful mastery of the competencies in these courses (e.g. receiving at least a "B" grade) and have recently completed (within the last three years) a course with similar competencies, students may apply for an exemption. Exemption applications will need to be approved by the core instructor and associate dean for academic and student affairs.

What happens if a student fails one or more of the MPH Core courses?

The MPH Core teaching team will enact a remediation plan for any student who is unable to complete one or more of the MPH Core courses. Remediation plans will be handled on a case-by-case basis and may involve additional coursework or online courses (depending upon availability). In some cases, students will be offered a remediation plan to allow them to continue in the sequence of the integrated MPH Core. Factors that will be considered include: amount of coursework completed; quality of the work already completed; coursework and experience prior to enrolling at Gillings; student performance in other courses or potential for student to be able to succeed.

Will the MPH Core be offered in the summer?

The residential MPH Core is designed to be taken sequentially in the fall and spring semesters. Students enrolled in the MPH@UNC online degree will have more flexibility and will have options for summer courses, including the MPH Core.

Will the Gillings Academic Enrichment Program be adapted to support students taking the new MPH Core?

Yes. We anticipate that the Academic Enrichment Program will continue to provide group tutoring for students who may benefit from extra academic assistance in the new MPH Core course requirements and competencies.