

Doctoral Program Quick Guide, 2021-2022

PhD and MSPH-to-PhD

Program Objectives

Doctoral training in health behavior prepares graduates for research careers and leadership roles in academic, non-profit, and governmental settings. Graduates are trained to conduct independent research on the etiology of behaviors that contribute to domestic and global public health problems and on the development, evaluation, and dissemination of interventions to ameliorate those problems. Doctoral students are expected to gain and demonstrate competency in theoretical foundations of the field, research methods, interventions, and in professional development topics. All students have additional learning objectives and develop specialized and in-depth competencies in areas of interest.

The UNC Advantage

The UNC Gillings Health Behavior doctoral program is designed to provide students with research skills and experience to prepare them to become leaders in the field. Mentorship of students by faculty is at the heart of our approach to doctoral training. Students are expected to become involved with faculty-led research projects and to take advantage of research and training opportunities in nationally recognized centers across campus, including the Lineberger Comprehensive Cancer Center, Injury Prevention Research Center, Sheps Center for Health Services Research, Carolina Population Center, and the Institute for Global Health and Infectious Diseases. Students also have the opportunity to expand their skills through teaching. The small cohorts of PhD and MSPH-to-PhD students facilitate a collegial work atmosphere, individual attention, and excellent opportunities for mentorship.

Residential Requirements

PhD students must register full-time in the Department (nine or more credit hours per semester) for the Fall and Spring semesters during the first two years. MSPH-to-PhD students must register full-time for both semesters during the first three years. Students are required to enroll during any summer session in which they are taking a course or completing a training milestone. This applies to summer sessions when students complete a practicum, take the written comprehensive examination, take the oral qualifying examination, and defend the dissertation. Students in good academic standing may request a leave of absence from the Department for up to one year, during which time no academic progress is made.

Required Coursework

PhD students complete a minimum of 46 credits in required and elective courses. PhD students without a prior MPH or equivalent degree from an accredited school of public health must complete the Gillings School of Global Public Health course on foundations of public health (3 credits). MSPH-to-PhD students complete a minimum of 68 credits in required and elective courses. Elective courses must be higher than the 600-level to count towards the minimum credits required for graduation.

Practica

PhD students complete a primary practicum in research (4 credits) and a secondary practicum (2 credits) in teaching, research, or some other experience that enhances professional skills (e.g., an internship in a congressional office, government agency, or non-profit organization). MSPH-to-PhD students complete an additional research practicum (2 credits) that culminates in a publishable manuscript (2 credits). Each practicum is individually designed by and for the student. A practicum can occur within the department or elsewhere. The mentor is usually a department or adjunct faculty member, but that is not required.

Dissertation

The dissertation (minimum 6 credits) is a study or analysis of a contemporary public health problem or issue relevant to health behavior that is addressed using social or behavioral science theory. It must be based on original research of a high scholarly standard that makes a significant contribution to knowledge in the field. The dissertation may use quantitative or qualitative methods or both. A secondary analysis of existing data sets is allowed when the student generates and tests original hypotheses.

PhD and MSPH-to-PhD Training Sequences and Timetables

Training Event	PhD	MSPH-to-PhD
	<i>Semester after entry</i>	<i>Semester after entry</i>
Completion of MPH required courses	--	2
Completion of MSPH research practicum	--	2 (Summer)
Progress review meeting	2	2, 4
Completion of MSPH publishable paper	--	5
Completion of foundational public health course ¹	1	--
Completion of PhD course requirements	4	6
Completion of primary practicum requirements	4	6
Completion of secondary practicum requirements	4+	6+
Written doctoral comprehensive examination	4 (Summer)	6 (Summer)
Selection of doctoral dissertation committee	5+	7+
Written progress reports	5+	7+
Doctoral oral qualifying examination	5+	7+
Admission to doctoral candidacy	5+	7+
Submission of doctoral dissertation	7+	9+
Oral defense of doctoral dissertation	7+	9+
Award of doctoral degree	7+	9+

¹For students who enter without an MPH degree

At a Glance: PhD Sequence of Course Requirements (46 credits)

Fall, Year 1**	Spring, Year 1
HBEH 760: Advanced Research Methods (3) HBEH 812: Professional Development I (2) HBEH 815: Foundations of HB I (3) Elective(s)/advanced core	HBEH 761: Generalized Linear Modeling with Health Behavior Applications (4) HBEH 816: Foundations of HB II (3) Elective(s)/advanced core
Fall, Year 2	Spring, Year 2
HBEH 811: Development & Evaluation of HPDP Interventions (3) HBEH 762: Multilevel Modeling (1-3) Elective(s)/advanced core	HBEH 763: Measurement (3) HBEH 860: Research Proposal Development (3) HBEH 813: Professional Development II (1) Elective(s)/advanced core

**Students who enter without an MPH degree from an accredited school of public health will need to take a 3- credit foundational course.

At a Glance: MSPH-to-PhD Sequence of Course Requirements (68 credits)

Fall, Year 1	Spring, Year 1
SPHG 711: Data Analysis for Public Health (2) SPHG 712: Methods and Measures (2) SPHG 713: Understanding Public Health Issues (2) HBEH 730: Theories of Social and Behavioral Health (3) HBEH 750: Applied Research Methods (2) Elective(s)	HBEH 744: Research Practicum for MSPH-to-PhD students SPHG 721: Conceptualizing Public Health Solutions (2) SPHG 722: Developing, Implementing & Evaluating Public Health Solutions (4) HBEH 752: Health Behavior Survey Methods (2) HBEH 753: Qualitative Methods in Health Behavior (3) Elective(s)
Fall, Year 2	Spring, Year 2
See above	See above
Fall, Year 3	Spring, Year 3
See above	See above