



Program Guidebook

Master of Public Health

Program Code: **MPH** Catalog Version: **202408** Published Date: **9/27/2024**

The MPH program will prepare students to develop, implement, and evaluate public health programs. They will demonstrate research methods needed to address public health illness and disease and evaluate the impact social determinants of health have on health outcomes. Responding to the growing public health workforce shortage, students who earn this degree will support their community's health by monitoring the community's health status and needs, promoting disease prevention, strengthening community access to healthcare and public health resources, and creating policies, plans and laws that positively impact the public's health.

Understanding the Competency-Based Approach

Practically speaking, how do competency-based programs like those offered at Western Governors University (WGU) work? Unlike traditional universities, WGU does not award degrees based on completion of a certain number of credit hours or a certain set of required courses. Instead, you will earn your degree by demonstrating your skills, knowledge, and understanding of important concepts.

Progress through a degree program is governed not by the amount of time you spend in class but by your ability to demonstrate mastery of competencies as you complete required courses. Of course, you will need to engage in learning experiences as you review competencies or develop knowledge and skills in areas in which you may be weak. To help you acquire the knowledge and skills you need to complete your courses and program, WGU provides a rich array of learning resources. Your program mentor will work closely with you to help you understand the competencies required for your program and to help you create a schedule for completing your courses. You will also work closely with course instructors as you engage in each of your courses. As subject matter experts, course instructors will guide you through the content you must master to pass the course assessments.

The benefit of this competency-based system is that it enables students who are knowledgeable about a particular subject to make accelerated progress toward completing a degree, even if they lack college experience. You may have gained skills and knowledge of a subject while on the job, accumulated wisdom through years of life experience, or already taken a course on a particular subject. WGU will award your degree based on the skills and knowledge that you possess and can demonstrate—not the number of credits hours on your transcript.

Accreditation

Western Governors University is the only university in the history of American higher education to have earned initial accreditation from multiple regional accrediting commissions at once—earning simultaneous accreditation from ACCJC, HLC, NWCCU, and WASC. The university's accreditation from the Northwest Commission on Colleges and Universities (NWCCU) was reaffirmed in March of 2024. In addition to institution-level accreditation, each school has at least one program that is accredited by a programmatic accreditation. All programmatic accreditations are managed by the Academic Engagement department. Contact compliance@wgu.edu for additional information.

The Degree Plan

The focus of your program is your personalized Degree Plan. The Degree Plan is a detailed blueprint of the courses you will need to complete in order to earn your degree. The Degree Plan also lays out the accompanying learning resources and assessments that compose your program. The list of courses in the Degree Plan is often referred to as the standard path. The amount of time it takes to complete your program depends on both the amount of new information you need to learn and the amount of time you plan to devote each week to study. Your program mentor and course instructors will help you assess your strengths and development needs to establish a study plan.

Students vary widely in the specific skills and information they need to learn. For example, some students may be highly knowledgeable in a particular subject matter and would not need to engage in new learning opportunities. Other students may find that portions of the program require them to learn new information and that they need to take an online class or participate in a study module to acquire the knowledge and skills needed to fulfill program competencies in that area. Some individuals may be able to devote as little as 15–20 hours per week to the program, while others may need to devote more time. For this reason, pre-assessments are there to help your program mentor form a profile of your prior knowledge and create a personalized Degree Plan.

How You Will Interact with Faculty

At WGU, faculty serve in specialized roles, and they will work with you individually to provide the guidance, instruction, and support you will need to succeed and graduate. As a student, it is important for you to take advantage of this support. It is key to your progress and ultimate success. Upon your enrollment, you will be assigned a program mentor—an expert in your field of study who will provide you with regular program-level guidance and support from the day you start until the day you graduate. Your program mentor will set up regular telephone appointments (weekly at first) with you, which you will be expected to keep. The mentor will review program competencies with you and work with you to develop a plan and schedule for your coursework. Your program mentor will serve as your main point of contact throughout your program—helping you set weekly study goals, recommending specific learning materials, telling you what to expect in courses, and keeping you motivated. In addition to regular calls, your program mentor is available to help you resolve questions and concerns as they arise.

You will also be assigned to a course instructor for each course. Course instructors are doctoral-level subject matter experts who will assist your learning in each individual course. When you begin a new course, your assigned course instructor will actively monitor your progress and will be in touch to offer one-on-one instruction and to provide you with information about webinars, cohort sessions, and other learning opportunities available to help you acquire the competencies you need to master the course. Your course instructor can discuss your learning for the course, help you find answers to content questions, and give you the tools to navigate the course successfully. In addition, you will communicate with course instructors by posting in the online learning community and participating in live discussion sessions such as webinars and cohorts.

For many of the courses at WGU, you will be required to complete performance assessments. These include reports, papers, presentations, and projects that let you demonstrate your mastery of the required competencies. A separate group of faculty members, called evaluators, will review your work to determine whether it meets requirements. Evaluators are also subject matter experts in their field of evaluation. If your assessment needs further work before it “passes,” these evaluators, who review your work anonymously, will provide you with instructional feedback to help you meet evaluation standards and allow you to advance.

Connecting with Other Mentors and Fellow Students

As you proceed through your Degree Plan, you will have direct contact with multiple faculty members. These communications can take a variety of forms, including participation in one-on-one discussions, chats in the learning communities, and live cohort and webinar opportunities. As a WGU student, you will have access to your own personal MyWGU Student Portal, which will provide a gateway to your courses of study, learning resources, and learning communities where you will interact with faculty and other students.

The learning resources in each course are specifically designed to support you as you develop competencies in preparation for your assessments. These learning resources may include reading materials, videos, tutorials, cohort opportunities, community discussions, and live discussions that are guided by course instructors who are experts in their field. You will access your program community during your orientation course to network with peers who are enrolled in your program and to receive continued support through professional enrichment and program-specific chats, blogs, and discussions. WGU also provides Student Services associates to help you and your program mentor solve any special problems that may arise.

Orientation

The WGU Orientation course will introduce you to the fundamentals of WGU’s competency-based education (CBE) and the expectations, policies, and protocols for students enrolled in a WGU degree program. Orientation will introduce you to WGU’s wide range of support resources and success centers.

It also will provide you with study strategies recommended by current students and faculty that will help you succeed as a WGU student. Orientation ends with your first assessment at WGU, providing an opportunity to experience WGU's performance assessment process before you begin your degree-focused coursework. The Orientation course must be completed before you can start your first term at WGU.

Transferability of Prior College Coursework

Because WGU is a competency-based institution, it does not award degrees based on credits but rather on demonstration of competency. WGU undergraduate programs may accept transfer credits or apply a Requirement Satisfied (RS) in some cases. Refer to your specific program transfer guidelines to determine what can be satisfied by previously earned college credits. Students entering graduate programs must have their undergraduate degree transcripts verified before being admitted to WGU. In addition to a program's standard course path, there may be additional state-specific requirements.

[Click here for the Student Handbook](#)

WGU does not waive any requirements based on a student's professional experience and does not perform a "résumé review" or "portfolio review" that will automatically waive any degree requirements. Degree requirements and transferability rules are subject to change in order to keep the degree content relevant and current.

Remember, WGU's competency-based approach lets you take advantage of your knowledge and skills, regardless of how you obtained them. Even when you do not directly receive credit, the knowledge you possess may help you accelerate the time it takes to complete your degree program.

Continuous Enrollment, On Time Progress, and Satisfactory Academic Progress

WGU is a "continuous enrollment" institution, which means you will be automatically enrolled in each of your new terms while you are at WGU. Each term is six months long. Longer terms and continuous enrollment allow you to focus on your studies without the hassle of unnatural breaks between terms that you would experience at a more traditional university. At the end of every six-month term, you and your program mentor will review the progress you have made and revise your Degree Plan for your next six-month term.

WGU requires that students make measurable progress toward the completion of their degree programs every term. We call this "On-Time Progress," denoting that you are on track and making progress toward on-time graduation. As full-time students, graduate students must enroll in at least 8 competency units each term, and undergraduate students must enroll in at least 12 competency units each term. Completing at least these minimum enrollments is essential to On-Time Progress and serves as a baseline from which you may accelerate your program. We measure your progress based on the courses you are able to pass, not on your accumulation of credit hours or course grades. Every time you pass a course, you are demonstrating that you have mastered skills and knowledge in your degree program. For comparison to traditional grading systems, passing a course means you have demonstrated competency equivalent to a "B" grade or better.

WGU assigns competency units to each course in order to track your progress through the program. A competency unit is equivalent to one semester credit of learning. Some courses may be assigned 3 competency units while others may be as large as 12 competency units.

Satisfactory Academic Progress (SAP) is particularly important to students on financial aid because you must achieve SAP in order to maintain eligibility for financial aid. We will measure your SAP quantitatively by reviewing the number of competency units you have completed each term. In order to remain in good

academic standing, you must complete at least 66.67% of the units you attempt over the length of your program—including any courses you add to your term to accelerate your progress. Additionally, during your first term at WGU you must pass at least 3 competency units in order to remain eligible for financial aid. We know that SAP is complex, so please contact a financial aid counselor should you have additional questions. *Please note: The Endorsement Preparation Program in Educational Leadership is not eligible for federal financial aid.

Courses

Your Degree Plan includes courses needed to complete your program. To obtain your degree, you will be required to demonstrate your skills and knowledge by completing the assessment(s) for each course. In general there are two types of assessments: performance assessments and objective assessments. Performance assessments contain, in most cases, multiple scored tasks such as projects, essays, and research papers. Objective assessments include multiple-choice items, multiple-selection items, matching, short answer, drag-and-drop, and point-and-click item types, as well as case study and video-based items. Certifications verified through third parties may also be included in your program. More detailed information about each assessment is provided in each course of study.

Learning Resources

WGU works with many different educational partners, including enterprises, publishers, training companies, and higher educational institutions, to provide high-quality and effective learning resources that match the competencies you are developing. These vary in type, and may be combined to create the best learning experience for your course. A learning resource can be an e-textbook, online module, study guide, simulation, virtual lab, tutorial, or a combination of these. The cost of most learning resources are included in your tuition and Learning Resource Fee. They can be accessed or enrolled for through your courses. Some degree-specific resources are not covered by your tuition, and you will need to cover those costs separately. WGU also provides a robust library to help you obtain additional learning resources, as needed.

Mobile Compatibility:

The following article provides additional details about the current state of mobile compatibility for learning resources at WGU.

[Student Handbook article: Can I use my mobile device for learning resources?](#)

Standard Path

As previously mentioned, competency units (CUs) have been assigned to each course in order to measure your academic progress. If you are an undergraduate student, you will be expected to enroll in a minimum of 12 competency units each term. Graduate students are expected to enroll in a minimum of 8 competency units each term. A standard plan for a student for this program who entered WGU without any transfer units would look similar to the one on the following page. Your personal progress can be faster, but your pace will be determined by the extent of your transfer units, your time commitment, and your determination to proceed at a faster rate.

Standard Path *for* Master of Public Health

Course Description	CUs	Term
Environmental Health	3	1
Global Health	3	1
Public Health Leadership and Administration	3	2
Social and Behavioral Determinants of Health	3	2
Public Health Assessment, Program Planning, Intervention, and Evaluation	3	2
Public Health Finance and Funding	3	3
Biostatistics and Analysis	3	3
Principles of Epidemiology	3	3
Public Health Policy and Advocacy	3	4
Public Health Education and Promotion	3	4
Public Health Graduate Capstone	3	4
Total CUs	36	

Changes to Curriculum

WGU publishes an Institutional Catalog, which describes the academic requirements of each degree program. Although students are required to complete the program version current at the time of their enrollment, WGU may modify requirements and course offerings within that version of the program to maintain the currency and relevance of WGU's competencies and programs. When program requirements are updated, students readmitting after withdrawal from the university will be expected to re-enter into the most current catalog version of the program.

Areas of Study for Master of Public Health

The following section includes the areas of study in the program, with their associated courses. Your specific learning resources and level of instructional support will vary based on the individual competencies you bring to the program and your confidence in developing the knowledge, skills, and abilities required in each area of the degree. The Degree Plan and learning resources are dynamic, so you need to review your Degree Plan and seek the advice of your mentor regarding the resources before you purchase them.

Public Health

Public Health Core Functions and Essential Services

Public Health Core Functions and Essential Services builds foundational knowledge by exploring the ethical dimensions, intervention techniques, and educational strategies crucial for effective public health practice. Participants delve into the historical underpinnings, philosophy, and core values of public health, gaining insights into ethical principles guiding decision-making. The course equips students with the skills to design and implement impactful public health programs, emphasizing strategies tailored for health disparities and equity. The course navigates current issues and trends, providing a forward-looking perspective. Integrating discussions on core functions and the 10 Essential Services, the course fosters a holistic understanding of prevention science across primary, secondary, and tertiary levels in population health, including health promotion and screening. There are no prerequisites for this course.

This course covers the following competencies:

- *Begin your course by discussing your course planning tool report with your instructor and creating your personalized course plan together.*
- *The learner analyzes the impact public health has had on health outcomes.*
- *The learner examines the core functions and essential services of public health.*
- *The learner explains the differences between primary, secondary, and tertiary prevention.*

Environmental Health

Environmental Health provides learners with foundational knowledge, covering the relationship people have with their environment, the risk management choices that are made, and the resulting associations that affect the health and physical well-being of individuals, communities, and susceptible populations. There are no prerequisites for this course.

This course covers the following competencies:

- *Begin your course by discussing your course planning tool report with your instructor and creating your personalized course plan together.*
- *The learner evaluates the impact human activities have on their environment.*
- *The learner examines how a community can decrease environmental risks and promote health.*
- *The learner explains the role of government in the environmental protection of various dimensions of environmental problems.*

Global Health

Global Health prepares learners to identify and analyze Global Health as a field. Learners consider how globalization has affected the health of various groups of people throughout the world. Likewise, the learner also looks at how economic and environmental factors have different effects on different groups globally. Finally, the course presents the learner with knowledge of various global initiatives and international organizations that strive to promote health and well-being and reduce health disparities. The learner demonstrates their knowledge and skills by drafting an advocacy statement promoting the successful efforts of a global health organization.

This course covers the following competencies:

- *Begin your course by discussing your course planning tool report with your instructor and creating your personalized course plan together.*
- *The learner analyzes the positive and negative impact globalization has on public health.*
- *The learner describes how initiatives and agencies address global health issues.*
- *The learner explains the impact of economic and environmental factors on health outcomes.*

Public Health Leadership and Administration

Public Health Leadership and Administration enables students to apply leadership principles for public health leadership positions. This includes engaging, organizing, and leading diverse groups, as well as addressing ethical issues in the field of public health. Students also apply negotiation and mediation skills to address challenges they may face in the organization or community. There are no prerequisites for this course.

This course covers the following competencies:

- *Begin your course by discussing your course planning tool report with your instructor and creating your personalized course plan together.*
- *The learner applies ethical principles to resolve an ethical dilemma in public health.*
- *The learner applies leadership principles to address an issue within an organization.*
- *The learner evaluates negotiation and mediation skills when implementing a policy to address a public health challenge.*

Social and Behavioral Determinants of Health

Social and Behavioral Determinants of Health provides an overview of social and behavioral determinants and their association with health behaviors, health outcomes, and health disparities. Learners examine the strategies to mitigate social determinant barriers and apply public health theories and models to elicit behavior change and to bridge the health disparity gap. There are no prerequisites for this course.

This course covers the following competencies:

- *Begin your course by discussing your course planning tool report with your instructor and creating your personalized course plan together.*
- *The learner analyzes how social determinants of health (SDOH) affect health behaviors.*
- *The learner applies a public health model or theory for a positive behavior change.*
- *The learner explains how to mitigate barriers created by social determinants of health.*

Public Health Assessment, Program Planning, Intervention, and Evaluation

Public Health Assessment, Program Planning, Implementation and Evaluation explores the key components, concepts, and approaches for the public health assessment and planning process. In this course, students will apply evidence-based practices to conduct a community needs assessment, design a health promotion program, and develop implementation and evaluation plans. There are no prerequisites for this course.

This course covers the following competencies:

- *Begin your course by discussing your course planning tool report with your instructor and creating your personalized course plan together.*
- *The learner analyzes data collected to identify a public health program need.*
- *The learner develops a program evaluation plan for a program that meets an identified public health need.*
- *The learner develops an evidence-based program for a community based on a needs analysis.*
- *The learner develops an implementation plan for a public health program.*

Public Health Finance and Funding

Public Health Finance and Funding offers students a field-specific approach to acquiring the budgetary skills needed to secure funding for public health programs and manage it in prudent ways. Students learn to navigate various funding sources, such as government grants and cooperative agreements, and philanthropic organizations. Students learn to create budgets using government documentation both for managing funds and for persuading funding organizations of the value of projects. Finally, students conduct a variance analysis—the process by which budgets are evaluated for feasibility after programs have launched. There are no prerequisites for this course.

This course covers the following competencies:

- *Begin your course by discussing your course planning tool report with your instructor and creating your personalized course plan together.*
- *The learner compares funding resources for public health initiatives.*
- *The learner develops a budget for a public health initiative using budget principles.*
- *The learner evaluates the budget to determine budgetary needs for the organization.*

Biostatistics and Analysis

Biostatistics and Analysis introduces learners to the role that biostatistics has in public health, predicting public health outcomes and influencing decisions made with policies. Learners will examine the sources and methods of collecting public health information, analyze and interpret quantitative data in research studies, and make inferences on the effectiveness of health program interventions and policies. There are no prerequisites for this course.

This course covers the following competencies:

- *Begin your course by discussing your course planning tool report with your instructor and creating your personalized course plan together.*
- *The learner evaluates the implementation of a preventative program or policy using data.*
- *The learner examines quantitative research to identify health risks.*
- *The learner recommends data collection methods for a given public health context.*

Principles of Epidemiology

Principles of Epidemiology offers an in-depth exploration of foundational principles and methodologies crucial for discerning and interpreting health and disease patterns in populations. Learners engage with core epidemiological concepts, encompassing measures of disease frequency, study designs, and principles of causation. Emphasizing practical applications, the course equips learners with analytical skills and theoretical foundations essential for conducting epidemiological research and contributing to evidence-based public health practices. Delving into a diverse range of topics, participants cultivate a robust understanding of epidemiological principles and their real-world applications, facilitating a seamless integration of knowledge into public health practices. There are no prerequisites for this course.

This course covers the following competencies:

- *Begin your course by discussing your course planning tool report with your instructor and creating your personalized course plan together.*
- *The learner analyzes qualitative and quantitative epidemiological data.*
- *The learner applies epidemiologic methods, concepts, and issues in public health.*
- *The learner evaluates the effectiveness of disease prevention and control programs.*

Public Health Policy and Advocacy

Public Health Policy and Advocacy prepares learners to approach public health in the political landscape. Policy can affect the health of groups ranging in size from individual organizations to entire nations and even the globe, making this an especially powerful and complex tool for the public health specialist. Learners in this course compare international healthcare systems, describe the policy-making process, evaluate a policy for its impact, and advocate in favor of a public health policy. There are no prerequisites for this course.

This course covers the following competencies:

- *Begin your course by discussing your course planning tool report with your instructor and creating your personalized course plan together.*
- *The learner advocates for political, social, or economic policies and programs that improve health in diverse populations.*
- *The learner compares the organization, structure, and function of healthcare, public health, and regulatory systems across national and international settings.*
- *The learner conducts a policy analysis for a given public health issue with consideration for professional ethics and evidence.*
- *The learner evaluates existing policies for their impact on public health and health equity.*

Public Health Education and Promotion

Health Education & Promotion provides learners with a thorough understanding of this multifaceted field, delving into its core concepts, philosophical underpinnings, and fundamental principles. The curriculum explores various teaching methods tailored to the dynamic landscape of health education, equipping learners with versatile tools to effectively communicate health-related information. Learners develop an appreciation for the importance of promoting well-being and preventative measures, recognizing the interconnectedness of physical, mental, and social aspects of health. Through a combination of theoretical exploration and practical applications, this course aims to cultivate not only a strong foundation in health

education, but also essential communication skills vital for disseminating health information in diverse contexts. Learners emerge from the course with a comprehensive skill set, ready to engage in the vital work of educating and empowering individuals and communities to make informed decisions for a healthier future. There are no prerequisites for this course.

This course covers the following competencies:

- *Begin your course by discussing your course planning tool report with your instructor and creating your personalized course plan together.*
- *The learner develops communication strategies around a public health issue for a diverse population.*
- *The learner discusses the different types of public health-specific communication and when to use them.*
- *The learner evaluates the validity of public health information.*

Public Health Graduate Capstone

Public Health Graduate Capstone enables students to investigate a public health issue in their local or home community and recommend new approaches to address that issue. Students practice the skills they have honed over the Master of Public Health program to design one that improves public health through education. Students control the process from research and discovery to program design, ultimately justifying their approach to potential stakeholders.

This course covers the following competencies:

- *The learner analyzes data results from research on a public health need, program, or policy in the community.*
- *The learner demonstrates the ability to communicate verbal and non-verbal audience-appropriate public health content.*
- *The learner designs a program using evidence-based solutions to educate a target audience in the community.*

Accessibility and Accommodations

Western Governors University (WGU) is committed to providing equal access to its academic programs to all qualified students. WGU's Student Disability Services department supports this mission by providing support, resources, advocacy, collaboration, and academic accommodations in accordance with federal and state statutes and regulations to WGU students and prospective students. Potential and current students needing to request accommodation(s) are encouraged to contact Student Disability Services to initiate the request. To initiate the accommodation process, all potential and current WGU students must complete the secure online Accommodation Request Form located at' https://www.wgu.edu/wgu/ada_form. Potential and current students can reach the Student Disability Services team Monday through Friday 8:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. MT at 1-877- 435-7948 x5922 or at sds@wgu.edu.

Need More Information? WGU Student Services

Student Support Services team members also assist with unresolved concerns to find equitable resolutions. To contact the Student Support Services team, please feel free to call 877-435-7948 or e-mail studentservices@wgu.edu. We are available Monday through Friday from 6:00 a.m. to 10:00 p.m., and Saturday and Sunday, 10:00 a.m. to 7:00 p.m, mountain standard time.