



University of  
**Pittsburgh**®

School of Public Health

**Department of Epidemiology**

Master's Degree Programs

Student Manual

## Contact Information

In this document, Epidemiology Master's Program students can find important operational policies, as well as degree overviews, information, and requirements.

### **Important Contact Information:**

As you read through this document, you will see instructions on who to contact for each action/task. Please use the following contact information for the titles that are referenced:

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### **Forms referenced in the document can be found using these links:**

- [School Forms](#)
- [Department of Epidemiology Forms](#)

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# Master's of Public Health (MPH) Degree Overview

- Epidemiology offers one MPH degree program:
  - Master of Public Health (MPH) 45 credit minimum
- Master's Program Director: Nancy W. Glynn, PhD

## Degree Purposes

### [MPH in Epidemiology](#)

The MPH degree is designed to educate the individual on the epidemiological approach to public health. This includes epidemiology, biostatistics, environmental influences on health, public health planning, and health services. Applied experience may also be gained through a 200-hour internship. Although it is a terminal master's degree, it may also serve as prerequisite training for a doctoral degree program in Epidemiology.

## Academic Advisement and Research Mentorship

[Dr. Nancy W. Glynn](#) acts as an academic advisor for MPH students. When students have completed their required coursework and are prepared to move forward with development of their culminating essay projects, they are typically connected with another Epidemiology faculty member who will act as a research mentor.

## Degree Completion Timeframes

- Master's Program students typically begin their programs of study in fall term.
- The MPH program for a matriculated graduate student may be completed in 3 academic terms (fall, spring, and the following fall – a required internship is typically scheduled for the summer of the first academic year).
- University of Pittsburgh undergraduates who qualify may enter the [Pitt Public Health Accelerated Bachelor's/Master's Program](#), and complete both their undergraduate and MPH program in five years.
- University of Pittsburgh [Statute of Limitations policy](#) indicates that MPH students must complete their degree requirements within 5 concurrent years after their matriculation terms.

## Program of Study

- Refer to the [Core Courses and Requirements](#) section of the Epidemiology Student Handbook & Forms page for an overview of Pitt Public Health and Departmental core course requirements.
- For a suggested course plan for MPH students, refer to the [MPH Program Course Sequence document](#) for your matriculation year below.
- Students may use the [Advisement Tracking Worksheet](#) for their program to help plan their courses for the duration of their program.
- Student course enrollment
  - Master's program students will meet individually with the Master's Program Director regarding course selection prior to each academic term.
  - The Director of Student Services for the Epidemiology Department will e-mail students instructions for self-enrollment.

Epidemiology MPH Program Sequence Documents  
by Matriculation Year

**3 Term Suggested Course Sequence (December Graduation)  
Master of Public Health (MPH) 45 Credit Program in Epidemiology  
School of Public Health - University of Pittsburgh  
For Fall 2024 Matriculation**

**Fall Term, Year 1 (15 credits)**

Course #	Course Title	Credits
EPIDEM 2110	Principles of Epidemiology	3
EPIDEM 2250	Seminar in Epidemiology (highly encouraged to attend each term, must register for credit at least once prior to graduation)	1
BIOST 2041	Introduction to Statistical Methods 1	3
BCHS 2509 / HPM 2001	Social and Behavioral Science in Public Health OR Health Policy and Management in Public Health (both offered fall/spring)	3
PUBHLT 2033	Foundations in Public Health	1
PUBHLT 2015	Public Health Biology (exemptions often granted for undergraduate biology majors/minors)	2
PUBHLT 2022	Dean's Public Health Grand Rounds (must register for 2 terms)	0
Suggested Elective		
EPIDEM 2185 or EPIDEM 2186	<i>Introduction to SAS or Introduction to R</i>	2
Required Online Trainings	Human Subjects Internal Review Board (IRB) Module	0
	Pitt Public Health Academic Integrity Module	0

**Spring Term, Year 1 (15 credits)**

EPIDEM 2180	Fundamental Epidemiologic Methods	3
BIOST 2142	Applied Regression Analysis	3
EPIDEM 2160	Epidemiology of Infectious Diseases	2
EPIDEM 2170	Chronic Disease Epidemiology	2
EOH 2013 / PUBHLT 2034	Environmental Health & Disease OR Public Health Communications (offered every fall and spring)	2
BCHS 2509 / HPM 2001	Social and Behavioral Science in Public Health OR Health Policy and Management in Public Health (offered fall/spring)	3
PUBHLT 2022	Dean's Public Health Grand Rounds (must register for 2 terms)	0
Elective(s)	In consultation with Advisor	variable

**Summer Term, Year 1**

EPIDEM 2214	Public Health Internship**	1 or 2

**Fall Term, Year 2 (15 credits)**

EPIDEM 2181	Design and Conduct of Clinical Trials	2
EPIDEM 2214	Public Health Internship (register if summer credits deferred)	1 or 2
EPIDEM 2210	Essay (based on approved topic in consultation with advisor)	1 or 2
EOH 2013 / PUBHLT 2034 / BCHS 2509 / HPM 2001	One MPH core course if not taken in prior terms*	2 or 3
PUBHLT 2035	Applications in Public Health	2
Elective(s)	In consultation with Advisor	variable
Communications Requirement	Oral Presentation Communications Competency	0

\*Only one School Core requirement can be taken concurrently with PUBHLT 2035 Applications (e.g., HPM 2001, EOH 2013 or BCBS 2509). For planning purposes, HPM 2001 conflicts with EPIDEM 2189, an advanced Epi Methods course (elective) in Fall, Year 2.

\*\* Summer Internship credits are typically deferred to 2<sup>nd</sup> Fall term to ease financial burden for full-time students.

**3 Term Suggested Course Sequence (December Graduation)  
Master of Public Health (MPH) 45 Credit Program in Epidemiology  
Graduate School of Public Health - University of Pittsburgh  
For Fall 2023 Matriculation**

**Fall Term, Year 1 (15 credits)**

Course #	Course Title	Credits
EPIDEM 2110	Principles of Epidemiology	3
EPIDEM 2250	Seminar in Epidemiology (highly encouraged to attend each term, must register for credit at least once prior to graduation)	1
BIOST 2041	Introduction to Statistical Methods 1	3
BCHS 2509/HPM 2001	Social and Behavioral Science and Public Health OR Health Policy and Management in Public Health (both offered fall/spring)	3
PUBHLT 2033	Foundations in Public Health	1
PUBHLT 2015	Public Health Biology (exemptions often granted for undergraduate biology majors/minors)	2
PUBHLT 2022	Dean's Public Health Grand Rounds (must register for 2 terms)	0
Suggested Elective		
EPIDEM 2185 or EPIDEM 2186	<i>Introduction to SAS or Introduction to R</i>	2
Required Online Trainings	Human Subjects Internal Review Board (IRB) Module	0
	Pitt Public Health Academic Integrity Module	0

**Spring Term, Year 1 (15 credits)**

EPIDEM 2180	Fundamental Epidemiologic Methods	3
BIOST 2049	Applied Regression Analysis	3
EPIDEM 2160	Epidemiology of Infectious Diseases	2
EOH 2013/PUBHLT 2034	Environmental Health & Disease OR Public Health Communications (offered every fall and spring)	2
BCHS 2509/HPM 2001	Social and Behavioral Science and Public Health OR Health Policy and Management in Public Health (offered fall/spring)	3
PUBHLT 2022	Dean's Public Health Grand Rounds (must register for 2 terms)	0
Elective(s)	In consultation with Advisor	variable

**Summer Term, Year 1**

EPIDEM 2214	Public Health Internship**	1 or 2
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**Fall Term, Year 2 (15 credits)**

EPIDEM 2170	Chronic Disease Epidemiology	2
EPIDEM 2181	Design and Conduct of Clinical Trials	2
EPIDEM 2214	Public Health Internship (register if summer credits deferred)	1 or 2
EPIDEM 2210	Essay (based on approved topic in consultation with advisor)	1 or 2
EOH 2013/PUBHLT 2034/ BCHS 2509/HPM 2001	One MPH core course if not taken in prior term)*	2 or 3
PUBHLT 2035	Applications in Public Health	2
Elective(s)	In consultation with Advisor	variable
Communications Requirement	Oral Presentation Communications Competency	0

\*Only one School Core requirement can be taken concurrently with PUBHLT 2035 Applications (e.g., HPM 2001, EOH 2013 or BCHS 2509). For planning purposes, HPM2001 conflicts with EPIDEM 2189, an advanced Epi Methods course (elective) in Fall, Year 2.

\*\* Summer Internship credits can be deferred to Fall term to ease financial burden of full-time students.

### **Communications Competency Requirement**

- Prior to completing their degrees, Master's program students must complete one public presentation at Epi in Action, Dean's Day, a professional conference, or another meeting approved by their advisor.
- The [Communications Competency Requirement Record form](#) should be completed to document this requirement and submitted to the Epidemiology Student Services Office.
- See the [Competency in Communication Requirement section](#) for more details.

### **Public Health Internships—EPIDEM 2214**

- The internship program director is Nancy W. Glynn, PhD.
- After completing two terms of course work in the program, students are eligible to discuss moving forward with the internship with the Program Director.
- Most students complete their experience during the first summer of their study, although it is possible to register for the course in a different term to reduce tuition expenses for some students.
- MPH students must develop two deliverables demonstrating fulfillment of CEPH competencies during their internship experience, which will be housed in an e-portfolio documenting the experience.
- Students may develop their master's essay based on their internship. This should be discussed with the student's academic advisor.
- Internship requirements for Epidemiology also include an abstract and poster presentation, held in fall term each year.

### **Masters Essay—EPIDEM 2210**

- The [MPH Essay Guidelines document](#) provides details about format, timeline, grading, and committee requirements for the essay.
- Essay credits
  - MPH Students should register for 1-2 credits when enrolling in EPIDEM 2210 (Dr. Glynn's section). Credits may be spread across multiple academic terms, but students should participate in the EPIDEM 2210 course in the term they expect to graduate.
  - Students must be registered for at least 1 course credit in the term of their graduation.
- Topic selection should be discussed with academic advisor and/or research mentor.

### **Financial aid and student employment**

- Contact the Master's Program Director with questions.
- Note that Pitt undergraduates qualify for [Pitt2Pitt scholarship](#) funding if they wish to pursue an MPH program.



## **Graduation**

Students anticipating graduation receive support from the Epidemiology master's program director through participation in EPIDEM 2210, the Student Services Office, and the Student Affairs Office to ensure they are aware of all required departmental and school operational processes.

Refer to the [Graduation section](#) of the Pitt Public Health Website to learn more about important deadlines.

- Students should discuss graduation readiness with their academic advisor.
- When academic advisor confirms they are academically prepared, student should follow protocols to apply to graduate.
- Students are responsible for communicating with the Student Affairs Office at [stuaff@pitt.edu](mailto:stuaff@pitt.edu) with questions about school-level form requirements and protocols (including uploading their committee-approved essays).
- All Epidemiology students are certified for graduation by the Epidemiology department.

## Master's of Science (MS) Degree Overview

- Epidemiology master's degree programs include:
  - Master of Science (MS)—45 credit minimum
  - Master of Science (MS)—30 credit minimum
- Master's Program Director: Nancy Glynn, PhD

### **Degree Purposes**

#### [MS in Epidemiology](#)

The MS degree includes a more flexible mix of courses in epidemiology and biostatistics for those with a research focus. The **45-credit MS degree** is designed, in general, for individuals who do not hold a professional degree in the health sciences or a doctoral degree. Although it is a terminal master's degree, it may also serve as prerequisite training for a doctoral degree program in the Epidemiology Department.

The condensed **30-credit MS degree** is available for health professionals who are US citizens or permanent residents with graduate degrees in the health sciences (e.g. medicine, dentistry, nursing, etc.). It is meant to augment prior professional training acquired by the individual. Health professionals seeking a broader exposure to public health should consider the MPH program.

### **Academic Advisement and Research Mentorship**

[Dr. Nancy Glynn](#) is the academic advisor for MS students. When students have completed their required coursework and are prepared to move forward with development of their culminating thesis projects, they will proceed under the direction of another Epidemiology faculty member who will serve as their thesis advisor.

### **Degree Completion Timeframes**

- Master's students typically begin their program of study in fall term.
- A 45-credit MS program for a matriculated graduate student may be completed in 3 academic terms (fall, spring, and the following fall); the required thesis project is typically started in the summer between the first and second year and completed in fall term of the second academic year.
- The 30-credit MS program may be completed in 3 terms as well; the required MS thesis project may be optionally registered for in summer term of the first academic year.
- University of Pittsburgh undergraduates who qualify may enter the [Pitt Public Health Accelerated Bachelor's/Master's Program](#), and complete both their undergraduate and MPH or MS program in five years.
- University of Pittsburgh [Statute of Limitations policy](#) indicates that MS students must complete their degree requirements within 4 concurrent years after their matriculation terms.

## Program of Study

- Refer to the [Core Courses and Requirements](#) section of the Epidemiology Student Handbook & Forms page for an overview of Pitt Public Health and Departmental core course requirements.
- For a suggested course plan for MS students, refer to the [MS Program Course Sequence document](#) for your program and matriculation year below.
- Students may use the [Advisement Tracking Worksheet](#) for their program to help plan their courses for the duration of their program.
- Student course enrollment
  - Master's program students will meet individually with the Master's Program Director concerning course selection prior to each academic term.
  - The Director of Student Services for the Epidemiology Department will e-mail students instructions for self-enrollment.

# Epidemiology MS Program Sequence Documents by Matriculation Year

**Suggested Course Sequence**  
**Master of Science (MS) 45 Credit Program in Epidemiology**  
**School of Public Health - University of Pittsburgh**

**For Fall 2024 Matriculation**

<b>Fall Term, Year 1</b>		
<b>Course #</b>	<b>Course Title</b>	<b>Credits</b>
EPIDEM 2110	Principles of Epidemiology	3
EPIDEM 2185 or EPIDEM 2186	Introduction to SAS or Introduction to R	2
BIOSTAT 2041	Introduction to Statistical Methods 1	3
EPIDEM 2250	Seminar in Epidemiology (highly encouraged to attend each term, must register for credit at least once prior to graduation)	1
PUBHLT 2015	Public Health Biology (exemptions often granted for undergraduate biology majors)	2
PUBLHT 2022	Dean's Public Health Grand Rounds (must register for 2 terms)	0
Elective(s)	In consultation with Advisor	variable
Required Online Trainings	Human Subjects Internal Review Board (IRB) Module	0
	Pitt Public Health Academic Integrity Module	0
<b>Spring Term, Year 1</b>		
EPIDEM 2180	Fundamental Epidemiologic Methods	3
BIOSTAT 2142	Applied Regression Analysis	3
EPIDEM 2160	Epidemiology of Infectious Diseases	2
EPIDEM 2170	Chronic Disease Epidemiology	2
PUBHLT 2011	Essentials of Public Health (can be taken in Spring, Year 2 for April graduates)	3
PUBHLT 2022	Dean's Public Health Grand Rounds (must register for 2 terms)	0
Elective(s)	In consultation with Advisor	variable
<b>Fall Term, Year 2</b>		
EPIDEM 2181	Design and Conduct of Clinical Trials	2
EPIDEM 2189 or approved alternative*	Epidemiologic Methods of Longitudinal & Time-To-Events Analyses	3
EPIDEM 2210	Master's Thesis (credits may be split over multiple terms)	3 to 5
Elective(s)	In consultation with Advisor (one suggested course below)	variable
Communications Requirement	Oral Presentation Communications Competency	0

\*To be determined in consultation with your academic advisor.

**Suggested Course Sequence**  
**Master of Science (MS) 30 Credit Program in Epidemiology**  
**Graduate School of Public Health - University of Pittsburgh**

**For Fall 2024 Matriculation**

**Fall Term, Year 1**

<b>Course #</b>	<b>Course Title</b>	<b>Credits</b>
BIOST 2041	Introduction to Statistical Methods 1	3
EPIDEM 2185 or EPIDEM 2186	Introduction to SAS or Introduction to R	2
EPIDEM 2110	Principles of Epidemiology	3
EPIDEM 2250	Seminar in Epidemiology (highly encouraged to attend each term, must register for credit at least once prior to graduation)	1
PUBLHT 2022	Dean's Public Health Grand Rounds (must register for 2 terms)	0
Elective(s)	In consultation with advisor	variable
Required Online Trainings	Human Subjects Internal Review Board (IRB) Module	
	Pitt Public Health Academic Integrity Module Training	

**Spring Term, Year 1**

BIOST 2142	Applied Regression Analysis	3
EPIDEM 2180	Fundamental Epidemiologic Methods	3
EPIDEM 2160 or EPIDEM 2170 or EPIDEM 2260	Epidemiology of Infectious Diseases (Spring only) or Chronic Disease Epidemiology (Spring only) or Epidemiologic Basis of Disease Control (Fall only)	2
PUBHLT 2011	Essentials of Public Health	3
PUBHLT 2022	Dean's Public Health Grand Rounds (must register for 2 terms)	0
Elective(s)	In consultation with advisor	variable

**Summer Term, Year 1 (optional)**

<b>Course #</b>	<b>Course Title</b>	<b>Credits</b>
EPIDEM 2210	Master's Thesis (credits may be split over multiple terms)	3 - 5

**Fall Term, Year 2**

<b>Course #</b>	<b>Course Title</b>	<b>Credits</b>
EPIDEM 2181	Design and Conduct of Clinical Trials	2
EPIDEM 2210	Master's Thesis (credits may be split over multiple terms)	3 - 5
Elective(s)	In consultation with Advisor	variable
Communications Requirement	Oral Presentation Communications Competency	0

**Suggested Course Sequence**  
**Master of Science (MS) 45 Credit Program in Epidemiology**  
**Graduate School of Public Health - University of Pittsburgh**

**For Fall 2023 Matriculation**

**Fall Term, Year 1**

Course #	Course Title	Credits
EPIDEM 2110	Principles of Epidemiology	3
EPIDEM 2185 or EPIDEM 2186	Introduction to SAS or Introduction to R	2
BIOSTAT 2041	Introduction to Statistical Methods 1	3
EPIDEM 2250	Seminar in Epidemiology (highly encouraged to attend each term, must register for credit at least once prior to graduation)	1
PUBHLT 2015	Public Health Biology (exemptions often granted for undergraduate biology majors)	2
PUBHLT 2022	Dean's Public Health Grand Rounds (must register for 2 terms)	0
Elective(s)	In consultation with Advisor	variable
Required Online Trainings	Human Subjects Internal Review Board (IRB) Module	0
	Pitt Public Health Academic Integrity Module	0

**Spring Term, Year 1**

EPIDEM 2180	Fundamental Epidemiologic Methods	3
BIOSTAT 2049	Applied Regression Analysis	3
EPIDEM 2160	Epidemiology of Infectious Diseases	2
PUBHLT 2011	Essentials of Public Health (can be taken in Spring, Year 2 for April graduates)	3
PUBHLT 2022	Dean's Public Health Grand Rounds (must register for 2 terms)	0
Elective(s)	In consultation with Advisor	variable

**Fall Term, Year 2**

EPIDEM 2170	Chronic Disease Epidemiology	2
EPIDEM 2181	Design and Conduct of Clinical Trials	2
EPIDEM 2189 or BIOST 2050 or BIOST 2066	Epidemiologic Methods of Longitudinal & Time-To-Events Analyses or Longitudinal and Clustered Data Analysis or Applied Survival Analysis: Methods and Practice	2 or 3
EPIDEM 2210	Master's Thesis (credits may be split over multiple terms)	3 to 5
Elective(s)	In consultation with Advisor (one suggested course below)	variable
<i>PUBHLT 2030</i>	<i>Research Ethics and the Responsible Conduct of Research</i>	1
Communications Requirement	Oral Presentation Communications Competency	0

**Suggested Course Sequence**  
**Master of Science (MS) 30 Credit Program in Epidemiology**  
**Graduate School of Public Health - University of Pittsburgh**

**For Fall 2023 Matriculation**

**Fall Term, Year 1**

<b>Course #</b>	<b>Course Title</b>	<b>Credits</b>
BIOST 2041	Introduction to Statistical Methods 1	3
EPIDEM 2185 or EPIDEM 2186	Introduction to SAS or Introduction to R	2
EPIDEM 2110	Principles of Epidemiology	3
EPIDEM 2250	Seminar in Epidemiology (highly encouraged to attend each term, must register for credit at least once prior to graduation)	1
PUBHLT 2022	Dean's Public Health Grand Rounds (must register for 2 terms)	0
Elective(s)	In consultation with advisor	variable
Required Online Trainings	Human Subjects Internal Review Board (IRB) Module	
	Pitt Public Health Academic Integrity Module Training	

**Spring Term, Year 1**

BIOST 2049	Applied Regression Analysis	3
EPIDEM 2180	Fundamental Epidemiologic Methods	3
PUBHLT 2011	Essentials of Public Health	3
PUBHLT 2022	Dean's Public Health Grand Rounds (must register for 2 terms)	0
Elective(s)	In consultation with advisor	variable

**Summer Term, Year 1 (optional)**

<b>Course #</b>	<b>Course Title</b>	<b>Credits</b>
EPIDEM 2210	Master's Thesis (credits may be split over multiple terms)	3 - 5

**Fall Term, Year 2**

<b>Course #</b>	<b>Course Title</b>	<b>Credits</b>
EPIDEM 2160 or EPIDEM 2170 or EPIDEM 2260	Epidemiology of Infectious Diseases (offered in Spring only) or Chronic Disease Epidemiology or Epidemiologic Basis of Disease Control	2
EPIDEM 2181	Design and Conduct of Clinical Trials	2
EPIDEM 2210	Master's Thesis (credits may be split over multiple terms)	3 - 5
Elective(s)	In consultation with Advisor	variable
<i>Suggested:</i> PUBHLT 2030	<i>Research Ethics and the Responsible Conduct of Research</i>	1
Communications Requirement	Oral Presentation Communications Competency	0



### **Communications Competency Requirement**

- Prior to completing their degrees, Master's program students must complete one public presentation at Epi in Action, Dean's Day, a professional conference, or another meeting approved by their advisor.
- The [Communications Competency Requirement Record form](#) should be completed to document this requirement and submitted to the Epidemiology Student Services Office.
- Note that the MS Comprehensive Exam and the MS Thesis defense do not count as eligible presentations.
- See the [Competency in Communication Requirement section](#) for more details.

### **MS Oral Comprehensive Examination**

- The [MS Thesis Guidelines document](#) provides information concerning the Comprehensive Exam milestone, as well as the faculty committee that must be proposed and approved to administer it and direct student ongoing research efforts.

### **Master's Thesis—EPIDEM 2210**

- The [MS Thesis Guidelines document](#) provides additional details concerning thesis development and protocols.
- Thesis credits
  - MS Students should register for 3-5 credits when enrolling in EPIDEM 2210. Credits may be spread across multiple terms.
  - Students must be registered for at least 1 course credit in the term of their graduation.
- Topic selection should be discussed with academic advisor and/or thesis advisor.

### **Thesis Defense**

- The [MS Thesis Guidelines document](#) provides information concerning Thesis Defense milestone protocols.

### **Financial aid and student employment**

- Contact the Master's Program Director with questions.
- Note that Pitt undergraduates qualify for [Pitt2Pitt scholarship](#) funding if they wish to pursue an MS program.

## **Graduation**

Students anticipating graduation receive support from the Epidemiology master's program director through participation in EPIDEM 2210, the Student Services Office, and the Student Affairs Office to ensure they are aware of all required departmental and school operational processes.

Refer to the [Graduation](#) section of the Pitt Public Health Website to learn more about processes and requirement deadlines.

- Students should discuss graduation readiness with their academic advisor.
- When academic advisor confirms they are academically prepared, student should follow protocols to apply to graduate.
- Students are responsible for communicating with the Student Affairs Office at [stuaff@pitt.edu](mailto:stuaff@pitt.edu) with questions about school-level form requirements and protocols (including uploading of their committee-approved essays).
- All Epidemiology students are certified for graduation by the Epidemiology department.

## Epidemiology Master’s Program Policies & Procedures

The Master’s Program Director serves as academic advisor to all Epidemiology Master’s Students. Any questions regarding academic advising should be directed to the Master’s Program Director.

### Course Enrollment

Epidemiology Master’s Program students may self-register after they meet with their academic advisor and the hold has been lifted by Student Services.

### General Course Enrollment Information

- **Student enrollment process (Table 1)**
  - In fall and spring terms, students receive University designated enrollment appointments. Students will then receive communication from their academic advisor with directions on how to book an advising appointment.
  - During their appointment, the student and their academic advisor will complete the [Enrollment Form](#). The form will be sent through DocuSign for the student and academic advisor to sign. Form is then automatically sent to Student Services through DocuSign.
  - Receipt of these signed forms by the Student Services staff represents advisor approval of the courses selected.
  - This authorizes Student Services to remove the student’s University assigned Advisement Services Indicator hold and enables students to proceed with the [self-enrollment process](#). The student receives an email from Student Services confirming the hold has been removed and they can proceed to self-enrollment.
  - At that time, students may self-register on or after their enrollment appointment dates, through the end of the registration period for the term.
  - Enrollment appointment dates can be found in the [Student Center](#). There are no enrollment appointments assigned to students in summer term.
  
- **Assistance with the course enrollment process**
  - Students should contact the Epidemiology Student Services Specialist for the Master’s Program with enrollment questions.

**Table 1**

RESPONSIBILITY	ACTION / POLICY
Student & Academic Advisor	Student discusses course selection with academic advisor and <a href="#">Enrollment Form</a> is completed during advising appointment. Master’s Program Director send the form to student to sign through DocuSign and then signs. Form is then automatically sent to Student Services through DocuSign.
Student Services Staff	Receives signed form through DocuSign. Receipt of signed form is indication that student has received appropriate academic advisement from their academic advisor. Lifts PeopleSoft Advisement Services indicator hold, enabling student to register for their courses.
Student	Registers for courses using the University student self-enrollment system.

### Registration for more than 15 credits

- A full-time course credit load for master's students is 9 – 15 credits. Graduate students who register for more than 15 credits will be billed for each additional credit that exceeds their full-time tuition rate.
- Graduate students requesting to register for more than 15 credits must first receive approval from their academic advisor.
- After receiving approval, students will be put in contact with the Master's Program Epidemiology Student Services Specialist to facilitate the registration process for the additional credit(s).

### When instructor permission is required for course enrollment (Table 2)

- Enrollment in some courses is accepted only by special permission of the instructor(s). Courses requiring permission for enrollment are indicated in the online [Pitt Public Health course schedule](#) by term.
- Additionally, the Master's Program Director will inform students which courses require instructor permission during the student's advising appointment.
- Non-Epidemiology courses require students to obtain their own permission numbers from the course director, with some exceptions.

Table 2

RESPONSIBILITY	ACTION / POLICY
Student	Contacts course instructor to request permission to enter course. If the instructor approves the student's enrollment into the closed or restricted course, the email should be forwarded to the Master's Program Epidemiology Student Services Specialist.
Student Services Staff	Upon receipt of instructor's approval, the Student Services Staff Specialist will do one of the following: <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• If an EPIDEM class, a permission number will be forwarded to the student.</li><li>• If a non-EPIDEM class, the student will be advised on how to obtain a permission number from the respective department.</li></ul>
Student	Enters permission number while completing self-enrollment process.

### Obtaining enrollment verification

- Proof of enrollment may be obtained from the [University Registrar's Office](#). Verification may be obtained by visiting the office in person, or requested electronically.

### Enrollment in independent study course (EPIDEM 2213)

- To enroll in an independent study course, students should first discuss their plans with their academic advisor.

- Then students should complete an [Independent Study Form](#) in consultation with the independent study faculty member lead in addition to including this course on their enrollment form.
- Students should then send the completed Independent Study Form to the Master's Program Epidemiology Student Services Specialist.

### **Undergraduate course enrollment**

- Pitt Public Health students may register for undergraduate courses with the permission of their academic advisor.
- Advisors will indicate permission with signatures on the student's [Enrollment Forms](#). However, students may also need to obtain permission from the instructor of the course.
- Students should contact the Master's Program Epidemiology Student Services Specialist for specific instructions.
- Students should be aware that credits obtained from undergraduate courses do not go towards earning a master's or doctoral degree.

### **Enrollment in the term of graduation**

- The current School of Public Health policy is that degree-seeking graduate students must be registered for at least one credit in the term of graduation.
- Under extenuating circumstances, exceptions to this rule can be granted, provided the student was registered for credit in the term prior to the term in which they are graduating. These circumstances may include illness, a death in the family, or other situations beyond the student's control, which delay completion of their essay, thesis, or dissertation in time of graduation.
- Epidemiology students **will not be eligible** for an exception if they have attended a Pitt Public Health Epidemiology master's program for **less than four terms**. If they have been enrolled four or more terms, they may be granted a 1-credit waiver in extenuating circumstances, such as the ones described above.
- This waiver will apply for one term only. If the student is unable to finish in that term, they will be required to pay for any subsequent terms.
- This exception is made at the discretion of and with the approval of: 1) the student's primary reader/advisor and 2) the relevant program director. **Two** faculty members must sign off on the request.

### **Inactive Student Policy**

- Students who do not register for three consecutive terms are considered inactive if not registered by the add-drop deadline of the third term.
- As an example, if a student does not register for fall and spring, the student is considered inactive if not registered by the add-drop period for the subsequent summer term.
- Inactive students must [re-apply via SOPHAS](#) if they wish to re-register. Contact the Director of the Epidemiology Student Services for more information on how to reobtain active student status.

Additional information concerning student self-enrollment procedures can be found on the [University Registrar's website](#).

**Enrollment in Courses Outside the University of Pittsburgh at Specific Regional Academic Institutions (Cross Registration)**

- The University of Pittsburgh has cross-registration agreements with several regional academic institutions regarding enrollment of Pitt students in their courses. More information about these types of registrations is available on the [University Registrar’s Office site](#).
- Students must be registered as full time (enrolled in 9 – 15 credits) in fall and spring terms at the University before cross-registration can be approved. Cross registration is not available in summer terms. Please contact the Director of Epidemiology Student Services if interested.

**Course Add/Drop (Table 3)**

- The [Enrollment Form](#) used to register for courses is also utilized to add or drop courses. The add/drop deadline each term can be found on the [School of Public Health Academic Calendar](#).
- Students interested in adding or dropping a course must first get permission from their academic advisor.
- All students requesting late transactions (after add/drop deadlines) must also have the approval of the Pitt Public Health Student Services Director, in addition to that of their academic advisor which will be facilitated by the Master’s Degree Program Director.
- Students **resign** when they request withdrawal from all enrolled courses for the term. Resignation does not automatically result in a refund of all charges, and may only result in a partial refund depending upon the date in the term the resignation was processed.

**Table 3**

RESPONSIBILITY	ACTION / POLICY
Student	<p><b>Before Add/Drop Deadline:</b> If it is before the deadline and the student is already registered for one or more courses, they should complete the <a href="#">Enrollment Form</a> to indicate the courses they want added or dropped. The student and their academic advisor must sign the form via DocuSign with a copy to the Master’s Program Student Services Specialist, then complete the self-enrollment process.</p> <p><b>Adding a Course After Add/Drop Deadline:</b> Only in extenuating circumstances may students attempt to add a class after a term’s add/drop deadline.</p> <p>Students requesting course adds after the deadline must first obtain approval from their academic advisor. Then they should get written permission to enroll from the course instructor. Once they have permission, they should complete the <a href="#">Enrollment Form</a> and have it signed by their advisor. The Enrollment Form and the written authorization from the course instructor should then be sent to the Director of Epidemiology Student Services, who will then send to the Pitt Public Health Student Services Director.</p> <p>If the add request is approved by the Pitt Public Health Student Services Director, the University Registrar’s Office will consider and either approve/disapprove it.</p>

	<p>Permission numbers are not needed for approved enrollments beyond the add/drop deadline unless special permission is required to enter the course in question.</p> <p><b><u>Dropping a Course After Add/Drop Deadline</u></b></p> <p>Students requesting a course drop after the deadline must first talk with their academic advisor and get permission in the form of a signature on the <a href="#">Enrollment Form</a>. The Enrollment Form and the written authorization should then be sent to the Director of Epidemiology Student Services, who will then send to the Pitt Public Health Student Services Director.</p> <p>If the drop request is approved by the Pitt Public Health Student Services Director, the University Registrar’s Office will consider and either approve/disapprove it.</p> <p>If the drop request is not approved, students may consider processing a <a href="#">Monitored Withdrawal Request form</a> to withdrawal from the course if the term deadline for this process has not passed. In cases where a course must be dropped, a Monitored Withdrawal Form must be completed.</p> <p>Refer to the <i>Monitored Withdrawal</i> section below.</p>
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**Monitored Withdrawals (Table 4)**

- If a student wishes to withdrawal from a course after the term’s add/drop deadline, a Monitored Withdrawal Request form should be processed. More information about Monitored Withdrawals is posted on the [University Registrar’s Office Web site](#).
- Students withdrawing from a course in this manner receive a “W” for the course on their transcripts and receive no tuition reimbursement. This “W” grade has no impact on the Grade Point Average (GPA) earned, requirements toward student degree completion, or academic progress for purposes of financial aid eligibility.

**Table 4**

RESPONSIBILITY	ACTION / POLICY
Student	Confers with their academic advisor regarding the course drop. Master’s Program Director informs the Director of Epidemiology Student Services that student wishes to complete <a href="#">Monitored Withdrawal Request Form</a> .
Director of Epidemiology Student Services	Completes the Monitored Withdrawal Request Form. It is then forwarded to the student and the Pitt Public Health Student Services Director for signature using DocuSign.
Student	Upon receipt of the form via DocuSign, the student will sign and date, confirming request to withdrawal from course.
Pitt Public Health Student Services Director	Signs form to authorize withdrawal and forwards it to the University Registrar’s Office for further processing.

### Repeating Courses (Table 5)

- If authorized by the student’s academic advisor, a student may repeat a course in which a grade of B- or lower is received.
- Students may not repeat a school-wide core course or required departmental course more than once (i.e., course may only be taken twice).
- Students who fail a school-wide core course or required departmental course twice are subject to dismissal.
- See Pitt Public Health [academic dismissal and probation guidelines](#).

**Table 5**

RESPONSIBILITY	ACTION / POLICY
Student	Discusses desire to repeat course with advisor, obtains appropriate approvals, completes <a href="#">Enrollment Form</a> and requests advisor signature.
Advisor	Signs Enrollment Form to indicate course repeat approval.
Student	E-mails Enrollment Form to Student Services Offices.
Student	Inform the Director of Epidemiology Student Services that they are repeating a course.
Director of Epidemiology Student Services	Completes <a href="#">Course Repeat Form</a> . Forwards form to Academic Advisor and Pitt Public Health Student Services Director to request inclusion of only last course grade for GPA computational purposes.

### Course Exemptions

#### Pitt Public Health and Departmental Core Course Exemptions

**Table 6**

RESPONSIBILITY	ACTION / POLICY
Student	At first advising meeting, students will discuss with their academic advisor all previously taken courses that justify an exemption(s). All exemptions are processed for students prior to the start of the first fall term once the student submits the required paperwork that the Director of Masters Degree Programs requests.
Epidemiology Student Services Staff	Ensures Pitt Public Health Student Affairs staff receives copies of exemption forms after they are processed.



## Credit Transfers

### General Credit Transfer Information (Table 7)

- In any course credit transfers, associated grades must be a “B” or higher. Grades (and quality points) are not recorded for credits accepted by transfer.
- Credits may be transferred from another academic institution, a University of Pittsburgh school, or another department in Pitt Public Health.
- Credit transfers must be discussed with and approved by each student’s advisor.
- [A Course Credits Accepted form](#) should be completed and submitted to the Master’s Program Epidemiology Student Services Specialist. Generally speaking, courses taken at previously attended institutions must be matched on the form with Pitt Public Health courses that are comparable in content.

Table 7

RESPONSIBILITY	ACTION / POLICY
Epidemiology Student Services Staff	Prepares letter or memo on behalf of an Epidemiology academic advisor, indicating approval of credits being transferred from a University of Pittsburgh school (outside of Pitt Public Health). A copy will be forwarded to Pitt Public Health Student Affairs for the student’s school-level file.
Student transferring credits from another university	Obtains and completes <a href="#">Course Credits Accepted Form</a> and requests advisor approval and signature. Individual course credits previously earned should be linked to Pitt Public Health course credits on the form. It should be delivered or e-mailed to the Master’s Program Epidemiology Student Services Specialist, who will retain a copy. The original form should be forwarded to Pitt Public Health Student Affairs.
Pitt Public Health Student Affairs	Reviews/approves Course Credits Accepted Forms and any supporting memo or letters. Individual course credits accepted are subsequently entered into PeopleSoft.

### Continuing Students - Completing Another Degree During or After Their Course of Study

- Students already enrolled in the Epidemiology MPH/MS program who are accepted into the Epidemiology PhD program may transfer all of their credits, with a grade of B or higher, toward their doctoral degree. Students who have already graduated with an MPH/MS in Epidemiology and are then accepted into the Epidemiology PhD program may transfer all of their master’s degree credits toward their doctoral degree if the date of graduation was within 5 years of matriculation into the doctoral program. If the MPH/MS graduation date was greater than 5 years before matriculation into the doctoral program, a maximum of 24 credits may be transferred.

### Master's Degree Credit Transfers

- Pitt Public Health students enrolled in an MS program who earned prior graduate-level credits, but no degree, may transfer up to 6 credits to their current program.
- Pitt Public Health MPH students who earned prior graduate-level credits, but no degree, may transfer up to 1/3 of the required credits for their MPH to their program (15 credits for Epidemiology MPH).
- A master's program student (MPH or MS) who has earned a prior graduate degree may transfer 6 credits to a master's degree at Pitt Public Health. All required program coursework must still be completed.

### Other Credit Transfer Policies

- Course credit transfer acceptance does not automatically imply course exemption from Pitt Public Health or Departmental core requirements. All course exemptions must be discussed with and approved by the student's academic advisor.

### Changing To/Adding Another Degree Program

#### Current Epidemiology Department or Pitt Public Health Students

- Students desiring enrollment in two independent degree programs must be admitted to both programs, and must satisfy degree requirements of both.
- The [Pitt Public Health Website](#) provides more information concerning the processes involved.
- Students should contact [phadmissions@pitt.edu](mailto:phadmissions@pitt.edu) with questions.

### Grading

Students may view their grades through their PeopleSoft Student Centers via the [University Web portal](#)

#### Changing Pitt Public Health Grade Option – Audit Requests (Table 8)

- Any Pitt Public Health graduate course may be audited on a space available basis.
- Students auditing a course will still be assessed tuition, but will not receive a traditional letter grade or credits for the course (an "N" grade will be received).
- Interested students should discuss this grade option with their advisors and course instructors, and must obtain their permission.

Table 8

RESPONSIBILITY	ACTION / POLICY
Student	Verify with instructor that grade option selected is available for course. Complete middle portion of <a href="#">Grade Option/Audit Request form</a> to request a grade option/basis change. Complete form to request course auditing (no grade/no credit – "N" appears on transcript) or the middle section to request a different grade option.

Advisor & Instructor	Sign and date form to indicate approval. Instructor must remember to enter an “N” grade (representing an audit) when electronic grade rosters open for the term in question.
Student	Delivers or e-mails form to the Epidemiology Student Services staff member for their academic program.
Epidemiology Student Services Staff	Forwards form copy to Pitt Public Health Student Affairs.

**Grade Change Requests**

- “I” grades are incomplete grades given when students are in the process of completing MPH essays or MS theses.
- “G” grades are given when personal extenuating circumstances prevent a student from completing a course.
- Both can be changed to permanent grades with instructor or advisor authorization, following student completion of the course(s) in question.
- Instructors and students should communicate with the Director of Epidemiology Student Services for more information.
- The Director of Epidemiology Student Services can also change grades on behalf of instructors when grading errors must be corrected or when other circumstances warranting grade changes occur.

**Competency in Communication Requirement**

Department of Epidemiology policy specifies that prior to graduation, all degree-seeking students must demonstrate competency in oral communication through research presentation experiences as described below:

- MPH & MS students must complete at least one oral presentation or poster presentation during their tenure at Pitt Public Health.

**Qualifying venues and presentations**

- Local, regional, national, or international professional or scientific conferences qualify as venues where the Competency in Communication requirement may be fulfilled. Presentations delivered at Department of Epidemiology or Pitt Public Health special events featuring student research, including the annual Epi in Action MPH Poster Presentation (fall term) or the school’s Dean’s Day Research Poster Competition (spring term) will also count towards this requirement.

**Submission of competency records**

- A [Communications Competency Requirement Record Form](#) must be submitted by students to the Epidemiology Student Services Offices prior to graduation as a record of the requirement’s fulfillment.
- In Epidemiology, these forms are typically generated after the annual Epi in Action! event in the fall term by Student Services Staff on behalf of the student.

## Statute of Limitation for Degree Completion/Leaves of Absence

### Statute of Limitations Policy (Table 9)

- MS program requirements must be completed within 4 years. MPH requirements must be completed within 5 years.

**Table 9**

RESPONSIBILITY	ACTION / POLICY
Student	<p>Requests for extensions of statute of limitations must be made in writing by students and their academic advisors, approved by Department Chair, and submitted to Pitt Public Health Student Services director for final approval. There is no guarantee that extension requests will be approved.</p> <p>Extension requests must include documented evidence of specific circumstances leading to current situation, and students must describe ongoing plans to complete all degree requirements and identify a completion timeline</p> <p>Contact the Director of Epidemiology Student Services to obtain more information on extension requests.</p>
Pitt Public Health Student Services Director	Forwards student letter indicating final approval or disapproval of statute of limitations extension requests and sends letter copies to Epidemiology Student Services staff.

### Leave of Absence Policy (Table 10)

- One leave of absence may be granted to a student. A one-year leave is available to master's degree students.

**Table 10**

RESPONSIBILITY	ACTION / POLICY
Student	<p>Leave requests must specify the basis for the leave, and must first be approved by the academic advisor.</p> <p>Contact the Director of Epidemiology Student Services to obtain instructions for proceeding with leave of absence requests.</p>
Pitt Public Health Student Services Director	Forwards student letter indicating final approval or disapproval of leave of absence requests, and sends letter copies to Epidemiology Student Services Specialist for the student's program.

## Funding Resources and Student Jobs

### Helpful Links:

- [Department of Epidemiology Grants and Scholarships](#)
- [University and Pitt Public Health Financial Aid](#)

### Student Jobs

- Students should talk with their academic advisors, the Doctoral or Master's Degree Program directors, or other members of the faculty about their desire to obtain hourly-paid employment.
- Students may also explore the [Student Employment page](#) from the Pitt Office of Human Resources, to search descriptions of available positions and apply for them.
- International students should focus on obtaining on-campus positions, as dictated by their student visa status. Questions about international student employment should be directed to the [University's Office of International Services \(OIS\)](#).
- Some Pitt Public Health students find positions at local or regional employers, including, but not limited to, the [University of Pittsburgh Medical Center \(UPMC\)](#).

## MPH Essay Guidelines

Epidemiology MPH students are required to do an essay, the thesis format is not an option. No oral exams are required for an essay.

### Acceptable essay formats:

- a journal article reporting on original research
- a review of the literature on a specific public health topic
- a grant proposal describing an hypothetical epidemiologic study to be conducted
- a surveillance report based on local or national surveillance data
- another format agreed upon in advance by the student, advisor, and essay readers

If the student plans to conduct original research, this can be done in the following ways:

- Collecting new data – e.g., the student adds data to an existing study or executes a small study on his or her own
- Doing something novel with existing data such as applying a new analytic technique, making novel use of an existing technique, or combining datasets
- Overseeing data collection or management
- Developing a new protocol or way of collecting data
- Executing additional laboratory assays or genetic evaluation of existing samples

### Timing and composition of committee formation and essay

MPH students must form their essay committees by the end of the semester prior to the one in which they plan to graduate. The committee must consist of at least two, preferably three readers. One member must be the student's academic advisor or designated research mentor. There are no MPH committee chairs; all members have equal standing. However, the academic advisor or designated research mentor will generally take a leadership role. Students should describe the nature of their essays to their readers at the time of committee formation so they can determine if their topics are suitable.

### MPH Essay Committee Composition Rules are:

- The committee must consist of at least two, preferably three, University of Pittsburgh faculty members, one of which must be the students' academic advisor or designated research mentor.
- Members must have primary appointments in different University departments (at least two departments represented).
- At least one member must be on the core list of some SPH department.

**Note:** If essay work includes internship/practica experience, including data and policies, from the Allegheny County Health Department, the committee must include a preceptor from the Allegheny County Health Department. If the preceptor is an adjunct faculty member, they count as a faculty member. If they do not hold an adjunct appointment, they must be added in addition to all faculty on the committee.

The Master's Program Director will provide information about committee member selection and instructions for obtaining committee composition approval during academic advising. Subsequent changes in committee composition must be similarly approved.

**MPH ESSAY DEVELOPMENT TIME FRAMES**

(The Pitt Public Health [website](#) identifies specific deadlines for each graduation period)

**Table 11**

<b>Benchmark</b>	<b>December graduation</b>	<b>April graduation</b>	<b>June graduation</b>	<b>August graduation</b>
Select readers /advisors request approval	By end of Summer Term	By end of Fall Term	By end of Spring Term	By end of Spring Term
Submit outline to readers <sup>1</sup>	By September 15 <sup>1</sup>	By February 15 <sup>1</sup>	By April 15 <sup>1</sup>	By June 15 <sup>1</sup>
Submit First Draft to readers	Time frames and number of drafts determined by students and their readers	Time frames and number of drafts determined by students and their readers	Time frames and number of drafts determined by students and their readers	Time frames and number of drafts determined by students and their readers
Final Draft submission/ Reader sign-off	Two weeks prior to school-wide deadline	Two weeks prior to school-wide deadline	Two weeks prior to school-wide deadline	Two weeks prior to school-wide deadline
Submit final Version to D-Scholarship. Additional formatting changes may still be required.	Determined by school. See Pitt Public Health website for semester-specific deadlines <sup>2</sup>	Determined by school. See Pitt Public Health website for semester-specific deadlines <sup>2</sup>	Determined by school. See Pitt Public Health website for semester-specific deadlines <sup>2</sup>	Determined by school. See Pitt Public Health website for semester-specific deadlines <sup>2</sup>

**<sup>1</sup>Dates provided here are approximate and serve only as a point of reference. The specific timeline will be provided each term in EPIDEM 2210.**

<sup>2</sup>Requests for extensions to complete work on the essay can be made of Pitt Public Health Student Affairs ONLY through Dr. Nancy Glynn, Master’s Program Director. Requests to Dr. Glynn should be made in writing by the students’ academic advisor only in extenuating circumstances.

### **Guidelines for the essay, based on selected format**

- Original research  
Use journal article format, with the goal of potential publication in a journal (this is the standard to strive for, but actual publication or submission is not required). The length of the article should be that of an original research journal article, with an expanded introduction/literature review. The typical length for this format is 40-60 pages, but varies based on topic.
- Literature review  
The Introduction should include the research question and its importance to public health. The methods section should explain how the literature review was conducted, the results section should synthesize the current literature on the topic, and the discussion section should critically review what is currently known and what further research is needed. The typical length for this format is 20-40 pages, but varies based on topic.
- Grant application  
A hypothetical grant proposal should be in the format of a standard NIH grant application. Typical length for this format is 20-30 pages.
- Surveillance report  
A surveillance report should resemble original research requirements, as well as text, tables and graphs in a format similar to those used by CDC and state health departments ). Typical length for this format is 20-40 pages, but varies based on topic.

### **Integrated Learning Experience (ILE) Forms**

Two [forms](#) must be submitted to identify competencies that will be attained during essay development, and describe how/if the documented competency goals were met. Questions regarding these documents should be discussed with student research mentors and/or the master's degree program director. The forms include:

- Essay/Thesis Agreement
- Essay/Thesis Final Assessment

### **Final written paper**

All essays require an abstract of 350 words or less, per Pitt Public Health policy. The abstract must contain a clear and concise statement indicating the paper's significance to public health, specifically using the words "public health." Please pay close attention to all [formatting requirements](#) to prevent the need for revision.

The final essay typically requires multiple drafts. Readers should not sign the Report on Requirements for Master's Degree form or the essay signature page until they have seen and approved those changes. The Report on Requirements Form may be downloaded from the school [website](#).

***Students who do not meet school-wide essay deadlines may not be able to graduate in the expected term.***



**Essay Grading**

Readers will grade the essay on a 4-point scale (4=excellent 3=good 2=meets expectations 1=does not meet expectations). Readers should assign an overall score, as well as scores for various components: understanding of public health importance, review of the literature, grasp of study design and statistical analysis, strength of conclusions and recommendations, and quality of writing using the Essay Grading Form. The readers should not approve the essay unless it is worthy of an overall score of 2 or 3. After all revisions to the essay are made, the readers should reach a consensus about the final scores, and the academic advisor should complete the grading form. A copy of the Essay Grading Form should be given to the Student Services Office by the academic advisor.

If the student fails to meet passing standards after receiving comments from readers, the advisor may ask the student to embark on a different essay topic and graduation may be delayed.

**Authorship**

If the essay is to be submitted for publication, readers may be included as authors on the paper, but this is not a requirement. The primary advisor and student should make this decision and it should be based on the degree to which a given reader influenced or contributed to the paper.

Time limits should be set so that publication is not delayed if the graduate does not submit the paper following graduation. For example, the advisor and student may decide that if the work is not submitted for publication within 6 months of graduation, the materials will be turned over to the advisor so that the advisor can move forward with the publication.

## MS Thesis Guidelines

An MS thesis must describe original research conducted by the student. It also involves two oral exams. All Epidemiology MS students are required to do a thesis.

### Definition of a good thesis

A good thesis topic provides the student with an opportunity to apply epidemiology concepts and develop research skills. The thesis should advance knowledge and, ideally, answer one or more important questions. The thesis is an important step in training the student to ask good questions as well as learning how to go about answering them. A good thesis is of publishable quality.

### Criteria for an acceptable thesis

The thesis should report on original research by the student. This requires that the student take total “ownership” of at least a piece of the thesis work. Examples of ways that this can be done include the following:

- Primary data collection – e.g., the student adds data to an existing study or executes a small study on his or her own
- Doing something novel with existing data such as applying a new analytic technique, making novel use of an existing technique, or combining datasets
- Overseeing data collection or management
- Developing a new protocol or way of collecting data
- Executing additional laboratory assays or genetic evaluation of existing samples

Through these activities, the student should understand the basic process of data collection and should gain experience in collaborating with others.

### Timing of committee formation and oral exams

MS students must form their thesis committees by the end of the semester prior to the one in which they plan to graduate. The committee must consist of at least three members. One member must be the student’s academic advisor or designated thesis advisor, although the advisor or mentor does not have to be the committee chair. Students should describe their proposed thesis projects to their committee members at the time of committee formation so the members can determine whether topics are suitable.

#### MS Thesis Committee Composition Rules are:

- The committee must consist of at least three University of Pittsburgh faculty members, one of which must be the students’ academic advisor or the designated thesis advisor.
- Half or more of the members must be on the core faculty list of at least one SPH department.
- One of the Pitt faculty on the committee must not be on the core list from the student's department.
- Thesis committee chair need not be on the core list of the student’s department.
- Graduate faculty status is not required.

The Master's Program Director will provide information about committee member selection and instructions for obtaining committee composition approval during academic advising. Subsequent changes in committee composition must be similarly approved.

### **Required exams:**

MS students are required to have two oral exams, the Comprehensive and the Final Defense. The exact timing of these exams is at the discretion of the committee chair. The Comprehensive Exam ideally takes place at least 2 months before the last day of term in which the degree is to be granted (it must take place at least one month before the last day of term according to SPH policy). A written document should be given to committee members two weeks before this exam. The Final Defense should take place at least 3 weeks before the last day of term to accommodate additional edits. A draft of the written thesis should be given to committee members at least 2 weeks before this exam. All committee members should be reasonably comfortable with the student's progress before allowing the Final Defense to go forward. Comments on the draft following the Comprehensive and the Final Defense should be given to the student within a few days following these exams.

### **Content of exams:**

- Comprehensive: Generally, the student presents the literature review and demonstrates how the proposed thesis will fill a void in the existing literature. Preliminary data may be presented. The committee should focus on whether or not the student has the skills to move forward with the thesis work. The purpose of this exam is to discuss with the committee issues related to project design and analysis. Enough information should be presented so that any concerns of the committee will be raised at this stage.
- Final Defense: The purpose of this exam is to present the completed thesis work. Note that it is termed "defense" for a reason. The student must be prepared to defend the research against any and all questions, some of which may not have been raised before. This requires the successful candidate to be fully versed in all aspects of the research. To be ready, the candidate must demonstrate a complete understanding of the material in the thesis, be polished in presentation skills and be able to fluently answer questions about the research. Student must be able to put material in perspective relative to the existing literature. Knowing the answer to all questions is not as important as knowing how to go about answering them.

### **Conduct of the Oral Exams**

When all committee members have convened, the chair asks the candidate to leave the room for a few minutes. At this time, the chair provides a brief description of the candidate's strengths and weaknesses. It is important for the chair to be honest with any concerns. This is an opportunity for the chair to get opinions and suggestions from other committee members. The chair may wish to bring along the candidate's school record, which can be signed out in advance (only by the committee chair) from the Student Services office. When the review of the candidate is completed, the candidate is invited back into the room and the exam begins.

The candidate then presents their materials, leaving sufficient time for discussion. While the length of the presentation will vary at the discretion of the committee chair, twenty slides usually allow enough time for discussion. After the presentation and discussion period, the chair asks the candidate to leave again. The committee privately discusses their decision.

Recommendations on how to address weaknesses are provided to the chair, who relays the comments to the candidate. Committee members are also encouraged to provide input directly to the candidate.

If the committee indicates that the candidate is not ready to pass the exam, deficient areas are noted and criteria for success are provided to the candidate. This rarely happens, as the committee chair should have a good sense of the candidate's progress and make sure the student is ready for an exam before it is scheduled. Students who insist on an exam against the advice of their chair should recognize the potential consequences of such an action.

If the candidate passes, committee members sign the [Report on Requirements for Master's Degree form](#). The chair is responsible for bringing this form to the meeting.

**MS THESIS DEVELOPMENT TIME FRAMES**

(The Pitt Public Health [website](#) identifies specific deadlines for each graduation period)

**Table 12**

<b>Benchmark</b>	<b>December graduation</b>	<b>April graduation</b>	<b>June graduation</b>	<b>August graduation</b>
Select committee members/ advisors request	By end of Summer Term	By end of Fall Term	By end of Spring Term	By end of Spring Term
Submit First Draft <sup>1</sup> Introduction/ methods to committee	2 weeks prior to Comprehensive Exam	2 weeks prior to Comprehensive Exam	2 weeks prior to Comprehensive Exam	2 weeks prior to Comprehensive Exam
Comprehensive Exam	At least 2 months before last day of term	At least 2 months before last day of term	At least 2 months before last day of term	At least 2 months before last day of term
Final Defense	At least 3 weeks prior to school-wide deadline	At least 3 weeks prior to school-wide deadline	At least 3 weeks prior to school-wide deadline	At least 3 weeks prior to school-wide deadline
Final committee sign-off	2 weeks prior to school-wide deadline	2 weeks prior to school-wide deadline	2 weeks prior to school-wide deadline	2 weeks prior to school-wide deadline
<b>Upload final version to D-Scholarship</b>	Determined by school. See Pitt Public Health website for semester-specific deadline <sup>2</sup>	Determined by school. See Pitt Public Health website for semester-specific deadline <sup>2</sup>	Determined by school. See Pitt Public Health website for semester-specific deadline <sup>2</sup>	Determined by school. See Pitt Public Health website for semester-specific deadline <sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup>Total number of drafts determined by students’ committee

<sup>2</sup> Requests for extensions to complete work on the essay can be made of Pitt Public Health Student Affairs ONLY through Dr. Nancy Glynn, Master’s Program Director. Requests to Dr. Glynn should be made in writing by the students’ academic advisor only in extenuating circumstances.

***Please note the timeline provided here is approximate and serves only as a point of reference. The specific timeline will be addressed in detail each term in EPIDEM 2210.***

### **Guidelines for the written portion of the thesis**

The thesis should be written in the format of a journal article that includes an expanded introduction/literature review, such that it can be published if it is of sufficient quality. The abstract is limited to 350 words, as per Pitt Public Health policy. The abstract must contain a clear and concise statement of the significance of the paper to the field of public health, specifically using the words, "public health." To learn more about formatting requirements, refer to the school's [Graduation Information page](#).

### **Options when the master's candidate is not performing at a sufficient level**

- **Comprehensive Exam:** If the committee has concerns about the ability of a student to complete his or her thesis work, then the candidate will not be passed on the Comprehensive Exam. It is critical that the committee be honest with the student and open with one another. If the probability of the student completing the work is judged to be low, then an alternate path should be identified at this time. Alternate paths may include providing the student more time or switching the subject matter/topic of the thesis.
- **Final Defense:** If a student fails the final defense, this represents lack of preparation by the student and lack of guidance by the committee. Thus, all committee members should be reasonably comfortable with progress before allowing the defense to be scheduled. If the student insists on going forward without the recommendation of the committee chair, failure is a possibility. If a student fails, he/she may be granted a second attempt at the discretion of the committee chair.

### **Final written paper**

There is often work that must be done after the Final Defense. If committee members indicate that changes to the thesis should be made, they should not sign the thesis signature page until they have seen and approved those changes.

***Students who do not meet school-wide thesis deadlines may not be able to graduate in the expected term.***

### **Grading**

Committee members will grade the thesis on a 4-point scale (4=excellent 3=good 2=meets expectations 1=does not meet expectations). The committee should assign an overall score, as well as scores for various components: understanding of public health importance, review of the literature, grasp of study design and statistical analysis, strength of conclusions and recommendations, quality of writing, and clarity of oral presentation using the Thesis Grading Form. The committee should not approve the thesis unless it is worthy of an overall score of 2 or 3. After all revisions to the thesis are made, the committee should reach a consensus about the final scores, and the committee chair should complete the grading form. A copy of the Thesis Grading Form should be given to the Director of Epidemiology Student Services.

**Authorship**

If the thesis is to be submitted for publication, committee members are often included as authors on the paper, but this is not a requirement. The primary advisor and student should make this decision and it should be based on the degree to which a given committee member influenced or contributed to the paper.

Time limits should be set for publication of the material following graduation. For example, the advisor and student may decide that if the work is not submitted for publication within 6 months of graduation, the materials will be turned over to the advisor so that the advisor can move forward with the publication.