

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS (FAQs) ABOUT OUR PGD AND MPH PROGRAMMES

1. FAQs: POST- GRADUATE DIPLOMA (PGD) IN PUBLIC HEALTH

GENERAL INFORMATION

What is a Post Graduate Diploma in Public Health?

The PGD in Public Health aims to provide graduates with an overview of Public Health, with an emphasis on health sector transformation, district health services, and Primary Health Care. It aims to provide students with a basic understanding of how to prioritize health needs at a population level and design, implement and evaluate comprehensive and participatory public health programmes.

Who would benefit from completing a PGD?

The PGD is especially aimed at health and welfare managers, supervisors and educators who would like to increase their Public Health knowledge and skills to transform their sector without necessarily having to do formal research; and/or practitioners trained in other disciplines, but now working in Public Health. It is appropriate for practitioners working at all levels within the health system: from a local or district level to a national level. The PGD is also a potential progression towards an MPH.

How much work experience would I need in order to apply for the PGD?

A minimum of one year of relevant experience in the health or welfare / development sector.

What is your policy on RPL?

UWC has a strong tradition of supporting the practice of Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL). The RPL Policy of 2001 (as amended in March 2019) governs the principles and procedures for the assessment and recognition of prior learning at UWC. If you would like to find out more about how to make an RPL application to the PGD programme, please contact Ms Janine Kader at Email: soph-comm@uwc.ac.za.

What is included in the curriculum?

The curriculum comprises of six compulsory modules.

	Module Title	<i>Credits</i>
Module 1	Introducing Public Health: The Priorities and Scope of Public Health [Core]	20
Module 2	Descriptive Epidemiology [Core]	20
Module 3	Population Health and Development: A Primary Health Care Approach [Core]	20
Module 4	Health Promotion for Public Health I [Core]	20
Module 5	Management Strategies for the Public Health Services I [Core]	20
Module 6	Monitoring and Evaluation for Health Services Improvement I [Core]	20
Total credits		120

For details of these modules please see the SOPH website and School's Programme Handbook: <http://www.uwcsoph.co.za/index.php/academic-programmes>

How are courses assessed?

You will be assessed continuously throughout the course in the form of assignments and participation in online discussion forums and an e-portfolio.

MODE OF STUDY

Is the programme distance learning?

The programme is offered online using the University Learning Management System called iKamva. You will be required to have some Internet connection to be able to fully participate in the module.

Is the entire course by distance or am I required to attend classes?

You may complete the entire course via online learning, however, there are also optional (but strongly encouraged) in-person teaching blocks which occur in February (Orientation and Summer School) and June/July (Winter School) at the School of Public Health in Cape Town, South Africa. During these blocks you will get to meet your course coordinators and guest presenters, interact with other participants and benefit from teaching and group work discussions and activities. While we strongly encourage participants to attend Summer and Winter School, we do understand that this is not an option for everyone and we are increasingly taking steps, where possible, to provide online access to some classes or presentations.

How many times do I need to travel to South Africa/UWC?

There are two opportunities for in-person teaching and interactions during each year (Summer School in February and Winter School in June/July). So full-time learners will have two opportunities for in-person classes, and part-time learners will have 4 opportunities over 2 years. Attending these teaching blocks is optional but strongly encouraged.

TIME COMMITMENT

Should I resign from my job in order to do the programme full time?

Participants have 2 options: The six distance learning modules may be taken in one year, equivalent to full-time study, or two years, equivalent to part-time study. The part-time option allows participants the flexibility to keep working and complete their coursework in

the time available to them. However, should you wish to complete the programme in 1 year (full-time study), the time commitment would likely be too onerous to complete while working full time too.

Your decision about which option is better would depend on your personal circumstances and goals eg: what are you hoping to achieve as a result of completing the PGD? A promotion? A change in career? Expanding your learning and knowledge to apply to your current job? Are you able to financially support yourself and any dependents if you are no longer working full-time? What does the job market look like? Does it seem like it might be challenging for you to get work if you needed to apply for a new job? Keep in mind that of course the situation could change significantly in the space of a year.

Can I complete the programme in two years?

Yes, you can enroll in the programme as a part-time learner and complete the course over 2 years. Students would need to apply to the Senate Assessment Committee in order to enrol for a third year, provided they have made sufficient progress and have been granted permission by SOPH.

How long will it take me if I do it part time?

2 years

What are the time commitments involved?

The PGD consists of 120 credits. This means that in order to achieve all of the learning outcomes associated with the programme, participants are expected to spend approximately 1 200 notional hours (6 x 20 credit modules which would require 200 notional hours) on all course related work (including reading, going through course materials, preparing assignments and participating in online discussions). This would be split over 2 years for students completing the programme part-time.

Here are some important guidelines to help you understand how much time you really will need each week during your studies:

- If you take 3 modules per year (ie. do the PGD part-time over two years), you will need to dedicate approximately 8 - 10 hours per week for your studies.
- If you are planning to do all the 6 modules in one year it is almost the equivalent of full time study: you will need 16 - 20 hours per week to study if you are to fulfil all your academic requirements.

If you travel regularly, or if you carry a heavy work or family responsibilities, it may be preferable to take fewer modules and do the PGD part-time.

COSTS

What are the costs involved?

For South African and African citizens the cost per module was R3 100 for the 2019 academic year. This increases by 10% every year. Students will also be required to pay a registration fee of approximately R1 500. International fees are available on request from the SOPH admin office. Please email: soph-comm@uwc.ac.za.

Is there funding available? Any bursaries one can apply for?

No, the School of Public Health unfortunately does not have funding available. Please contact the UWC Financial Aid Office for information on bursaries (the contact details of which you will find in the [SOPH Programme Handbook](#)).

TIMING AND DEADLINES

When do applications open?

Applications open in late May 2020 and close on 30 September 2020.

When does UWC academic year start?

The academic year begins in February and runs until December.

ELIGIBILITY

Am I eligible to apply?

If you have completed a three-year Bachelor's degree or equivalent in a relevant discipline (eg. health sciences, education, development studies); and a minimum of one-year of working experience in these or related sectors, you are eligible to apply.

How many years work experience do I need?

1 year relevant work experience

I am a general nurse, do I qualify to apply?

You qualify to apply provided that you have at least a 3 or 4-year diploma.

OTHER REQUIREMENTS

Do I need SAQA evaluation?

Those who have non-South African qualifications need to apply to the South African qualifications authority (SAQA) for **clearance** and have to submit this with all your relevant documents. Please do so as soon as you start your application process as the SAQA clearance takes quite a long time to process.

Is SAQA clearance and evaluation the same thing?

Yes

How do I go about applying for SAQA clearance?

Please visit the SAQA website for details on the application process
<http://www.saqa.org.za/show.php?id=5741>

If I have any additional questions that are not addressed here – who should I contact?

Please contact Ms Janine Kader at Email: soph-comm@uwc.ac.za.

FAQs: MPH (COURSEWORK AND MINI-THESIS)

What is a Master of Public Health?

The Master of Public Health (MPH) aims to equip graduates to quantify and prioritize health needs at a population level; design, implement and evaluate public health programmes - in line with evidence and appropriate policies; demonstrate leadership in transforming health services and systems, and to conduct public health-related research.

Who would benefit from completing an MPH?

The MPH is designed for a range of health professionals who are either working on the frontline in health facilities or in programmes related to the delivery of health services; occupying a strategic or management position within the health system - at district, regional /provincial or national level; or be a member of an academic research institution.

What career will I be able to pursue after I obtain an MPH?

The career path you choose after completing an MPH will vary widely based on your specific circumstances and career goals. The MPH will provide you with opportunities to enhance your understanding of public health and strengthen your ability to design, implement and evaluate public health interventions within your local context. Because the field of public health is so broad our MPH programme offers a number of areas of specialisation that you can pursue, and the career you embark on after your MPH is up to you and your personal goals and preferences.

What is included in the curriculum?

The MPH is comprised of six compulsory modules, two elective modules and a mini-thesis. For details of these eight modules please see the SOPH website and School's Programme Handbook: <http://www.uwcsoph.co.za/index.php/academic-programmes>

Here is an overview of the composition of the curriculum and the credits:

Composition of the curriculum

Modules	Credits
1. Population Health and Development: A Primary Health Care Approach II [Core]	15
2. Measuring Health & Disease - Intermediate Epidemiology [Core]	15
3. Management Strategies for the Public Health Services II [Core]	15
4. Health Promotion for Public Health II [Core]	15
5. Public Health Research [Core]	15
6a. Qualitative Research Methods [Core] OR 6b. Quantitative Research Methods [Core]	15
7. Elective 1*	15
8. Elective 2*	15
Mini-thesis of 7 500 - 20 000 words [Core]	60
Total	180

- Students must in addition take two 15 credit elective modules; Electives 1 and 2 may be taken from one of SOPH's areas of specialisation, which affords them a degree of specialisation, or from the range of Electives available from SOPH. **With permission from SOPH, students may take up to 30 credits at Level 9 from another department, provided these are deemed directly relevant to Public Health.**

How are students assessed?

You will be assessed continuously throughout the MPH: through assignments, your participation in online discussion forums, and through a mini-thesis.

MODE OF STUDY

Is the programme distance learning?

The programme is offered online using UWC's Learning Management System called iKamva. You will be required to have an accessible and reliable internet connection to be able to participate in the programme. This is required as all the modules, the associated readings and materials, the discussions with other students, and your communication with the lecturers and the School will be online.

Is the entire course by distance or am I required to attend classes?

You will be able to complete the entire course remotely using iKamva (the University's online platform) to access your materials and other activities and assessments. However, there are also optional, in-person teaching blocks which occur in February/March (Summer School) and June/July (Winter School) at the School of Public Health in Cape Town, South Africa. During these blocks you will get to meet your course convenors and guest presenters, interact with other participants and benefit from the face/face teaching and group work discussions and activities.

While we strongly encourage participants to attend Summer and Winter School, we do understand that this is not an option for everyone and we are increasingly taking steps, where possible, to provide online access to some of these classes or presentations.

How many times do I need to travel to South Africa/UWC?

There are two opportunities for in-person teaching and interactions during each year (Summer School in February/March and Winter School in June/July). But as we indicated previously, you do *not* have to travel to South Africa – as everything is online!

TIME COMMITMENT

Should I resign from my job in order to do the MPH programme full-time?

Students have two options:

The full-time option means that you:

- complete the six core modules in year 1 (three modules per semester);
- complete the two elective modules in the first half (or first semester) of year 2, and in the second half (ie. semester) of year 2 develop and get approval of your mini-thesis research proposal and begin with data collection; and
- submit your final mini thesis research project for examination in mid-March, mid-May or mid-November in year 3.

The part-time option means you:

- complete four of the core modules in year 1 (two modules per semester);
- complete the remaining two core modules, along with the two electives in year 2 (two modules per semester);
- begin to work on your mini-thesis research proposal in the second semester of year 2 and begin your data collection once this has been approved; and
- submit your mini thesis by mid-November of year 3.

The MPH programme has been designed to be completed while participants are still working and so it is not necessary to resign from your job. We also generally encourage students to pursue the part-time option, over 3 years as the accelerated option will be extremely demanding on your time if you are working fulltime.

Can I complete the programme in two years?

You can pursue a more intensive course load (what we call the full-time option) and complete your course work within 18 months. You could use the remainder of the second year to develop and submit your mini thesis proposal and begin data collection. You could then aim to submit your mini thesis by March in the third year. This means that you will complete the programme in just over 2 years. Completing the programme within 2 years is quite difficult and most students take 3 years.

What are the time commitments involved?

The MPH consists of 180 credits. This means that in order to achieve all of the learning outcomes associated with the programme, participants are expected to spend approximately 1800 notional learning hours on all course related work (including reading, going through course materials, preparing assignments and participating in online discussions. This is broken down into 8 x 15 credit module (150 notional learning hours each) and a 60 credit mini-thesis (600 notional learning hours).

What this translates to in reality is that you can expect to spend the equivalent of 1.25 days/week on your studies.

Here are some important guidelines to help you understand how much time you really will need each week during you studies:

If you take four modules per year (i.e. part-time study) you will need about 10 - 12 hours per week (ie. the equivalent of 1.25 work days/week).

Taking *more* than four modules in one year is almost the equivalent of full time study. If you travel regularly, or if you will carry heavy work or family responsibilities it may be preferable to take fewer modules.

COSTS

What are the costs involved?

For South African and African citizens the cost per module for most modules will be *approximately* R3 400 for the 2021 academic year. The exact price of the modules will only be available in December 2020. Students will also be required to pay an annual registration fee of *approximately* R1 500. The cost for the mini thesis will be in the region of R7 000. International fees are available on request from the SOPH admin office. Please contact the SOPH admin office if you require further information about the programme fees. Email: soph-comm@uwc.ac.za.

South African citizens will be required to pay an initial fee of approximately R5 000 (before they will be allowed to register in mid-January 2021). The remainder of their fees for the year will be billed to them by UWC.

African and international citizens will need to pay their fees for the entire year as well as the registration fee upfront before they will be allowed to register in mid January 2021.

**Please note these are approximate costs for the year 2021 and they will likely increase in subsequent years.*

Is there funding available? Any bursaries one can apply for?

No, the School of Public Health unfortunately does not have funding available. Please contact the UWC Financial Aid Office for information on bursaries (the contact details of which you will find in the SOPH Programme Handbook which is available on the SOPH website).

TIMING AND DEADLINES

When do applications open?

Applications open in late May 2020 and close on 30 September 2020.

When does UWC academic year start?

The academic year starts in February and ends in December.

ELIGIBILITY

Am I eligible to apply?

Candidates must have:

- An Honours Degree, a Postgraduate Diploma in Public Health, or its equivalent at NQF Level 8 in any relevant discipline in the health and social development sector, or a related sector.
- Three years' work experience in health, social development or related sectors.
- Those who do not have credit for a tertiary level course in disease pathogenesis, disease measurement or disease control must take the module, *Introducing Public Health: its Basis and Scope* from the PG Diploma in Public Health, and complete a task before or during their first semester in Year 1 of their studies.

How many years work experience do I need?

A minimum of 3 years is the requirement.

I am a general nurse, do I qualify to apply for the MPH?

If you do not have a four year Honors Degree you would not be eligible to apply for the MPH. However, you may want to instead apply for our Post Graduate Diploma (PGD) programme.

What is your policy on RPL?

UWC has a strong tradition of supporting the practice of Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL). The principles and procedures for the assessment and recognition of prior learning at UWC are governed by the RPL Policy of 2001 (as amended in March 2019). If you would like to find out more about how to make an RPL application to the MPH programme, please contact Please contact Ms Janine Kader at Email: soph-comm@uwc.ac.za.

OTHER REQUIREMENTS

Do I need SAQA evaluation?

Those who have non-South African qualifications need to apply to the South African qualifications authority (SAQA) for **clearance** and have to submit this clearance with all other relevant documents. Please do so as soon as you start your application process as the SAQA clearance takes quite a long time to process.

Is SAQA clearance and evaluation the same thing?

Yes

How do I go about applying for SAQA clearance?

Please visit the SAQA website for details on the application process:

<http://www.saqa.org.za/show.php?id=5741>

If I have any additional questions that are not addressed here – who should I contact?

Please contact Ms Janine Kader at Email: soph-comm@uwc.ac.za.

3. FAQs: MPH (FULL THESIS)

What is a Master of Public Health (MPH) by full thesis?

An MPH by full thesis involves the completion of a research project and the submission of a thesis based on this research. A student select a topic of interest to them and that is within the areas specified by SOPH. Students must also be able to identify an appropriate supervisor who will have the expertise to advise and guide the student through the research process. There is no course work involved in this degree. The full thesis is expected to be between 20 000 – 45 000 words in length

Who would benefit from completing an MPH by full thesis?

Those who have a specific area of interest and would like to gain practical experience conducting a research project are likely to benefit from the Masters by full thesis. This mode allows you to develop your research skills and to gain in-depth knowledge on a specific area of interest.

What is included in the curriculum?

Students must select a topic and design and complete a research project that is situated within the scope of topics and approaches covered in the areas of specialization of the School, namely:

- Strengthening primary health care and district health systems
- Health systems analysis and innovation (human resources, health systems, health promotion, health policy, multi-sectoral action)
- Health programmes and interventions (HIV/AIDS/TB, Maternal, Adolescent and Child Health, Sexual and Reproductive Health, including Men's health, Public Health Nutrition and Food Security, Non communicable diseases)
- Social determinants of health and social systems
- Pharmaceutical Public Health
- Health Information Systems/Health Informatics.

With the approval of their supervisor, students may choose to attend one of the SOPH MPH coursework modules for non-degree purposes for their own personal development. With permission from SOPH and, students may apply the content and approach of other disciplines to their thesis project, provided these are deemed of direct relevance to Public Health.

How is the thesis assessed?

Your thesis will be assessed by a panel which will consist of two specialists who have not been involved in the supervision process of your thesis research. One of the two examiners will be an external academic who is not attached to the University. In order to pass, a candidate must obtain a mark of at least 50% for the thesis.

MODE OF STUDY

Is the entire course by distance or am I required to attend classes?

There is no coursework associated with this degree so you are not required to attend any classes. If considered relevant to their thesis topic, and with the approval of their

Supervisor, students could choose to attend Summer and/or Winter School short course sessions in Cape Town held in February/March and June/July respectively.

How many times do I need to travel to South Africa/UWC?

It is not necessary for you to travel to South Africa, however you might, with the approval of your supervisor, choose to attend some of the Summer or Winter School short courses which are relevant to your area of research.

TIME COMMITMENT

How long do I have to complete the full thesis?

Students must be registered for at least one academic year. You may take a maximum of three years to complete your thesis. Students must apply to the UWC Senate in order to enrol for a fourth year, provided they have shown sufficient progress and have been granted permission by SOPH to do so.

What are the time commitments involved?

The MPH by full thesis consists of 180 credits. This means that participants are expected to spend approximately 1 800 notional learning hours on all project related work (including reading, preparing your proposal, data collection and writing up the full thesis etc.). This is equivalent to 225 days (calculated at 8 hours/day).

COSTS

What are the costs involved?

For the 2021 academic year the full thesis cost will be approximately R40 000 for South African and African citizens. This fee will need to be paid in the first year. After this, students will only need to pay the registration fee for each year that they register.

International fees are available on request from the SOPH admin office. Please contact the office at Email: soph-comm@uwc.ac.za.

Is there funding available? Any bursaries one can apply for?

No, the School of Public Health unfortunately does not have funding available. Please contact the UWC Financial Aid Office for information on bursaries (the contact details of which you will find in the [SOPH Programme Handbook](#)).

TIMING AND DEADLINES

When do applications open?

Applications open in late May 2020 and close on 30 September 2020.

When does UWC academic year start?

The academic year starts in February and ends December.

ELIGIBILITY

Am I eligible to apply?

Candidates must have:

- An Honours degree, Postgraduate Diploma in Public Health or equivalent at NQF Level 8 in any relevant discipline OR have completed (within the preceding 5 years) a Master's level coursework programme covering the competencies of the core modules of the UWC MPH degree.
- A minimum of five years in the health or welfare sector with relevant experience in implementing policy or planning and managing health or welfare services, including a minimum of three years of significant research or monitoring and evaluation experience.
- A tertiary level course in disease pathogenesis, disease measurement or disease control, if the candidates do not have the credit then they have to take the module *Introducing Public Health: its Basis and Scope* from the PG Diploma in Public Health, and pass an assessment before or during their first semester.
- Candidates will also need to have developed a 3-5 page proposal to accompany their application which details the research they are interested in undertaking.

How many years work experience do I need?

5 years

OTHER REQUIREMENTS

Do I need SAQA evaluation?

Those who have non-South African qualifications need to apply to the South African qualifications authority (SAQA) for **clearance** and have to submit this with all your relevant documents. Please do so as soon as you start your application process as the SAQA clearance takes quite a long time to process.

Is SAQA clearance and evaluation the same thing?

Yes

How do I go about applying for SAQA clearance?

Please visit the SAQA website for details on the application process

<http://www.saqa.org.za/show.php?id=5741>

If I have any additional questions that are not addressed here – who should I contact?

Please contact Ms Janine Kader at Email: soph-comm@uwc.ac.za.

PGD vs MPH coursework vs MPH full thesis: which option is the best one for me?

Should I apply for a PGD or a Master in Public Health?

It does depend on your qualifications – so first double-check that you meet the stipulated requirements for the course that you are interested in. This includes your academic qualifications and workplace experience.

Here is some information that might assist you to consider the options:

- The PGD option has no research component so you will not be required to develop a mini-thesis unlike in both of the masters programmes which do contain a research focus.
- You might select a PGD over an MPH if you are less interested in developing research skills and instead are just hoping to gain more knowledge on public health theory and practice.
- A PGD is also shorter and can be done in 1-2 years unlike the MPH which would take approximately 3 years to complete.
- You will need to consider your personal circumstances and goals in order to decide how long you are able to commit to studying. If you do want to conduct a mini-thesis or full research project, then the MPH may be more aligned to your goals.

In addition, students who already have a masters degree in another field and are interested in completing a PhD in public health, may choose to pursue the PGD in order to gain a strong grounding and background in public health – before applying to be a PhD candidate.

What is the difference between Full thesis and Masters by coursework?

A masters by full thesis is a more research intensive option. Which you choose will depend on your career goals, your existing knowledge, experience and skills as well as your personal preferred learning style. The masters by coursework also has a research component and so if you would like some research experience but are interested in developing your public health knowledge more broadly and value the structure of coursework, then perhaps the coursework option might suit you better. Whereas if your main goal for obtaining a masters is to develop your research proficiency or you have a very specific area of interest that you would like to gain in-depth knowledge on, the full-thesis option could be for you.