

# PUBLIC HEALTH STUDIES, PH.D.

Saint Louis University's Ph.D. in public health studies provides expertise in research design, methods and dissemination in an interdisciplinary setting. Students gain a solid understanding of public health science, including the distribution and determinants of health and disease across populations.

The Doctor of Philosophy (Ph.D.) in Public Health Studies at SLU is an advanced academic program designed to prepare scholars for independent research and leadership roles in academic, governmental, and applied public health settings. Housed within the College for Public Health and Social Justice, the program provides rigorous methodological training, interdisciplinary coursework, and structured research mentorship grounded in the principles of evidence-based practice and social justice.

The program equips students with the theoretical foundations, analytic competencies, and professional skills necessary to conduct high-quality research that advances public health knowledge and addresses population health disparities. Students develop depth in a chosen concentration area while engaging in collaborative research with faculty and community partners.

## Curriculum Overview

SLU's public health Ph.D. program requires 51 credits. Students take 21 credits of core doctoral courses, 9 credits of coursework to train in their research concentration area, 9 credits electives and 12 credits of dissertation research. The faculty mentor and doctoral director review prior coursework to ensure competencies in both doctoral and concentration core areas.

## Health Systems, Policies and Behaviors

The health systems, policy and behavior concentration focuses on theory-driven organizational and behavioral sciences and how they interact at individual, organizational, community or societal levels. Through academic or community-based research, scholars examine health policy, economics, health care access, delivery, quality and behavior, and their impacts on individuals, health equity and population health.

### Faculty Research Areas

- Health disparities and health equity
- Health promotion, communication, and disease prevention for chronic conditions
- Injury prevention
- Maternal and child health
- Food security and nutrition
- Physical activity
- Sexual and reproductive health
- Global health
- Aging and long-term care policy
- Health insurance policy and its impact on health outcomes
- Health care provider well-being and patient experience
- Quality of and access to care
- Organizational behavior, management, and leadership
- Policy-change implications

Graduates emerge as skilled researchers and thought leaders prepared to advance public health through innovative science, systems thinking, and policy expertise – contributing to a more equitable and effective health landscape for all.

## Epidemiology and Biostatistics

The epidemiology and biostatistics concentration prepares students to investigate the distribution and determinants of health and disease in human populations through rigorous statistical analysis and innovative computational methods. By integrating epidemiological inquiry with advanced biostatistical techniques, the program equips students with the analytical tools and methodological expertise needed to address complex public health challenges at local, national and global levels.

Students in this program are trained to design and conduct population-based research, develop and apply cutting-edge statistical methods, and translate findings into actionable public health solutions. Research spans a wide range of settings and populations, with opportunities to engage in both domestic and international work across community, clinical, and policy-relevant contexts.

### Faculty Research Areas

- Cancer and chronic diseases
- Exposure assessment
- Global health
- Implementation research in public health settings
- Maternal and child health
- Vector-borne diseases
- Methodology and application of causal inference
- Geospatial analyses to study associations between the built environment and chronic diseases
- Optimal experimental design
- Statistical modeling of genetic and environmental effects on comorbidity

Graduates of the epidemiology and biostatistics concentration emerge as skilled researchers and public health scientists prepared to advance knowledge, inform policy, and develop innovative methodological approaches that improve health outcomes for diverse populations worldwide.

## Careers

In a recent alumni survey, 96% of graduates in public health studies stated they found a job in their field before graduation or within six months of graduation. Graduates work as academics in universities and researchers at medical centers, government, nongovernmental health agencies or community-based organizations.

## Admission Requirements

This program is designed for individuals who already hold a master's degree in public health or a related field. The following criteria guide admission decisions.

- Evidence of exceptional intellectual ability, analytical and writing skills necessary to complete the doctoral program requirements
- Evidence of interest in an area of research and commitment to pursue it through the completion of a dissertation research project

- Presence of a willing and suitable faculty mentor in one of the concentration research areas
- A minimum 3.50 GPA in graduate work

## Application Requirements

- Application form and fee
- Transcript(s)
- Three letters of recommendation
- Résumé or CV
- Professional goal statement
- A prerequisite for entry into the program is a successfully completed graduate level introductory statistics course that has been taken in the past 5 years.

## Requirements for International Students

All Saint Louis University admission policies and requirements for domestic students apply to international students. International students applying to SLU must also meet the following additional requirements:

- Demonstrate English language proficiency (<https://catalog.slu.edu/academic-policies/office-admission/undergraduate/english-language-proficiency/>)
- Academic records must include an English translation. Unofficial copies may be accepted in some cases for initial admission review, however official copies must be received prior to enrollment. Course-by-course transcript evaluations are accepted and are required in some cases.

Students must submit financial documents to be issued an I-20 for their F-1 visa application. Proof of financial support must include:

- A letter of financial support from the person(s) or sponsoring agency funding the student's time at Saint Louis University
- A letter from the sponsor's bank verifying that the funds are available and will be so for the duration of the student's study at the University

## Application and Assistantship Deadlines

All students are required to submit an application, even students currently enrolled in other programs at Saint Louis University. The Ph.D. program only accepts applications for the fall semester.

The application deadline is Jan. 31. Assistantships will be considered for all candidates.

## Review Process

All admission decisions will be finalized by the **end of March**.

## Assistantships

The doctoral program in public health has a limited number of graduate assistantships, which are designed to allow students to work closely with a mentor on a research project as well as cover any teaching duties at the college. Assistantships are typically awarded for three years and provide a stipend, student health insurance and tuition waiver (up to 21 credits annually). Students will learn about the terms and length of awards at the time of acceptance to the program.

## Tuition

Tuition	Cost Per Credit
Graduate Tuition	\$1,450

Additional charges may apply. Other resources are listed below:

Information on Tuition and Fees (<https://catalog.slu.edu/academic-policies/student-financial-services/tuition/>)

Miscellaneous Fees (<https://catalog.slu.edu/academic-policies/student-financial-services/fees/>)

Information on Summer Tuition (<https://catalog.slu.edu/academic-policies/student-financial-services/tuition-summer-current/>)

## Scholarships and Financial Aid

The College for Public Health and Social Justice offers several ways to help finance graduate education. Opportunities include a limited number of merit-based scholarships and graduate research assistantships.

Awards are made to applicants with the highest combinations of GPAs and test scores who complete their applications by the priority deadlines.

For more information, visit the Office of Student Financial Services (<https://www.slu.edu/financial-aid/>).

## Accreditation

Saint Louis University's College for Public Health and Social Justice is fully accredited by the Council on Education for Public Health (CEPH). To see our most recent accreditation documentation, please visit the College for Public Health and Social Justice website (<https://www.slu.edu/public-health-social-justice/about/accreditation.php>). (<https://www.slu.edu/public-health-social-justice/about/accreditation.php>)

## Learning Outcomes

Saint Louis University's Ph.D. program in public health studies continues to improve its curriculum to match the skills and competencies graduates should have. The overall Ph.D. competencies are listed below; additional competencies are described in the concentration areas.

### Domain 1: Critical Thinking

Critically evaluate, integrate and challenge existing scientific knowledge.

### Domain 2: Analytical Skills

Conduct research studies and interpret the results using inferential statistical methods and methods of qualitative data analysis.

### Domain 3: Communication

Demonstrates mastery of written and oral presentations and publications to enhance the effectiveness of dissemination of research to diverse audiences.

### Domain 4: Collaboration

Work collaboratively to conduct research and provide peer review to colleagues.

### Domain 5: Ethics and Professionalism

Apply ethical principles for public health research and decisions on social justice and equity in the global environment.

## Domain 6: Community/Cultural Orientation

Devise research studies that integrate knowledge, awareness and respect for the impact of cultural, structural, legal, political and public health and social justice on health outcomes.

## Domain 7: Translation and Dissemination

Use innovative methods to communicate scientific findings and implications to diverse audiences, ensuring appropriate strategies.

## Concentration Competencies

### Health Systems, Policies and Behaviors

- Identify, assess and influence key causal mechanisms for successful behavior and system change at multiple ecological levels of analysis. (Understand public health problems and how to change/make impact)
- Rigorously apply theory and existing evidence from a multitude of sources to pose compelling research questions and theoretically grounded interventions/solutions/programs/system and organizational changes to achieve public health goals. (Use evidence and theory for research and practice)
- Select and apply appropriate research and analytic methods including, but not limited to, community and practitioner methods, to generate new knowledge, including knowledge about the efficacy of public health strategies. (Generate new knowledge)

### Epidemiology and Biostatistics

- Design and conduct research studies to test biostatistical and/or epidemiological hypotheses.
- Choose, critique and apply new and advanced biostatistical methods to solve novel problems in public health and biomedical sciences.
- Communicate advanced epidemiologic results succinctly and persuasively in both oral and written communication to both scientists and nonscientists.
- Analyze the scientific literature to address gaps in knowledge that can be used to inform original hypotheses and research questions leading to scientific discovery, presentations and papers.

## Requirements

Code	Title	Credits
<b>Required Core Courses</b>		
BST 5100	Introduction to General Linear Modeling	3
PHS 6010	Design and Analysis in Public Health	3
PHS 6040	Applied Research Skills I: Primary Data Collection	3
PHS 6060	Applied Research Skills II: Grant Writing	3
PHS 6900	Professional Development	3
PHS 6070	Public Health Pedagogical Best Practices	3
PHS 6050	Science, Theory and Public Health	3
<b>Concentration</b>		<b>9</b>
Epidemiology and Biostatistics (p. 3)		
Health Systems, Policies, and Behaviors (p. 3)		
<b>Electives</b>		<b>9</b>

All electives must be taken at a graduate level and be pre-approved by the mentor.

<b>Dissertation Credits</b>		<b>12</b>
PHS 6990	Dissertation Research	
<b>Total Credits</b>		<b>51</b>

### Continuation Standards

Students must maintain a cumulative grade point average (GPA) of 3.00 in all graduate/professional courses.

Students must earn a B- or better in all required courses. Elective courses may be passed with a C or better.

## Epidemiology and Biostatistics

Code	Title	Credits
EPI 6070	The Science and Practice of Research Synthesis	3
BST 6100	Causal Inference	3
BST 6220	Multilevel and Longitudinal Data Analysis	3
<b>Total Credits</b>		<b>9</b>

## Health Systems, Policies, and Behaviors

Code	Title	Credits
BSH 6070	Evidence-Based Intervention & Implementation Research	3
HMP 6100	Organizational Theory and Research	3
HMP 6070	Advanced Health Policy Analysis	3
<b>Total Credits</b>		<b>9</b>

## Roadmap

This roadmap is just one example of a semester-by-semester plan of study for this program. There are other plans students can and do take. The plan of study for each particular student is established in consultation with each student's academic advisor; *this roadmap does not replace academic advising appointments.*

Roadmap notes:

- This Roadmap assumes full-time enrollment unless otherwise noted.
- Courses/Milestones marked with an "!" are critical and must be completed in the semester listed in the Roadmap to ensure a timely graduation.
- Course availability and sequencing are subject to change.

## Epidemiology and Biostatistics

Course	Title	Credits
<b>Year One</b>		
<b>Fall</b>		
PHS 6040	Applied Research Skills I: Primary Data Collection	3
PHS 6050	Science, Theory and Public Health	3
BST 5100	Introduction to General Linear Modeling	3
<b>Credits</b>		<b>9</b>

**Spring**

Participation in SLU Graduate Research Symposium, and Journal Clubs, Responsible Conduct of Research, CITI and IRB trainings

PHS 6010	Design and Analysis in Public Health	3
PHS 6060	Applied Research Skills II: Grant Writing	3
BST 6100	Causal Inference	3
BST 6220	Multilevel and Longitudinal Data Analysis	3
<b>Credits</b>		<b>12</b>

**Year Two****Fall**

Participation in Research Symposia, APHA and Professional Conferences, Journal Clubs; Practice for Written Exam

PHS 6900	Professional Development	3
EPI 6070	The Science and Practice of Research Synthesis	3
PHS 6070	Public Health Pedagogical Best Practices	3
Elective		3
<b>Credits</b>		<b>12</b>

**Spring**

Participation in SLU Graduate Research Symposium, Other Professional Conferences, Journal Clubs; Practice for Written Exam

Elective		6
<b>Credits</b>		<b>6</b>

**Year Three****Fall**

Participation in Symposia and Other Professional Conferences; Plan Oral Exam

PHS 6990	Dissertation Research	6
<b>Credits</b>		<b>6</b>

**Spring**

Participation in Symposia and Other Professional Conferences; Plan Oral Exam

PHS 6990	Dissertation Research	6
<b>Credits</b>		<b>6</b>

**Year Four****Fall**

Participation in Professional Conferences; Dissertation Research. Take Oral Exam

PHS 6990	Dissertation Research	0
<b>Credits</b>		<b>0</b>

**Spring**

Participation in Professional Conferences; Dissertation Research (if not yet complete); Plan for Dissertation Defense

PHS 6990	Dissertation Research	0
<b>Credits</b>		<b>0</b>

**Total Credits** 51

**Health Systems, Policies, and Behaviors**

Course	Title	Credits
<b>Year One</b>		
<b>Fall</b>		
PHS 6050	Science, Theory and Public Health	3
PHS 6040	Applied Research Skills I: Primary Data Collection	3
BST 5100	Introduction to General Linear Modeling	3
<b>Credits</b>		<b>9</b>

**Spring**

PHS 6010	Design and Analysis in Public Health	3
PHS 6060	Applied Research Skills II: Grant Writing	3
HMP 6070	Advanced Health Policy Analysis	3
HMP 6100	Organizational Theory and Research	3
<b>Credits</b>		<b>12</b>

**Year Two****Fall**

PHS 6070	Public Health Pedagogical Best Practices	3
PHS 6900	Professional Development	3
BSH 6070	Evidence-Based Intervention & Implementation Research	3
Elective		3
<b>Credits</b>		<b>12</b>

**Spring**

Elective		6
<b>Credits</b>		<b>6</b>

**Year Three****Fall**

PHS 6990	Dissertation Research	6
<b>Credits</b>		<b>6</b>

**Spring**

PHS 6990	Dissertation Research	6
<b>Credits</b>		<b>6</b>

**Year Four****Fall**

PHS 6990	Dissertation Research	0
<b>Credits</b>		<b>0</b>

**Spring**

PHS 6990	Dissertation Research	0
<b>Credits</b>		<b>0</b>

**Total Credits** 51

**Contact Us**

Apply for Admission (<https://sophas.liaisoncas.com/applicant-ux/#/deeplink/programSearch/organization/6425937835738032128>)

For questions about applying to one of our graduate programs, contact the College for Public Health and Social Justice admissions via [cphsjgrad@slu.edu](mailto:cphsjgrad@slu.edu).