MTSU PUBLIC HEALTH

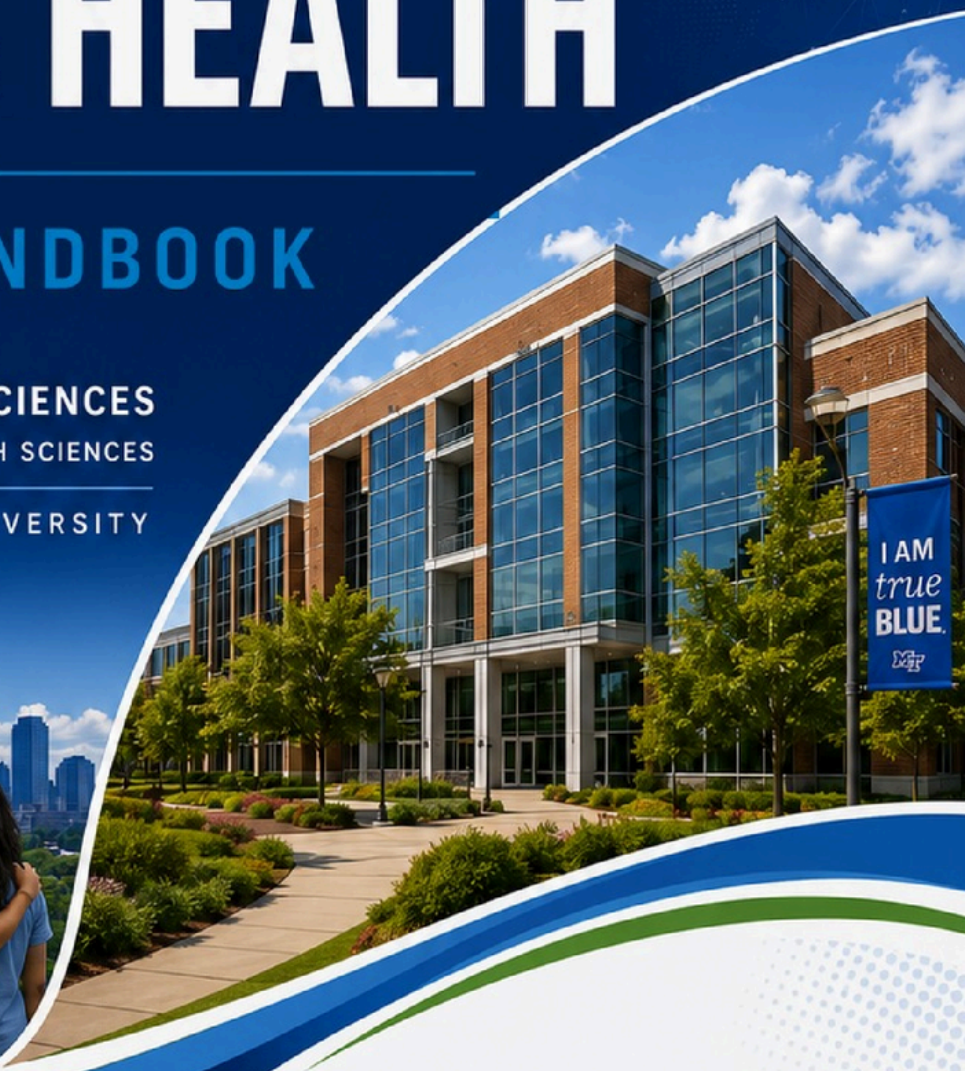
MASTER OF PUBLIC HEALTH

STUDENT HANDBOOK

DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH SCIENCES

COLLEGE OF BEHAVIORAL AND HEALTH SCIENCES

MIDDLE TENNESSEE STATE UNIVERSITY



I AM *true* BLUE.

LEADERSHIP | SERVICE | HEALTH EQUITY

CEPH ACCREDITED
BACHELOR'S
MASTER'S
DOCTORAL

MTSU PUBLIC HEALTH

ABOUT THIS HANDBOOK

Welcome to the Master of Public Health (MPH) program at Middle Tennessee State University.

This handbook is your roadmap through graduate school. It outlines program expectations, academic policies and procedures, resources, and opportunities available to support your success.

Please read it carefully and refer to it throughout your time in the program. If you have questions, your academic advisor is here to help.

CEPH ACCREDITED
Meets national standards for quality public health education.

COMMUNITY HEALTH
Focused on population health, prevention, and health equity.

EVIDENCE-BASED
Training grounded in data, research, and best practices.

LEADERSHIP
Develop the skills to lead and collaborate across sectors.

SERVICE
Engage with communities and address real-world public health needs.

HEALTH EQUITY
Promoting justice, inclusion, and opportunities for all populations.

Welcome to the MPH Program

A Message from the Graduate Program Director

Welcome, and congratulations on your admission to the Master of Public Health program at Middle Tennessee State University.

You are joining a program built on a simple premise: public health problems are solved by people who can combine rigorous methods with genuine engagement in the communities they serve. Over the next two years, you will develop the analytical, programmatic, and leadership skills that CEPH-accredited training is designed to build, and you will be asked, again and again, to apply them to real problems rather than hypothetical ones.

Graduate study is demanding, and this program is no exception. You will be held to a professional standard from your first semester, not just your last. In return, you can expect faculty and staff who are invested in your progress, an advising structure designed to keep you on track toward graduation, and a curriculum sequenced so that each course builds on the last.

This handbook is your primary reference for how the program works, degree requirements, milestones, policies, and the people who can help you navigate them. Read it early, and return to it often. When something isn't covered here or isn't clear, your academic advisor is your first point of contact.

I look forward to seeing what you accomplish.

Dr. Angie Bowman
MPH Graduate Program Director
Department of Health Sciences

Program Structure and Leadership

The Master of Public Health (MPH) program is supported by dedicated faculty and administrators committed to student success, academic excellence, and professional development. Faculty bring expertise in areas such as epidemiology, community health, health behavior, policy, environmental health, research methods, and program evaluation.

Key Contacts and Leadership Roles

Role	Who	Responsibility
MPH Program Director	Dr. Angie Bowman	Oversees day-to-day operations of the MPH program; provides guidance on program requirements; approves course substitutions and academic exceptions. Oversees graduate-level policies and compliance; reviews escalated academic concerns; ensures alignment with CEPH, MTSU, and College of Graduate Studies regulations.
Internship Coordinator	Dr. Andrew Owusu	Coordinates internship (applied practice experience) placements; provides guidance on internship requirements; reviews and approves internship sites and proposals; supports students throughout the internship process.
Department Chair	Dr. Bethany Wrye	Serves as the final departmental authority in cases involving formal academic appeals or unresolved concerns.
Graduate Coordinator	Wendy Gamble	Processes course override and permit requests, tracks progress through the program, including tracking APE and ILE completion, and oversees compliance with CGS policies. Oversees all aspects of hiring graduate assistants.

Faculty and Advising

Faculty

TheMPHprogram is supported by experienced faculty with diverse expertise across public health disciplines. Facultybiographies can be reviewed on the program website.

Advising Structure

Each MPHstudent willbeassigned a Faculty Advisor upon admission to the program. The advising structure is designedto ensure clarity, support, and appropriate oversight throughout the student's academicjourney. Should a student wish to do so, a change of advisor can be initiated by meeting withtheMPH Program Director after discussing the change with the current and proposednewadvisor.

Academic Advisor

The Academic Advisor serves as the student's primary point of contact for:

- Course planning and registration guidance
- Monitoring academic progress
- Reviewing Degree Works
- Discussing internship or thesis.
- Approving standard elective selections within the program

Who is my advisor?

Every MPH student is assigned an Academic Advisor. You can find the name of your assigned advisor in your PipelineMT account under "Assigned Advisor." If you do not have an advisor listed or your advisor is not a current Public Health faculty member, then please bring this to the attention of the MPH Program Director immediately.

When should I meet with my advisor?

Students should schedule a meeting with their advisor prior to registering for classes each semester. Meeting early allows you to select appropriate courses, review degree progress, and discuss your graduation timeline (e.g., full-time or part-time enrollment). Regular advising meetings help ensure steady progress toward degree completion.

About the MPH Program

Program Mission and Goals

The mission of the MPH program is to prepare public health professionals to improve population health through evidence-based practice, community engagement, leadership, and prevention-focused strategies.

The program aims to:

- Provide foundational knowledge in core areas of public health
- Develop skills in data analysis, program planning, and evaluation
- Prepare students for ethical and culturally responsive practice
- Promote leadership and interdisciplinary collaboration
- Advance health equity and address social determinants of health

Community Health Concentration

The MPH program in Community Health focuses on population-based approaches to health promotion, disease prevention, and addressing social determinants of health. Students develop the skills to design, implement, and evaluate community-based interventions aimed at improving health outcomes across diverse populations. The concentration emphasizes health equity, cultural competence, and evidence-based practice at the local, national, and global levels.

What Students Will Gain from the MPH Degree

Graduates of the MPH program will:

- Develop competency in epidemiology, biostatistics, health policy, environmental health, and social and behavioral sciences
- Gain practical experience through applied learning opportunities
- Strengthen communication and professional skills
- Be prepared for careers in governmental agencies, nonprofit organizations, healthcare systems, and community-based settings

CEPH Accreditation

The MPH program at Middle Tennessee State University is accredited by the Council on Education for Public Health (CEPH),the recognized accrediting body for public health education in the United States. CEPH accreditation ensures that the program meets national standards for quality and prepares graduates withrecognized public health competencies.

MPH Program Competencies

MPH program competencies represent the core knowledge, skills, and abilities that students are expected to develop throughouttheir training. These competencies guide the curriculum and ensure that graduates are prepared for effective public health practice.

The MPH program at Middle Tennessee State University is based on a set of foundational competencies aligned with national public health standards, as well as Community Health concentration-specific competencies. Together, these competencies reflect the knowledge and skills necessary for addressing complex public health challenges.

Students develop and demonstrate these competencies through a combination of coursework, applied practice experiences (APE/internships), and the Integrative Learning Experience (ILE), which serves as the culminating experience in the program.

CEPH Foundational Competencies

Evidence-based Approaches to Public Health

1. Apply epidemiological methods to the breadth of settings and situations in public health practice
2. Select quantitative and qualitative data collection methods appropriate for a given public health context
3. Analyze quantitative and qualitative data using biostatistics, informatics, computer-based programming, and software, as appropriate
4. Interpret results of data analysis for public health research, policy, or practice

Public Health & Health Care Systems

5. Compare the organization, structure, and function of health care, public health, and regulatory systems across national and international settings
6. Discuss the means by which structural bias, social inequities, and racism undermine health and create challenges to achieving health equity at organizational, community, and societal levels

Planning & Management to Promote Health

7. Assess population needs, assets, and capacities that affect communities' health
8. Apply awareness of cultural values and practices to the design or implementation of public health policies or programs
9. Design a population-based policy, program, project, or intervention
10. Explain basic principles and tools of budget and resource management
11. Select methods to evaluate public health programs

Policy in Public Health

12. Discuss multiple dimensions of the policy-making process, including the roles of ethics and evidence
13. Propose strategies to identify stakeholders and build coalitions and partnerships for influencing public health outcomes
14. Advocate for political, social, or economic policies and programs that will improve health in diverse populations
15. Evaluate policies for their impact on public health and health equity

Leadership

16. Apply principles of leadership, governance, and management, which include creating a vision, empowering others, fostering collaboration, and guiding decision making
17. Apply negotiation and mediation skills to address organizational or community challenges

Communication

18. Select communication strategies for different audiences and sectors
19. Communicate audience-appropriate public health content, both in writing and through oral presentation
20. Describe the importance of cultural competence in communicating public health content

Interprofessional Practice

21. Perform effectively on interprofessional teams

Systems Thinking

22. Apply systems thinking tools to a public health issue

Community Public Health Concentration Competencies

1. Engaging community partners in developing culturally appropriate interventions
2. Applying a multilevel understanding of social determinants of health behaviors
3. Evaluating public health initiatives for cultural competence and ethical considerations
4. Designing appropriate tools for community-based data collection

Public Health Competence Development

Students are expected to demonstrate competency attainment throughout the program. Competencies are reinforced across coursework and are formally applied and assessed during the Applied Practical Experience (APE) and the Integrative Learning Experience (ILE).

Certified in Public Health (CPH) Exam

The Certified in Public Health (CPH) credential is a national board certification administered by the National Board of Public Health Examiners (NBPHE). The CPH exam assesses mastery of the CEPH Foundational Competencies and is open to students and graduates of CEPH-accredited programs. MPH students at MTSU become eligible to sit for the CPH exam once they have completed all required coursework. Students are encouraged to consult the NBPHE website (https://www.nbphe.org) for current eligibility requirements, exam content outlines, and registration procedures.

While CPH certification is not a degree requirement, students are strongly encouraged to pursue it. Earning the CPH demonstrates mastery of foundational public health competencies to employers and is widely recognized across the public health workforce.

The CPH exam fee is the responsibility of the student

Commitment to Equity and Professional Preparation

The MPH program is committed to preparing professionals who promote health equity, ethical practice, and culturally responsive public health interventions. Students are trained to address complex health challenges in diverse communities from both local and global perspectives.

MPH Degree Requirements and Academic Regulations

Program Overview

The Master of Public Health (MPH) program requires a minimum of 42 credit hours, with options tailored to students' academic and professional goals. The non-thesis option requires 42 credit hours, while the thesis option requires 42–45 credit hours, depending on the number of thesis credits completed.

The program is typically completed in approximately 2 years for full-time students or 3–4 years for part-time students, depending on course load and individual progression.

The program is delivered in an in-person/hybrid/online format, offering flexibility while maintaining rigorous academic and professional training in public health.

Program Requirements

The MPH degree requires successful completion of the total number of credit hours established by the program (as specified in the graduate catalog). These credits include:

- Core courses
- Concentration requirements
- Electives
- Internship (Applied Practical Experience) APE)
- Thesis or Capstone (Integrated Learning Experience) ILE)

Cohort Model and Course Sequencing

The MPH program follows a cohort model. This means students enter the program as a group and progress through required core and concentration courses together in a structured sequence. Core and concentration courses are offered at specific times during the academic year and must be taken in sequence to ensure appropriate skill development and timely degree completion.

Because courses are offered in a structured rotation, students who deviate from the recommended sequence may delay their graduation timeline. Students are strongly encouraged to meet regularly with their assigned academic advisor to ensure they remain on track and are completing courses in theappropriate order. Courses may be offered in face-to-face, hybrid, or online formats depending on scheduling and faculty availability.

Community Health Concentration Course Rotation

While individual plans may vary slightly depending on the entry term, a typical first-year plan includes:

Fall Semester –Year 1

- HLTH 6710 Applied Biostatistics
- HLTH 6850 Methods in Epidemiology
- HLTH 6870 Health Promotion

Spring Semester - Year 1

- HLTH 6102 Theory of Health Behavior
- HLTH 6200 Environmental Health
- HLTH 6750 Applied Survey Methodology

Fall Semester – Year 2

- HLTH 6760 Mixed Methods Research in Health Sciences
- HLTH 6860 Program Planning for Health Promotion
- Elective

Spring Semester -Year 2

- HLTH 6510 Nation's Health
- HLTH 6890 Social Epidemiology and Population Health
- Elective

Fall Semester – Year 3

- Applied Practical Experience / Internship

*Timing of APE, thesis, and electives should be coordinated with the student's advisor and the Internship Coordinator. Students wishing to complete the program in two years should discuss summer course options with their academic advisor. This structured plan supports the development of foundational competencies required for advanced coursework and applied practice. Students should follow the recommended sequence to ensure timely progression.

Electives and Course Flexibility

In addition to required core and concentration courses, students must complete approved elective coursework.

Elective options may include:

- Courses offered within the Public Health program
- Approved 5000 or 6000 level courses from other departments within the university

Students who wish to enroll in elective courses outside the department must do the following:

- Consult with their academic advisor.
- Obtain appropriate approval prior to enrollment.
- Ensure the course aligns with MPH program competencies and career goals.

Not all electives are offered every semester. Students are encouraged to review the course schedule in advance and plan accordingly.

Course Substitutions and Transfer of Credit

Students requesting transfer of credit or course substitution must do the following:

- Discuss substitutions and transfer of credit with their advisor
- Submit documents for review
  - Course description and/or syllabus
- Receive approval from their advisor prior to enrollment (for substitutions) or application of transfer credit.
- Ensure transfer courses meet university and program standards.
- The Program Director must sign off

Transfer credit is subject to approval by the program director and graduate school policies regarding credit limits and recency. Credits can only be transferred from equivalent courses taken at a CEPH-accredited program.

Key Milestones

Students should monitor the following progression checkpoints:

Completion of core and concentration coursework
Completion of the elective requirement
Internship planning and approval
Completion of the Applied Practical Experience
Completion of the Integrated Learning Experience
Application for graduation

Students are encouraged to meet regularly with their academic advisor to ensure the timely completion of all program milestones.

Graduation Requirements

To graduate, students must:

- Complete all required coursework.
- Meet GPA requirements.
- Successfully complete the Applied Practical Experience (APE) and Integrated Learning
- Apply for intent to graduate by the published university deadline.

Students are responsible for monitoring graduation deadlines and confirming eligibility with their advisor. Application deadlines are published each semester and must be strictly followed. Failure to apply by the deadline may result in a delay in graduation.

Grading Policies and Academic Performance

Students are expected to meet the academic standards established by the MPH program and the Graduate School.

Minimum Grade Requirements

Students must maintain a minimum GPA of 3.00 and earn a minimum acceptable grade (C) in all required core courses. Courses in which a student earns a grade below the acceptable standard may need to be repeated in accordance with program and graduate school policies.

Course Repetition

Students may be permitted to repeat a course to improve their academic performance, subject to university regulations. Repeating a course does not guarantee replacement of the original grade unless permitted by Graduate School policy.

Incomplete Grades

A grade of “Incomplete” may be assigned at the discretion of the instructor when a student is unable to complete course requirements due to documented extenuating circumstances. Students receiving an incomplete grade must:

- Complete all required coursework within the timeframe specified by the instructor and university policy.
- Adhere to all conditions outlined for the removal of the incomplete grade.

Failure to complete requirements within the specified timeframe may result in the incomplete grade being converted to a failing grade, as determined by university policy.

Academic Standing and Probation

Students must maintain the minimum cumulative GPA required by the Graduate School to remain in good academic standing.

Students whose GPA falls below the required minimum may be placed on academic probation. While on probation:

- Students must improve their GPA within the timeframe specified by the Graduate School.
- Failure to meet the required academic standards may result in dismissal from the program.

Students on probation are strongly encouraged to work closely with their academic advisor to develop an academic improvement plan.

Grade Appeals

Students who believe a final course grade has been assigned in error or unfairly may initiate a grade of appeal in accordance with university policy. The grade appeal process typically includes attempting to resolve the issue directly with the course instructor. If unresolved, submit a formal appeal in accordance with departmental and graduate school procedures. Students should refer to the Graduate Catalog for detailed procedures, timelines, and required documentation for grade appeals.

Appeals Process

Students who wish to appeal against other academic decisions (e.g., program dismissal, probation outcomes, or policy exceptions) should follow university and departmental procedures as outlined in the Graduate Catalog.

Applied Practice Experience (APE) & Integrative Learning Experience (ILE)

The Applied Practice Experience (APE) and theIntegrative LearningExperience(ILE) are the two culminating requirements of the MPH program. The APE is your supervised field placement; the ILE is the culminating product in which you integrate what you learned. This section explains what each requires, in the order you will do it.

At a glance: The APE is a **180-hour** supervised placement completed for **6 credit hours** under **HLTH 6880**, at one approved community-based public health site. Your work is organized around **five competencies** (3 foundational + 2 concentration) and produces **at least two work products**. It is graded **Satisfactory / Unsatisfactory**.

Purpose of the APE

The Applied Practice Experience gives you the opportunity to apply public health knowledge and competencies in a real-world setting under professional supervision. Everything you do connects back to the competencies you select in your APE Learning Agreement, and the experience feeds directly into your ILE.

Your APE timeline, step by step

Follow this order. You may not begin logging hours until your placement is formally approved and all eligibility requirements are met.

1. **Confirm eligibility.** Good academic standing, GPA ≥ 3.0, required prerequisite courses complete, and CITI IRB certification.
2. **Start planning early.** Reflect on your career goals and the type of placement you want; begin a shortlist of possible sites by the end of Year 1.
3. **Meet with the APE Coordinator.** Review your site options, goals, and requirements together.
4. **Secure your site and preceptor.** Contact a prospective site and confirm it will host you; confirm your preceptor (your on-site supervisor) meets the MPH program's requirements; obtain APE Coordinator approval of the site and preceptor.
5. **Build the APE Learning Agreement.** With your preceptor, define your competencies, activities, and work products (see below), then obtain signatures.

6. **Submit the APE Learning Agreement and register.** Email the fully signed APE Learning Agreement to the APE Coordinator as an attachment, then register for 6 credit hours of HLTH 6880 once it is approved.
7. **Complete 180 hours.** Work at your site across one semester (normally 12–15 weeks, about 18 hours/week), logging hours as you go.
8. **Submit required deliverables.** Midpoint and final reflections, your work products, your preceptor's evaluation of you, and your evaluation of the site.
9. **Complete your ILE.** The culminating product that integrates your APE (see the ILE section).

Hours completed before approval do not count. Any placement hours accrued before your APE Learning Agreement is approved and all site clearances are on file will not be counted toward the 180-hour requirement.

Eligibility checklist

You are eligible to begin the APE once all of the following are true:

- ☐ You are in good academic standing with a GPA of at least 3.0.
- ☐ You have completed at least 7 of the 10 required courses (7 core + 3 concentration).
- ☐ You have completed HLTH 6102, which provides your CITI IRB certificate.
- ☐ The APE Coordinator has confirmed your eligibility.

The APE Learning Agreement

The APE Learning Agreement is the signed plan for your internship. Before you begin, you and your preceptor complete it together. It must specify, in this order:

- **Activities and responsibilities:** the specific projects and tasks you will carry out at the site.
- **Competencies:** 3 Foundational (FC) and 2 Concentration-Specific (CSC) competencies you select and map to those activities.
- **Work products:** at least two deliverables that, together, demonstrate all fivecompetencies.
- **CITI IRB certificate:** Confirm you have your CITI IRB certificate on hand (needed if your project involves human-subjects research).
- **Signatures:** student, preceptor, and APE Coordinator.

How to submit: Email the fully signed APE Learning Agreement to the APE Coordinator as an attachment. (You are not yet enrolled in the course, so there is nothing to upload to a learning-management system.) Use the **Sample APE Learning Agreement** as a model and the **APE Handbook** for full requirements.

Site and preceptor requirements

Each site must provide a qualified preceptor who will provide guidance and mentorship, oversee your activities, and evaluate your performance. A preceptor's qualifications are typically confirmed through their role, experience, and duties; the APE Coordinator approves each preceptor. A current CV or résumé is not routinely required and is requested only when the Coordinator needs it to confirm qualifications; in that case, email it to the APE Coordinator.

Background checks, health clearance & liability coverage

Many sites (clinics, health departments, schools, and other community settings) require a criminal background check, proof of specific immunizations, and/or health screenings (e.g., TB test, titers) before you may begin on-site activities. Requirements vary by site and are set by the host agency, not the MPH program. Confirm these with your proposed site as early as possible, since some clearances can take several weeks.

A site's clearance requirements must be satisfied before you begin accruing hours; hours completed before required clearances are on file will not count. MTSU students are covered by the University's *[general/professional liability policy: insert exact policy name]* while in an approved placement. Some sites require additional documentation of this coverage or supplemental coverage; ask your site supervisor before your start date. Direct questions about background-check vendors, immunization documentation, or liability coverage to the APE Coordinator.

Evaluation & deliverables

You are evaluated on successful completion of all APE requirements. The required deliverables are:

- Interim updates every 2–3 weeks throughout the placement
- Midpoint reflection and final reflection
- Your work products (the deliverables named in your APE Learning Agreement)
  Your preceptor's evaluation of your performance
- Your evaluation of the placement site and preceptor
- A final presentation to your preceptor, your site, and the MPH program

Once you are enrolled in HLTH 6880, these deliverables are submitted through the course (Canvas). The APE is graded Satisfactory / Unsatisfactory.

Professional expectations

Throughout your placement, you are expected to demonstrate professionalism: punctuality and reliability; respectful, professional communication; adherence to ethical standards; confidentiality when working with sensitive information; and responsible representation of the University. Failure to meet these expectations may result in disciplinary action and may affect the successful completion of the APE.

Roles

Role	Who	Responsibility
APE Coordinator	Program faculty/staff member	Your first point of contact: eligibility, site/preceptor approval, the APE Learning Agreement, and questions about clearances or liability.
Preceptor	Qualified supervisor at your site	Mentors you on site, oversees your activities, and completes your final evaluation.
Faculty Advisor	Your assigned MPH faculty advisor	Guides your overall progress and helps shape your ILE.

Integrative Learning Experience (ILE)

The ILE is the culminating requirement of the MPH program, demonstrating synthesis of at least three program competencies across your degree. It has three components:

- Completing your APE (the field experience)
- A written product integrating your APE work with public health theory
- A formal review and evaluation of that product

The APE is the experience; the ILE is where you make sense of it. The APE is one component of the ILE, not a separate requirement.

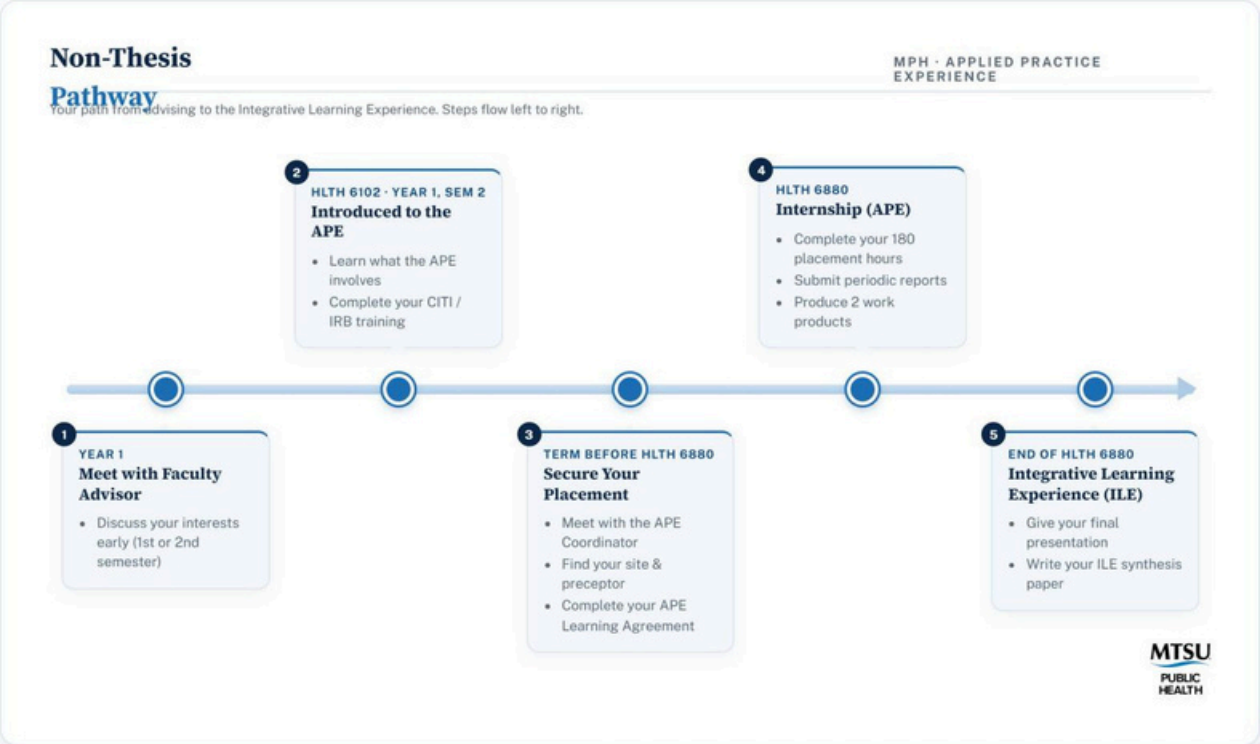
Choosing your pathway

Complete one of two options. Consult your faculty advisor.

	Non-thesis (ILE paper)	Thesis
What it is	Practice-based integrative paper at the end of your APE	Independent research culminating in a formal thesis
Competencies	Five from your APE Learning Agreement	Three, set in the proposal phase
Final product	Integrative paper + presentation	Written thesis (serves as the ILE)
Who it fits	Most students pursue practice-oriented	Research or doctoral study careers

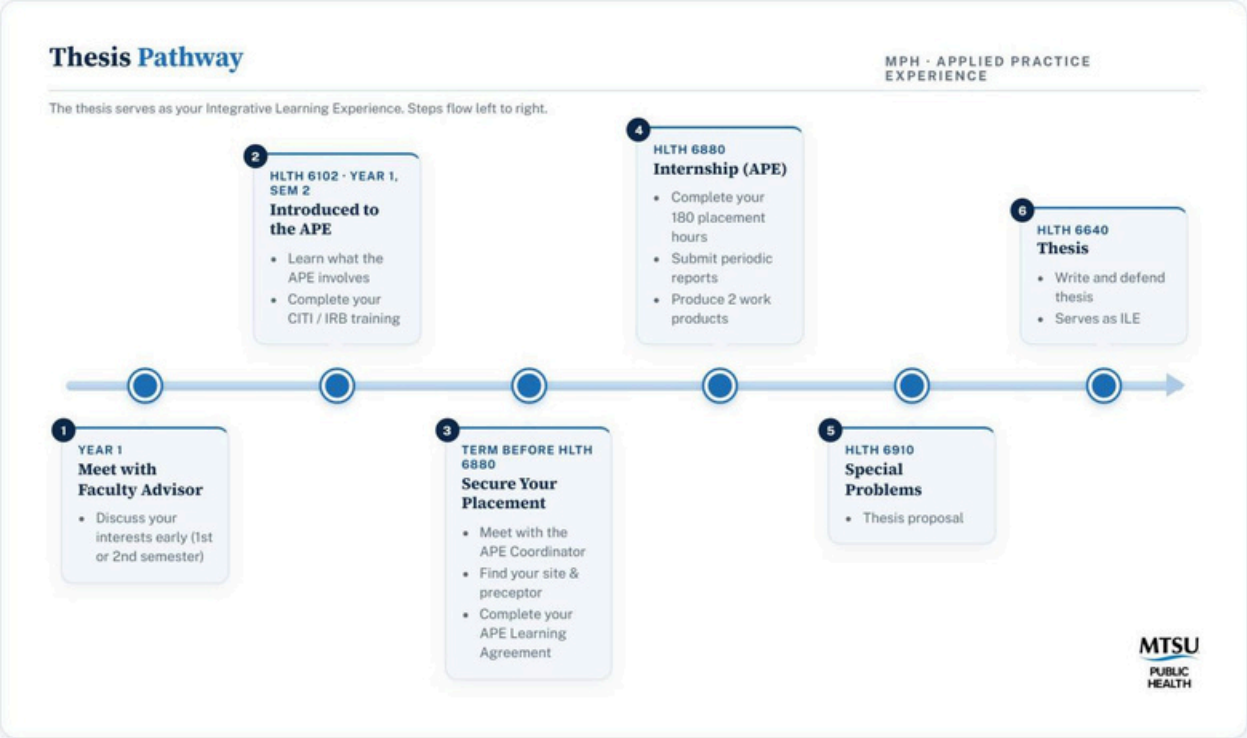
Non-thesis option (ILE paper)

Awritten integrative papercompleted at the end of the APE, not independent research. You will synthesize your APE against the five competencies in your APE Learning Agreement, showing how your work demonstrates competency attainment, and connect it to a public health theory, system, or policy. It must address three cross-cutting themes: cultural competence in communication (FC 20), health equity (FC 15), and social determinants of health behavior (CSC 2). Where the APE deliverables document what you did, the ILE analyzes and integrates. Minimum 2,000 words, essay format, with citations. You also give a final presentation on your placement, competencies, and reflection. Your faculty advisor and APE Coordinator review it using a rubric. Additional details and steps can be found in the APE manual and will be provided by the Internship Coordinator.



Thesis option

You will form a thesis committee (chair + members) per University guidelines. Your committee chair is typically your faculty advisor, and they will guide you through this process. Meet with them early in your program to discuss the steps. During the proposal phase, you will select three competencies; HLTH 6910 Special Problems can replace one of your electives and provides structured time to develop and defend the proposal. You will write your thesis proposal under the guidance of your committee. Conduct a formal proposal defense (presentation), get committee approval before collecting data, and complete an oral defense of the final thesis product. The written thesis serves as the ILE. You must follow MTSU College of Graduate Studies guidelines for format, submission, and deadlines: https://www.mtsu.edu/graduate/thesis/



Student Involvement and Professional Engagement

Active engagement beyond the classroomis an important part of professional development in public health. MPH students are encouraged to participate in student organizations, professional associations, and scholarly activities throughout their time in the program.

Student Public Health Association (SPHA)

The Student Public Health Association (SPHA) provides MPH students with opportunities for leadership, service, networking, and professional development. SPHA hosts events, guest speakers, volunteer activities, and community engagement initiatives related to public health. Membership in SPHA provides students with access to funding to reimburse expenses for scholarly activities, such as conference travel. Students are **expected** to become involved early in the program to build connections and gain leadership experience.

Other Campus-Based Organizations

MTSU offers a wide range of student organizations representing academic, cultural, professional, and service interests. Participation in campus organizations supports collaboration, leadership development, and interdisciplinary engagement. Students may explore and join organizations through the university's student engagement portal.
https://sos.mtsu.edu/

Conference, Research, and Professional Development

MPH students are encouraged to participate in conferences, volunteer activities, and networking events to enhance professional growth.

Opportunities may include:

- Presenting research at university events such as Scholars' Week
- Participating in state or national conferences (e.g., Tennessee Public Health Association, American Public Health Association)
- Engaging in community-based volunteer work

Enrollment Status and Course Modality Guidance

Continuous Enrollment

Students mustmaintaincontinuous enrollment as required by university policy unless granted an approved leave of absence. Failure to maintain enrollment may affect a student's ability to continue in the program. Stopping out during the fall or spring term will require reapplication for admission to the program.

Full-Time and Part-Time Status

Full-time and part-time enrollment status is definedby the Graduate School. Students receiving assistantships must meet minimum enrollment requirements per Departmental and University policy. Refer to the graduate assistant offer letter for details.

Course Registration and PipelineMT

Students register for courses and manage academic records through the university's registration system PipelineMT. Students are responsible for monitoring their university email account for official communication regarding registration, deadlines, and policy updates.

International Students

International students enrolled in the MPH program must comply with all federal immigration regulations. These regulations typically require full-time enrollment during fall and spring semesters and place limits on the number of fully online courses that may count toward full-time status.

Because immigration regulations may change, international students are responsible for confirming enrollment compliance each semester with the Office of International Student Affairs.

Graduate Teaching Assistants (GTA)

The MPH program offers Graduate Teaching Assistant (GTA) opportunities to qualified students. GTA positions provide valuable professional experience while supporting the department's instructional and administrative needs. Positions are competitive and awarded based on qualification, available funding, and program need.

Overview of the GTA Role

Graduate Teaching Assistants may be assigned to:

- Assist Faculty with Grading and assignment review
- Classroom support
- Course preparation and administrative tasks
- Student support under faculty supervision
- Teach a course under faculty supervision
- Other administrative or research-based tasks as assigned by the supervisor

GTAs are required to complete a **weekly timesheet** documenting hours worked, tasks completed, and the supervising faculty member. Regular reporting and documentation help ensure clarity of expectations, appropriate workload management, and protection of both student and faculty time.

Professional and Academic Benefits

Serving as a GTA provides:

- Practical teaching and academic experience
- Professional development and mentorship
- Strengthened communication and leadership skills
- Financial support

GTA positions require 20 hours per week of work and may include a tuition waiver and stipend, subject to university policies and availability.

Eligibility

GTA positions are awarded based on a combination of factors, including departmental needs and available funding. While some students may receive GTA appointments upon entering the

program, others may be selected after demonstrating strong academic performance and professionalism during their studies.

Students must be enrolled in the MPH program and maintain good academic standing to be eligible for and retain a GTA position.

Workload Policy and Expectations

GTA positions require a commitment of approximately 20 hours per week, in accordance with university policy. Responsibilities and schedules are determined in coordination with the supervising faculty member.

Due to the nature of academic responsibilities (e.g., grading periods, exams, or major assignments), weekly hours may vary, with some weeks requiring more time and others less. However, workload is expected to average around 20 hours per week over the course of the semester.

GTAs are required to complete a weekly timesheet documenting hours worked, tasks completed, and the supervising faculty member. Regular reporting ensures clarity of expectations, appropriate workload management, and accountability.

Students are encouraged to communicate with their supervisor if workload concerns arise to ensure a balanced and manageable schedule.

Application Process

GTA positions are competitive and typically awarded based on academic performance, faculty recommendation, and departmental needs. Application timelines and procedures are announced by the department.

Students should consult the program director or Department Chair for current availability and deadlines.
https://www.mtsu.edu/graduate/funding/

Non-Discrimination and Title IX

Middle Tennessee State University does not discriminate against students, faculty, staff, or applicants on the basis of race, color, ethnicity or national origin, sex, disability, age, religion, veteran status, sexual orientation, or gender identity in its programs and activities. This includes compliance with Title IX of the Education Amendments of 1972, which prohibits sex discrimination in any University education program or activity. Students who believe they have

experienced discrimination or harassment on any of these bases, or who have questions about the University's non-discrimination policies, may contact:

Title IX Coordinator / Office of Institutional Equity and Compliance
116 Cope Administration Building
1301 East Main Street
Murfreesboro, TN 37132
(615) 898-2185
titleix@mtsu.edu

Complaints involving MTSU students specifically may also be directed to the Office of Student Conduct. Additional information, including the University's full non-discrimination policy and grievance procedures, is available at: https://www.mtsu.edu/titleix/

Student Support and University Resources

MTSU provides a range of academic and student support services designed to promote graduate student success. MPH students are encouraged to utilize these resources throughout their program.

Library Services

The James E. Walker Library provides access to extensive academic databases, research guides, interlibrary loan services, and subject librarians who can assist with public health research. Graduate students have access to a Graduate Reading Room, which offers a quiet study environment reserved for advanced study. The library also includes a Family Study Room that supports student parents who need a flexible and inclusive study space.

MPH students are encouraged to consult with library research specialists when conducting literature reviews, preparing research papers, or working on thesis or capstone projects.

More information is available on the James E. Walker Library website.
https://library.mtsu.edu/home

Writing Center Services

The University Writing Center offers individual consultations to assist students with academic writing, organization, citation styles, and clarity. Graduate students may receive support for course papers, literature reviews, grant proposals, and thesis or capstone writing.

For students pursuing the **thesis route**, the Writing Center can provide support throughout the writing process — from early brainstorming and outlining to revising and polishing the final manuscript prior to submission.

Appointments and scheduling information can be found on the Writing Center website.
https://writing-center.mtsu.edu/

Counseling and Wellness Services

Counseling Services at Middle Tennessee State University provides confidential mental health support to enrolled students. Services include individual counseling, crisis support, wellness programming, and mental health outreach initiatives.

Graduate study can be demanding, and students are encouraged to seek support when needed. Counseling Services also offers educational workshops and self-care services.

Information about services, workshops, and appointments is available on the Counseling Services website. https://counseling.mtsu.edu/

Student Food Pantry

Middle Tennessee State University provides an MTSU Student Food Pantry to support students experiencing food insecurity. The pantry provides free access to non-perishable food, hygiene products, and other essential supplies to help students maintain their well-being and academic success.

All currently enrolled MTSU students are eligible to use this service. Students are encouraged to utilize this resource as needed in a confidential and supportive environment. This is a safe service for any student to use. You will not be tracked, and information about your use of the pantry will not be part of your student records. For more information, including hours of operation and how to access services, visit: https://www.mtsu.edu/foodpantry/

Career Development Center (CDC)

MTSU's Career Development Center assists students with career planning, resume and CV development, interview preparation, and job search strategies. Graduate students may also access career fairs and networking opportunities. The Center also offers the **Career Closet**, which provides professional attire at no cost to students for interviews and career events. MPH students are encouraged to utilize these services when preparing for internships, applied practice experiences, and post-graduation employment.

Additional information is available through the Career Development Center website.
https://www.mtsu.edu/career/

Disability and Access Center (DAC)

Middle Tennessee State University is committed to providing equal access to educational opportunities for all students. The Disability & Access Center (DAC) works with students who have documented disabilities to provide appropriate accommodations that support academic success.

Services may include academic accommodations such as extended testing time, note-taking support, assistive technology, and other individualized services based on student needs. Students seeking accommodations are encouraged to contact the DAC as early as possible to begin the registration process and ensure timely support throughout the semester.

For more information or to request services, students can visit the DAC website: https://dac.mtsu.edu/

Academic Integrity and Professional Conduct

The MPH program at Middle Tennessee State University is committed to maintaining the highest standards of academic integrity and professional conduct. Students are expected to demonstrate honesty, accountability, and ethical behavior in all academic and professional activities.

Academic Misconduct

Academic misconduct refers to any act that compromises the integrity of the educational process or misrepresents a student's work or abilities. Such behavior undermines both individual learning and the credibility of the academic community.

Examples of academic misconduct include, but are not limited to:

- **Plagiarism**: Presenting another person's ideas, words, or work as one's own without proper citation
- **Cheating**: Using unauthorized materials, assistance, or information during exams or assignments
- **Fabrication or falsification**: Inventing, altering, or misrepresenting data, research findings, or academic records
- **Unauthorized collaboration**: Working with others on assignments when independent work is required
- **Facilitating academic dishonesty**: Assisting others in violating academic integrity policies

Students are expected to adhere to all university policies related to academic integrity. Violations may result in academic penalties, disciplinary action, or further consequences as outlined by the university.

For full details on policies, procedures, and student responsibilities, please refer to the Middle Tennessee State University Academic Integrity Policy available at:
https://faculty.mtsu.edu/academic-integrity/

Professional Conduct

As a graduate program preparing students for careers in public health practice, the MPH program holds students to standards of professional conduct that extend beyond the classroom. MPH students routinely represent the program and the public health profession through practicum placements, community-based research, and other activities that bring them into direct contact with community members, agency staff, and the public. Conduct in these settings reflects not only on the individual student but on the program and the University.

Expectations for Professional Conduct

While on campus or representing MTSU and the Public Health Program off-campus, all MPH students are expected to:

- Act with honesty, integrity, and respect toward faculty, staff, fellow students, practicum supervisors, and members of the public
- Maintain appropriate confidentiality regarding information encountered in coursework, practicum placements, or research, consistent with FERPA, HIPAA, and other applicable confidentiality standards
- Communicate professionally in all settings, including the classroom, email, and electronic/social media, whether on or off campus
- Comply with the policies, procedures, and expectations of the university, program, and any practicum site, agency, or organization while representing the MPH program
- Refrain from conduct that discriminates against, harasses, or endangers others
- Refrain from the commission of a crime involving moral turpitude, including, but not limited to, theft, fraud, physical violence, or sexual misconduct, whether or not the conduct occurs on campus or in connection with University or practicum activities
- Meet commitments and responsibilities related to coursework, practicum placements, and professional obligations in a timely and reliable manner

These expectations apply in addition to, and do not replace, MTSU's University-wide Code of Student Conduct, Academic Integrity Policy, and any policies specific to a student's practicum site.

Reporting and Review

Concerns about a student's professional conduct may be raised by faculty, staff, practicum supervisors, or peers to the student's Academic Advisor or the MPH Program Director. Most concerns are addressed informally through direct conversation between the student and the relevant faculty or staff member, with the goal of correcting the behavior going forward. Where a concern is more serious, repeated, or not resolved informally, the matter will be referred to the Program Director and Department Chair for formal review. The student will be notified of the concern and given an opportunity to respond before any formal action is taken.

Disciplinary Action Resulting from Misconduct

Depending on the nature and severity of the conduct, disciplinary action may include, but is not limited to:

- An informal verbal or written warning
- A formal written improvement plan, with specific expectations and a timeline for correction
- Removal from a practicum site
- Suspension from the program
- Dismissal from the program

Egregious or repeated violations of academic and/or professional conduct, including but not limited to violations that endanger the safety of others, breach client or patient confidentiality, commission of a crime involve dishonesty in a practicum or research setting, involve the commission of a crime of moral turpitude, or seriously damage the program's relationship with a practicum site or community partner, may result in immediate dismissal from the program, regardless of the student's academic standing.

A student dismissed from the program under this policy may pursue an appeal through the process described in the Graduate Catalog.

Program Communication and Policy Updates

Official Communication

The MPH program communicates important information through official university email accounts. Students are responsible for monitoring their MTSU email regularly for announcements related to the following:

- Course registration
- Internship deadlines
- Program policy updates
- Graduation procedures
- Orientation and professional development opportunities Course-related announcement

Failure to monitor the university email does not exempt students from compliance with program requirements or deadlines.

Policy Updates and Handbook Revisions

The program's policies are subject to revision to ensure alignment with university regulations, accreditation standards, and evolving public health practice requirements.

When policy updates occur:

- Students will be notified through official communication channels.
- The most current version of the MPH Handbook will be maintained on the program website or designated departmental platform.

Official program documents, forms, and procedural guidelines are maintained by the department and the graduate school. Students should refer to:

- The Graduate Catalog
- The MPH Handbook
- Official University Webpages, including:
  - MPH Program Page
  - Department of Health Sciences

In the event of discrepancies, graduate school and university policies take precedence.

Master of Public Health Program Student Handbook Acknowledgment

By signing below, I acknowledge and agree to the following:

- I have received access to the MPH Program Student Handbook, either as a physical or electronic copy.
- I am responsible for reading and understanding the policies, requirements, and procedures described in this handbook
- I understand that this handbook does not replace or supersede official MTSU University policies, the Graduate Catalog, or CEPH accreditation requirements, and that where a conflict exists, the applicable University policy or Graduate Catalog governs.
- I understand that policies and procedures in this handbook may be updated during my time in the program, and that I am responsible for reviewing any such updates as they are communicated to me.
- I understand that questions about anything not covered by, or unclear in, this handbook should be directed to my Academic Advisor or the MPH Program Coordinator/Program Director.

Student Information

Student Name _____

(printed): MTSU M#: _____

MPH Concentration: _____

_____

Student Signature *Date*

This form should be signed during the student's first semester in the program and retained in the student's academic file.

MTSU
PUBLIC HEALTH

PREPARE. PROTECT. PROMOTE.

Preparing leaders. Protecting communities.
Promoting health for all.

OUR MISSION

The MTSU Department of Health Sciences prepares public health professionals and leaders to improve the health of populations and advance health equity through education, research, service, and collaboration.

OUR VALUES

- **INTEGRITY** We act with honesty, transparency, and ethical responsibility.
- **INCLUSION** We embrace diversity and promote equity in all we do.
- **COLLABORATION** We build partnerships to achieve greater impact.
- **EXCELLENCE** We pursue quality, innovation, and continuous improvement.
- **SERVICE** We are committed to serving our communities and beyond.

STAY CONNECTED

Department of Health Sciences
Middle Tennessee State University
1301 E. Main Street
Murfreesboro, TN 37132

615-898-5204

publichealth@mtsu.edu

mtsu.edu/healthsciences

WE'RE HERE TO SUPPORT YOU

Your success is our priority. Connect with your advisor, faculty, and peers throughout your MPH journey.

MTSU
PUBLIC HEALTH

I AM *true* BLUE.

MIDDLE TENNESSEE
STATE UNIVERSITY.

The MPH program is accredited by the Council on Education for Public Health (CEPH).
Learn more at www.ceph.org.