



SDSU ONLINE MPH PROGRAM: FAQs

This document includes answers to questions that MPH applicants frequently ask about the program. If you have a question that is not answered here, please contact the Program Director, Dr. Emily Schmied at eschmied@mail.sdsu.edu.

Q: I am trying to decide between SDSU's in-person and online MPH programs; what are the advantages of each program?

A: Deciding between attending an in-person or online program can be difficult; your decision should be informed by several factors, including your learning style and your schedule. The content of the two programs is nearly identical, and many of the instructors are the same across the two programs as well. Some key differences between the programs are the learning setting and your access to the professor. In the online program, we make every effort to have the students interact with each other on a regular basis through video conferencing and group problem solving activities, but some students feel that they may learn better when they are physically sitting in a room with others. The same can be said about the professor--some students like to be able to physically meet with the professor, which is not out of the question, but much more difficult in the online program. If you feel that you can successfully learn in a remote or online environment, then the online program may be for you! Additionally, the flexibility of the online program is a key advantage over the in-person program. While you have mandatory weekly activities in the online program, you can complete them at any time of day or night, instead of having to come to class at a set time. Therefore, if you are already working full-time, the online program may better allow you to continue your work while earning your MPH.

Q: How does the online program work? What do students do in the courses?

A: All courses are conducted online via Blackboard. Students will be able to access the courses at least one week prior to the start of the semester so that they can review the syllabus, course schedule, and book purchasing requirements. While each course may vary slightly in terms of scheduling, most courses will be divided in 8 weekly modules. Each weekly module will have a number of requirements, including viewing video lectures, assigned readings, and weekly activities (done both individually and in groups).

Q: Are the online courses live?

A: No, all lectures are pre-recorded and the videos are posted to Blackboard and/or YouTube. This allows students the flexibility to view the content as their schedules allow. However, in some courses the instructor may periodically conduct live sessions or "office hours" via a free online conference platform, such as Zoom.

Q: Is there an expected average weekly time to do lessons, homework, etc?

A: For online graduate courses, which provide the same amount of content as a 16-week semester in just 8-weeks, the workload is significant. It is estimated that students will be tasked with approximately 4-6 hours/week per unit, or up to 18 hours/week per each standard 3-unit course. This will include time spent viewing lecture videos, completing assigned readings, participating in any weekly learning activities, and completing culminating course projects. Students should review each course syllabi for the specific course requirements.



Q: What type of work is required in each course for grading? Homework, papers, finals?

A: This is dependent on the course. All courses will have some required work each week that will be designed to replace the activities students would complete in class in a live program (i.e., online group discussions, case studies, reading quizzes). Some courses may have exams, including final exams, while others may have a culminating project instead of a final exam, such as a research paper.

Q: Do I have to purchase textbooks for all the courses?

A: Many courses do require the use of textbooks that you must purchase. Luckily, many sellers now offer options to rent textbooks or buy e-copies that are more affordable.

Q: Do I have to sign up for classes every 8 weeks?

A: It is highly recommended that students follow the 18-month program as it is designed, and complete all 8-week modules in order. If the student cannot enroll in one module, they will have to wait until the next time that module is offered, which may be one or more years in the future.

Q: Am I able to drop a class and then take it later if something comes up in my personal or professional life that will prevent me from completing it?

A: Students can drop a class and receive a tuition refund by the drop date specified by the office of the registrar (see the College of Extended Studies website under "Registration Information" or click [here](#)). Courses must be formally dropped by submitting a request in writing or in person to the SDSU College of Extended Studies. Please note that typically, full refunds (minus processing fees) will be offered if the student cancels *prior to* the first day of the course. Partial refunds may be available after the course begins. However, it is highly recommended that students do not drop classes; if the student cannot enroll in or complete a course, they will have to wait to re-enroll until the next time that course is offered, which may be one or more years in the future.

Q: If I don't pass a class for some reason, am I able to retake it? If so, when?

A: The online program will mostly adhere to the same rules as the live program (see SDSU Graduate Bulletin here: <http://arweb.sdsu.edu/es/catalog/Grad1718/018%20University%20Policies.pdf>), which state that, with department permission, students may repeat one course in their area of study if they fail to earn a passing grade. However, students who do wish to retake a course will have to wait until the next time the course is offered, which may be one or more years in the future. Sometimes in cases of emergency (e.g., serious medical issues), students can apply for an Incomplete, which allows them to finish a course within 12 months of their initial enrollment, pending the approval of the original course instructor. It is important to note that Incomplete agreements are only offered as a last resort in an emergency situation. Also, students who are admitted to the program on a conditional status may be held to different standards than those stated in the student handbook.

Q: What electives will be offered in the MPH program?

A: We have not yet finalized the course list for electives. We plan to query students regarding their interests this fall, and will publish a list of electives as soon as possible.



Q: What is the capstone project?

A: The capstone project is a research project that students complete, which is similar to a thesis. Students will work with their current employers or, as needed, with other research organizations, to develop and execute a public health-related project. This could include, but is not limited to: working on an ongoing health intervention, conducting a literature review regarding a relevant public health topic and proposing a new intervention, or evaluating a completed intervention. More information regarding the capstone project will be released this fall.

Q: What careers can I pursue with an MPH?

A: There are quite a few different career tracks you can pursue with an MPH, though it varies a bit depending on your MPH concentration and your focus area of study within the program. There is the research track, in which you can play a role in conducting research on important public health issues. As a researcher, you can pursue a number of different roles (e.g., study coordinator, research scientist, data manager, data analyst) and work in a number of different types of organizations, such as non-profits (e.g., American Heart Association), county health departments, a university research lab, a government research facility (e.g., Naval Health Research Center, CDC, NIH), hospitals, think tanks (e.g., RTI), or even a for-profit corporation such as insurance or marketing companies. You could also work as a health educator for many of the same types of companies that conduct research, or work in corporate wellness. Also, there are many opportunities for individuals with MPH degrees in clinical settings, such as nursing, or positions in hospital or clinic health promotion departments, hospital administration, quality control managers, emergency response preparedness officers. Ultimately, an MPH is a very versatile degree!

Q: If I enroll in the online MPH program, will I have access to the campus activities available to students in the in-person program?

A: If you live in the area, you are welcome to participate in campus activities, such as GSPH fundraisers and guest lecture series. You can also apply for research positions at any of SDSU's premier research labs (see here for information about SDSU's public health research centers: <https://publichealth.sdsu.edu/sci-research>). Additionally, with an SDSU RedID card, you can attend campus athletic events, use the library, and access the campus gyms.

Q: Where can I find more information?

A: For more information about registration, fees, add/drop policies, course descriptions, and other administrative and academic issues, please visit the websites for the online MPH program (www.ces.sdsu.edu/mph), the SDSU College of Extended Studies website (www.ces.sdsu.edu) and the Graduate School of Public Health (www.publichealth.sdsu.edu).