Overview

The Master of Public Health (MPH) in Nutrition was the first degree offered by the UNC Gillings School of Global Public Health’s Department of Nutrition. Since the first three students received their MPH degrees in 1951, the program has enrolled cohorts of about 40 residential students per year. Over the years, residential students have taken online courses as part of their degree program. Beginning in 2018, the Gillings School began to offer a fully online MPH/RD program through MPH@UNC.

Also beginning in 2018, the Registered Dietitian (RD) program became one of the first in the country to be an Accreditation Council for Education in Nutrition and Dietetics (ACEND)®-accredited Future Education Model program. The UNC Gillings RD program is recognized throughout the United States for the excellence of its training in public health nutrition.

Nutrition is recognized as one of the most important environmental determinants of health throughout the life cycle. It is a key factor in successful pregnancy outcomes, in the physical and mental development of infants and children, and in promoting health across the lifespan. Current research stresses nutrition and diet as critical factors in the prevention and treatment of most chronic disease, including obesity, heart disease, cancer, stroke, diabetes and osteoporosis. The safety, quality, quantity and distribution of local, national and world food supplies are major public policy issues.

Completion of the MPH degree with a Nutrition/Registered Dietitian concentration provides a graduate with a strong background in the science and practice of public health, along with a sound knowledge of food science and the science of human nutrition. UNC Gillings students complete the degree — as well as all related internship training — within two years and are then eligible to sit for the Commission on Dietetic Registration (CDR) exam to become a Registered Dietitian.
Admissions

ACEND has published the *Future Education Model Accreditation Standards* for programs in nutrition and dietetics at [www.eatrightpro.org/FutureModel](http://www.eatrightpro.org/FutureModel). UNC-Chapel Hill is one of only eight institutions in the country to be selected for the Future Education Model Accreditation Standards. These accreditation standards integrate didactic coursework with supervised experiential learning in a competency-based curriculum designed to prepare nutrition and dietetics students for future practice.

The Gillings School's RD program is part of the first cohort of programs to be accredited by ACEND under these new standards.

Program graduates will be eligible to take the CDR credentialing exam to become a Registered Dietitian. For more information on the steps to becoming a Registered Dietitian, please visit the Academy of Nutrition and Dietetics website.

Contact Amanda S. Holliday MS, RD, LDN, for more information.

Minimum Requirements for Admission

- Applicants must hold an appropriate baccalaureate degree from a four-year college or university or its international equivalent — with a 3.0 GPA or better.
- Applicants are required to submit Graduate Record Examination (GRE) scores. Physicians and dentists may submit Medical College or Dental Admission Test scores in lieu of GRE scores. The UNC Graduate School *recommends* a minimum score of 50th percentile or higher on the verbal and quantitative sections of these exams; however, there are no hard minimums for admission.
- The following prerequisite courses are required. They do not need to be completed at the time of application, but applicants must show that they will be able to complete them prior to enrolling in the program, if admitted. Pre-requisites may be completed at most any regionally accredited 2- or 4-year institution.
  - Chemistry (Chemistry I and Lab, Chemistry II and Lab, and at least one semester of Organic*)
  - Biochemistry*
  - Human Anatomy*
  - Human Physiology*
  - Microbiology and Lab
  - Human Nutrition
  - General Psychology
  - Introduction to Anthropology or Sociology I

*For these courses, a lab is recommended but not required for admission.*
• All international applicants, with some exceptions, are required to submit TOEFL or IELTS scores. Please see the UNC Graduate School’s admissions instructions for additional information.

Application Requirements

• Complete an online application and pay a nonrefundable application fee of $95.
• You must submit an essay that answers three key questions, without exceeding 1,500 words:
  o Why are you interested in pursuing a Master of Public Health degree and how will this prepare you for your career?
  o How have previous work and volunteer experiences led you to your choice of concentration(s)?
  o How will you contribute to a diverse, inclusive student community at UNC’s Gillings School?
• Submit your current resume or CV, and be sure to list any relevant professional and academic experience, including volunteer work.
• Provide three reference letters. While not required, it is recommended that at least one of your references be from an academic source.

Application Deadlines

MPH@UNC offers students four start dates per calendar year. See the MPH@UNC admissions webpage for the current application deadlines.
Mission and Goals

Our Mission

The mission of the MPH/RD program is to prepare future leaders in nutrition and dietetics through effective classroom education and practical community and clinical experiences, both locally and globally.

Our Goals

Goal #1:

To provide an educational environment that enhances critical thinking, problem solving and decision-making skills in enrolled students to produce program graduates who will be leaders in the field of nutrition and dietetics (public health, clinical, policy or nutrition research).

Objectives:

1. At least 90% of students will rate the program as “meets expectations” or higher when asked about this program goal on the exit survey.
2. At least 80% of employers will rate the program as “meets expectations” or higher when asked about this program goal on the employer survey.
3. At least 80% of program graduates will complete program requirements within 3.5 years (or 150% of the program length).
4. Throughout a five-year period, 80% of graduates who take the RD exam will pass the test on the first attempt.
5. Of graduates who seek employment, 70% will be employed in nutrition and dietetics or related fields within 12 months of graduation.
6. The program’s 1-year pass rate on the CDR credentialing exam (graduates who pass the exam within one year of their first attempt) will be at least 80%.

Goal #2:

To prepare competent entry-level practitioners in nutrition and dietetics who can assess and support the nutritional needs of individuals and communities.

Objectives:

1. 95% of students will receive a final grade of “P” or higher in Nutrition 710: Clinical Nutrition Experience.
2. 95% of students will receive a final grade of “P” or higher in Nutrition 720: Public Health Nutrition Management Experience.
3. 95% of students will receive a final grade of “P” or higher in Nutrition 730: Advanced Nutrition Experience.
4. 90% of the students taking the MPH exam will pass it.
5. When answering the question on the graduate survey about their ability to assess and support the nutritional needs of individuals and communities, 90% of graduates will “agree” or “strongly agree.”
6. When answering the question on the employer survey about their ability to assess and support the nutritional needs of individuals and communities, 90% of graduates will “agree” or “strongly agree.”

The outcome data measuring program achievement of these goals is available upon request.

Please contact the program director if you would like this information.
Curriculum

The UNC Gillings MPH/RD concentration is a 24-month program that prepares students for careers in clinical nutrition or public health and community leadership. The program is also for students who have received a Verification Statement* from an ACEND® Accredited/Approved Didactic Program in Dietetics. The program includes coursework and experiences that satisfy the Future Education Model Requirements of the Academy of Nutrition and Dietetics to prepare students for eligibility to take the examination for dietetic registration; coursework also satisfies competencies for the Associations of Schools of Public Health (ASPH) and the Council on Education for Public Health (CEPH).

All students are required to participate in a set of course requirements and experiential requirements. There are three groups of courses:

1. Public health core courses that orient all MPH students to the public health perspective and use of population-based data management;
2. Courses that offer in-depth knowledge of the biological, clinical and behavioral aspects of human nutrition and food selection; and
3. Courses that develop an understanding of nutrition problems in the community and the application of public health concepts to their solutions.

A total of 42 credit hours of coursework (as outlined below) is required to complete the MPH degree. Additionally, 1,000 hours or more of approved supervised field experience (incorporated into the 2-year degree) are required for completion of the MPH/RD program.

Please contact the program director if you would like more information about the hours of supervised field experience.

*An official Verification Statement must be given to the Academic Coordinator.

The following is a sample course schedule. Students may adjust based on their program start date and full-time or part-time status.

Fall Semester

NUTR 611*: Nutrition Across the Lifecycle (3 credits)
NUTR 630: Nutrition Communication, Counseling and Culture (3 credits)
SPHG 711: Data Analysis for Public Health (2 credits)
SPHG 712: Methods and Measures (2 credits)

SPHG 713: Understanding Public Health Issues (2 credits)

Total Credits: 12

Spring Semester

NUTR 715: Introduction to Nutritional Biochemistry (3 credits)

NUTR 640: Medical Nutrition Therapy (4 credits)

SPHG 721: Conceptualizing Public Health Solutions (2 credits)

SPHG 722: Implementing Public Health Solutions (4 credits)

NUTR 701: MPH Practicum Preparation – RD-specific (2 credits)

Total Credits: 15

Summer Session

Clinical Nutrition Field Experience – 10 weeks (0 credits)

Foodservice Management Experience – 2 weeks (0 credits)

Total Credits: 0

Fall Semester

NUTR 723: Public Health Nutrition Management (3 credits)

NUTR 805: Nutrition Policy (3 credits)

Elective(s): 3 credits or more, depending on interests

Total Credits: 6 + elective(s)
**Spring Semester**

NUTR 813: Nutritional Epidemiology (3 credits)

NUTR 650*: Food Science, Production and Meal Preparation (2 credits)

NUTR 650L*: Food Science, Production and Meal Preparation Lab (1 credit)

SPHG 992: Nutrition MPH Integrative Learning Experience (3 credits)

Elective(s): 3 credits or more, depending on interests

**Total Credits: 9 + elective(s)**

**January – May:** Food Systems Management Self-Study

**Summer Session II**

Public Health Nutrition Management Field Experience – 6 weeks (0 credits)

Advanced Nutrition Experience – 6 weeks (0 credits)

**Total Credits: 0**

A Comprehensive Examination covering core public health material is taken after the first year.

*Students who are already RDs or have a verification statement may take an elective or a core public health course in place of these courses.*

**Assessment of Prior Learning/Transfer Credit**

The MPH Program follows the UNC Graduate School’s policies for credit of prior learning. The policy can be found online at [handbook.unc.edu](http://handbook.unc.edu).
The Graduate School’s handbook states that:

Up to 20% of the total hours required for the master’s degree may be graduate-level courses transferred from another approved institution or from this institution for courses taken before admission to an academic program in the Graduate School (e.g., courses taken as a continuing studies student, an undergraduate or as a non-degree student). Credit received for graduate-level courses taken as an undergraduate may be transferred into an academic program with the program’s approval provided the course did not count toward the requirements of the undergraduate degree. Transferred credits will not be included in the program residence credit calculation.
Supervised Practice Experience

Field experiences are comprised of 1,000 hours of course curriculum activities and three primary field experiences: the Public Health Nutrition Management Experience, the Clinical Nutrition Experience and the Advanced Nutrition Experiences. These experiences provide students an opportunity to apply the knowledge and skills acquired through their coursework and further develop and demonstrate attainment of program learning outcomes. Field experiences prepare students for careers in clinical nutrition or public health and community leadership. Placements are decided based on input from both students and faculty.

Students assume full responsibility for their own safety in the course of travel to and from field sites, as well as for the cost of this travel. Students are also responsible for any injury that occurs during field placements. Students must complete any onboarding documentation required by their site, including drug testing and criminal background checks. **Students doing supervised field practice must not be used to replace employees.**

Public Health Nutrition Experience

The Public Health Nutrition Experience (240 hours), completed during the second summer of enrollment, provides students with an understanding of how a public health department or organization supports its community. Students are assigned to a state or local health agency for their community field experience and work under the direction of a public health nutritionist/dietitian preceptor.

Clinical Nutrition Experience

The Clinical Nutrition Experience (400 hours), completed during the first summer of enrollment, offers learning experiences to provide basic competencies in clinical nutrition and dietetics practice. Students develop an understanding of the role of a clinical dietitian and the opportunities and constraints of the health care setting in providing nutritional care to patients, as well as an awareness of the need for continuity of patient care between health care facilities and public health agencies.

Food Service/Systems Management Experience and Online Module

The Food Service Management Experience (110 hours) occurs during the first summer of enrollment at a local food service facility (university, hospital, etc.) or a food service facility affiliated with the student’s clinical nutrition site. Students complete online food service management modules (20 hours) and take a ServSafe Manager’s Training course and certification exam (10 hours) to prepare for their food service rotations (80 hours).
**Advanced Nutrition Experience**

The Advanced Nutrition Experience (240 hours), completed during the second summer of enrollment, is the final field experience for MPH/RD students. Students are placed in domestic and international organizations (governmental, nonprofit and private sector) that have a role in supporting nutritional health and well-being. This experience provides students with the opportunity to integrate theory with practice, facilitate the transition from student to professional status, and clarify short-term career objectives in a supportive and nurturing environment. The Advanced Nutrition Experience is tailored to the interests and professional goals of the individual student.
**Program Costs**

Estimated expenses for a graduate student for a typical 24-month program:

42 credits to complete

Tuition: $1,735 per credit
Student Fees (spring/fall): $23.84 per credit
Student Fees (summer): TBD
Placement Fees: $3,131 per placement experience*

*Placement fees for the RD program are billed through the North Carolina Institute of Public Health (NCIPH) in four installments. Internship fees are not included in Cost of Attendance as calculated for financial aid purposes.*
Diversity and Inclusion

MPH/RD program leaders are committed to ensuring that the program offers a diverse, inclusive, civil and welcoming community. Diversity and inclusion are central to the Gillings School’s mission — to improve public health, promote individual well-being and eliminate health disparities across North Carolina and around the world.

Diversity and inclusion are assets that contribute to our strength, excellence, and individual and institutional success. We welcome, value and learn from individual differences and perspectives. These include, but are not limited to: cultural and racial/ethnic background; country of origin; gender; age; socioeconomic status; physical and learning abilities; physical appearance; religion; political perspective; sexual identity and veteran status. Diversity, inclusiveness and civility are core values we hold, as well as characteristics of the School that we intend to strengthen.

We are committed to expanding diversity and inclusiveness within the MPH/RD program. We measure diversity and inclusion not only in numbers, but also by the extent to which students, alumni, faculty and staff members perceive the program’s environment as welcoming, valuing all individuals and supporting their development.

For more information, please visit the Gillings School of Global Public Health’s Diversity and Inclusion webpage.
Accreditation

The UNC Gillings School of Global Public Health MPH/RD program is accredited as a Future Education Model by the Accreditation Council for Education in Nutrition and Dietetics (ACEND). Additional information on ACEND can be obtained by contacting them at:

Accreditation Council for Education in Nutrition and Dietetics
Academy of Nutrition and Dietetics
120 South Riverside Plaza, Suite 2190
Chicago, IL 60606-6995

Phone: (800) 877-1600 x5400
Fax: (312) 899-4817
Email: ACEND@eatright.org
www.eatrightpro.org/ACEND

Successful completion of the MPH/RD program leads to eligibility to take the Commission on Dietetic Registration credentialing exam to become a registered dietitian. Many states require licensure to practice. Information about becoming licensed in North Carolina can be found on the North Carolina Board of Dietetics/Nutrition website.