



Midwest Center for Occupational Health and Safety
Education and Research Center

Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ)

Occupational and Environmental Health Nursing Graduate Program
University of Minnesota School of Public Health
Environmental Health Sciences Division
<http://www.mcohs.umn.edu/occupational-and-environmental-health-nursing>

The Occupational and Environmental Health Nursing (OEHN) program prepares future leaders dedicated to the health and safety of workers, their families, and the environment. The OEHN program degree options are a Master of Public Health (MPH) and a Doctor of Philosophy (PhD) in Environmental Health. *Graduates of the OEHN MPH program* work in business, industry, health care and public health to develop, manage and evaluate health programs designed to promote health and prevent work-related injuries and disease. *Graduates of the PhD program* work in universities, and public and private institutions to conduct research and educate future generations of OEHN professionals and educators.

Question 1. Why does a person go to this graduate program?

They are ready for a change and want to learn and do something new. They are curious and want to expand their vision of occupational health nursing and the scope of their professional role. They want to increase their salary in association with earning a graduate degree and getting a job promotion or making a job change.

Question 2. Who should apply? Nurses interested in public health, passionate about the prevention of illness and injury, and wanting to work with employed adults who meet the program admission requirements should apply. Applicants must have at least one year of professional experience as a registered nurse, be licensed to practice as a registered nurse in the United States, and have successfully completed a baccalaureate degree in nursing or a related field. Applicants must also have earned strong scores on the Graduate Record Exam (GRE) and provide three letters of recommendation.

Question 3. What are the program benefits?

- ***Student financial support.***

A major program benefit is the availability of financial support to cover eligible student tuition and fees through a training grant from the National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health (NIOSH). Full-time students may also be eligible for a partial stipend that varies with the number of students eligible for support. This financial support is determined annually based on federal budget appropriations and the program usually knows their funding status in May for the academic year beginning in September. **This year we will have funds available for students applying to start January of 2019.**

- ***Interdisciplinary approach.***

Occupational and environmental nursing integrates the sciences of occupational and environmental health with a population health perspective and prevention. Coursework and field experiences involve interactive learning and teamwork with students in epidemiology, injury prevention, industrial hygiene, occupational medicine and toxicology.

- ***Fieldwork and Applied Learning***

Students apply coursework to real world problems working with professional mentors in the community at the local, national or global level. Learning experiences are facilitated by the faculty or initiated by the students.

Question 4. How many nursing students are enrolled in the OEHN program?

Currently two Masters in Public Health (MPH) nursing students are enrolled in the program; two additional students graduated earlier this year. Typically, 2-5 nursing students are enrolled each year, and they are part of a class of 25 to 35 interdisciplinary students including occupational and environmental medicine residents, industrial hygienists, toxicologists, epidemiologists, injury prevention specialists, and others.

Question 5. Is it possible to work full-time while completing the OEHN program?

Yes, some MPH students work full-time while taking courses. PhD students typically work part-time given the longer duration of required coursework. We recommend students employed full-time start the program with one or two classes to determine the course level that they can successfully manage and enjoy. Courses are taught in-person (on the

Minneapolis campus) during the day and evening, and online, but the options vary by the course. For some students, taking one on-line class and one in-person class makes an easier transition when beginning the program. The advantage of the in-person class is to benefit from interaction with cross-functional disciplines and develop supportive, on-going relationships. The MPH generally takes 2 years of full-time study (4 years of part-time work). If one had completed the MPH, the PhD takes an additional 2-3 years depending on the nature and scope of the dissertation research.

Question 6. How many credits does it take to earn a degree for either the MPH or the PhD?

The MPH program involves 42 credits including interdisciplinary core courses in public health, environmental health sciences, occupational health and safety, electives, and field experiences and a final, integrative learning experience tailored for OEHN students. The PhD program builds on the MPH curricula and minimally includes 21 additional course credits in epidemiology, biostatistics, research and teaching methods, and 24 credits specific to the dissertation research.

Question 7. How does the U of M School of Public Health OEHN program interface with the U of M School of Nursing?

The Doctorate of Nursing Practice (DNP) program is the highest degree in practice or a clinical specialty offered in the School. For information, see <https://www.nursing.umn.edu/degrees-programs/doctor-nursing-practice>. The School of Nursing continues to offer the Masters of Nursing degree (MN) to students who already have a non-nursing, science-based Bachelor's degree and want to become RNs. Occupational and Environmental Health Nurses can take School of Nursing courses as electives.

Question 8. How do I get started with the program?

Once you decide to apply you then need to complete the on-line application to the program, and submit an official transcript from your undergraduate nursing program, see: <http://www.sph.umn.edu/prospective/application-process/>. Three letters of support are also required, one of which should be from your School of Nursing, if recent and still possible; otherwise, employers may provide a letter of support. Finally, the Graduate Record Exam (GRE) is required. There are on-line study guides and classes available through most colleges and universities that you may find helpful when preparing for the GRE. As one example, the University of Minnesota offers in-person and online preparation classes; see: <https://ccaps.umn.edu/graduate-school-test-prep>.

Question 9. What is the timeline for entering the program?

One usually enrolls in the fall as the academic year runs September-May (e.g., fall semester, 9/4/18-12/20/18 and spring semester, 1/22/19 – 5/15/19), but students can also enroll starting in spring. The application deadline for fall is July 15, and for spring semester, it is October 15. The School of Public Health encourages all applicants to submit their application and supporting documentation at least two weeks before the deadlines to allow for any problems that may arise.

Question 10. Is it possible to take some credits before being accepted into the program and then transfer those credits into the degree program upon acceptance to the program?

It is possible to transfer up to 12 credits into the School of Public Health before being formally accepted into the program. However, tuition support from NIOSH would not be available until formal acceptance into the program.

Question 11. I am interested in applying to the program, but I am concerned about being successful in the program.

Many applicants are concerned about re-entering academics, especially if they have been out of undergraduate school for a while. Some strategies for increasing your chances of success in being admitted and successful in the program include:

- 1) Visit the OEHN Program website to learn about the program, its students and alumni at <http://www.mcohs.umn.edu/occupational-and-environmental-health-nursing>
- 2) Connect with Pat McGovern, PhD, MPH, BSN, the OEHN Program Director, by email (pmcg@umn.edu), and set up a time for phone call or in-person visit to learn about academic expectations and discuss the many resources available to help students be successful.
- 3) Reach out to occupational health nurses graduates or current students you know to learn about their experiences, and what helped them be successful. If you do not personally know any of the graduates or students, ask Dr. McGovern for some contacts as she would be happy to connect you to others.