



**MS in EHS –
Environmental Health Data Science
Student Handbook**

2023 – 2024 Academic Year

This handbook has been created to ensure EHS students are familiar with Department and School procedures and protocol.

Important resources:
[EHS Department website](#)
[Official MSPH handbook](#)

Questions should be directed to [Nina Kulacki](#), Director of Academic Programs or [Dr. Greg Freyer](#), Director of EHS Master's Programs.

For a detailed academic calendar for 2023-24, please see the [Mailman Academic Calendar](#).

Academic Honesty & Honor Code: All candidates are expected to adhere to the required standards for academic and scientific integrity, which can be [found here](#).

Table of Contents

Advising and Administrative Resources	4
Faculty Advisor	4
Academic Programs Office in EHS	4
2nd Year MPH Peer Mentors	4
Writing Center Resources	4
Teaching Assistant (TA) Opportunities for EHS Department-based Courses	5
Requirements for consideration	5
Compensation	5
To be considered for an EHS TA position	5
Other TA opportunities in the School	5
EHS MS Environmental Health Data Science Degree Requirements	6
Course Requirements/Schedule	6
Attendance at Professional Development, Seminars, and Other Required Student Meetings	7
Thesis.....	7
Suggested MS Thesis Timeline	8
Practicum Requirement (Applied Practice Experience – APEX)	9
EHS Practicum/APEX Competencies	9
Graduation Procedures	10
Alumni Information	10
Contact with the Department	10
Important information about your Columbia email address upon graduation	10

Advising and Administrative Resources

Faculty Advisor

Each student is assigned an EHS faculty advisor at the start of the program. Students are expected to **meet with their advisor at least once per semester** to review their course plan prior to the end of the add/drop period. It is important for students to be proactive in scheduling these meetings and checking in with their advisor periodically. Students must also contact their advisor to discuss the details of their required Thesis.

Regardless of one's assigned faculty advisor, students are welcomed and encouraged to meet with any faculty member in the Department and with [Nina Kulacki](#). Questions or requests to change an assigned faculty advisor should be directed to Ms. Kulacki.

Academic Programs Office in EHS

The MS Data Science in Environmental Data Science Program Director, Dr. Tiffany Sanchez, and the Academic Director of Academic Programs, [Nina Kulacki](#), are the primary points of contact in the Department for administrative issues related to the academic program. They implement policies established by the Columbia University Mailman School of Public Health (*CUMSPH*) and by the Department of Environmental Health Sciences (*EHS*). Additionally, they can provide information about program requirements and address any questions or concerns.

2nd Year MPH Peer Mentors

All incoming EHS students are assigned a 2nd year MPH student mentor (*typically an MPH student*) from the EHS Department. Mentors are available to provide support and assistance to 1st year students by answering questions, offering advice, and recommending resources – academic and otherwise. EHS will host a lunch meeting each semester for peer mentors and mentees to have an opportunity to connect.

Writing Center Resource

The [Writing Center](#) provides writing support to undergraduate and graduate students. In one-on-one consultations and workshops, our consultants offer feedback and strategies to help you improve at every stage of your writing, from brainstorming to final drafts. [Learn more](#) about what happens in a Writing Center consultation.

Teaching Assistant (TA) Opportunities for EHS Department-based Courses

Any full-time EHS student in good standing may request to be a TA for an EHS course by contacting [Nina Kulacki](#). **Please note:** *Students in their first semester are NOT typically eligible to TA.*

Requirements for consideration

- Full-time student in good academic and conduct standing.
 - The applicant's academic and behavioral standing will be confirmed prior to being permitted to move to the next stage of the application process.
- Participate in assigned/needed CourseWorks/Canvas training session(s).
- Be able to devote up to 20 hours per week to the TA-ship. This may include, but is not limited to:
 - Time spent in class (*students should be available to sit in the course for the duration of the semester*).
 - Time spent outside of class for scheduled office hours, grading, and preparation of teaching materials, which might also include time prior to the semester in which the course is scheduled.
 - **Note:** All students must be available to hold office hours outside of the regular course meeting time if this is required for the course. Office space should be requested by sending an email to [Brandy Coleman](#).

Compensation

- TA compensation for the 2023-24 academic year is based on a \$27.81 per hour model. The salary amount in the final offer letter will be the set amount for the position assigned to a student.

To be considered for an EHS TA position

- Respond to the call for applications – sent by [Nina Kulacki](#) with the details of the requested course and semester offering.
- Nina Kulacki will confirm all TA appointments via email. Students will then be directed to the EHS Business Office to fill out the proper payroll documents prior to the semester in which they will serve as a TA.

Other TA opportunities in the School

There are also School-wide TA opportunities available in the Core courses. These TA positions are managed by the Office of Educational Programs. Office of Educational Initiatives. All students will receive notification of these opportunities through School-wide emails and should reply to that request at that time.

EHS MS Environmental Health Data Science Degree Requirements

1. EHS Department core course requirements
2. Program coursework
3. Required participation in EHS events
4. Thesis Requirement
5. Practicum requirement

This program is designed to be completed in 12 months. There is an option to do this as a part time student. Please discuss the part time option with [Nina Kulacki](#) and [Greg Freyer](#).

Course Requirements/Schedule

Semester	Course #	Course Name	Credits
Fall 2023	P6300	Environmental Health Sciences	3
	P8105	Data Science I	3
	P8130	Biostatistical Methods I	3
	P6400	Principles of Epidemiology I	3
	Pick one of the following:		3
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • P8307 Molecular Epidemiology • P8312 Principles of Toxicology 	
Total Fall Credits			15
Spring 2024	P8322	Environmental Health Sciences II	3
	P8106	Data Science II	3
	P8131	Biostatistical Methods II	3
	P9380	Advanced GIS and Spatial Analysis	3
	P6370	Journal Club in Molecular Epi and Toxicology	0
	P8332	Advanced Analytic Methods in EHS	3
	Pick one of the following:		3
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • P8326 Public Health Epigenetics • P8334 Computational Toxicology • P8451 Machine Learning for Epidemiology and Public Health • P8477 Epi Modeling for Infectious Disease 	
Total Spring Credits			18
Summer 2024	P9361	Thesis (Master's Essay)	3
	Total Summer Credits		3
	Total Credits for MS		36

Attendance at Professional Development, Seminars, and Other Required Student Meetings

Every Wednesday, in both Fall and Spring semesters of year 1, all full-time first-year master's students in EHS meet for the Professional Development Series. This seminar/discussion offers students an opportunity to interact with faculty members and current students in EHS. Additionally, these meetings are used for training in professional development, career development, and networking. Attendance is taken each week.

All full-time students must attend at least 3 of these meetings per month. If it is necessary to miss a seminar, the student must email [Nina Kulacki](#) prior to that date.

Examples of Required Meetings:

- All master's student meetings
- Casual Conversations and Professional Development attendance
- Practicum experience presentation
- EHS Speed Networking event
- EHS Alumni Panel

Thesis

All EHS MS students are required to complete a thesis. For these students, the thesis is typically related to the research/work done as a part of the practicum. It is critically important that students identify a possible thesis topic and a plan and timeline.

Guidelines for the written thesis provided in the table below.

Section	Content	Pages
Abstract	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• A hypothesis should be included in the abstract section that states the problem and results from the study	1 – 2 pages
Table of Contents	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Include major sections and subsections	1 page
Introduction	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• A review of current relevant literature	10 – 15 pages
Methods	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• A detailed description of methods used in the study	5 – 8 pages
Results	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• This reveals relevant data generated from the study	10 – 15 pages
Discussion	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• A discussion of how the data supports or contradicts the stated hypothesis and future directions	5 – 10 pages

Suggested MS Thesis Timeline

Note: MS students should populate this with dates and use this as a guide for the steps and approvals needed for successful thesis completion. The dates and deadlines must be reviewed and approved by your advisor.

Milestone	Student Submission Deadlines (to Advisor)	Deadlines for Advisor Feedback (to Student)
Outline		
Introduction		
Results/ Data		
Methods		
Discussion/ Abstract		
Final Draft to 2 nd Reader*		
Final Paper to Advisor for Grade		*Typically, this is around the 2nd week of August to meet the deadline summer grade submission.

*The final deadline for faculty to submit grades will be shared via email as the Summer semester approaches. In the meantime, please contact [Nina Kulacki](#) with any questions.

Practicum Requirement (*Applied Practice Experience – APEX*)

MS students are required to complete a practical experience requirement (*practicum*). This requirement is completed during the summer after the 2 semesters of coursework (*part-time students will discuss their specific practicum plans with their Advisor and the Director of Academic Programs*). However, some students request approval to fulfill this requirement during the school year.

The range of completed hours must fall between 150 – 300 hours total.

The practicum may take a variety of forms, depending on the student's area of interest. Most MS students opt to do a research project for their practicum and then use this as the basis of their thesis. However, there is the option of doing a practicum such as,

- working with a government agency
- working in a community-based organization
- working with an organization or company that does environmental or toxicological work.

MS students must meet all the following practical experience requirements to graduate:

- Obtain approval from a faculty advisor prior to accepting a position.
- Work with their advisor on the thesis. The thesis advisor may be the person with whom they conduct research. Please discuss this with [Dr. Tiffany Sanchez](#) and your faculty mentor.

EHS Practicum/APEX Competencies

The EHS practicum experience should meet one or more of the following competencies:

- Apply the principles of exposure assessment to evaluate human exposures to environmental and occupational hazards.
- Apply and synthesize content learned through coursework in environmental health sciences that can be applied to practice in a professional setting.
- Demonstrate an understanding of the complexities of the EHS field and how major stakeholders collaborate with the goal of informing public and private constituency groups of environmental outcomes.
- Involve a topic that is relevant to EHS such as exposure assessment, climate change, environmental policy or toxicology. They can include laboratory studies, field studies, data analysis or study design. The practicum can take place in academia, a government agency, private companies or non-government agencies.
- Identify biological mechanisms whereby environmental and/or occupational agents adversely affect human health.
- Identify factors that affect susceptibility to adverse human health effects of environmental and/or occupational agents.
- Recommend interventions for reducing human exposures to environmental and occupational hazards.
- Communicate effectively, in writing and orally, knowledge of environmental hazards to other professionals and the public, including effective risk communication.
- Knowledge within the area of Molecular Epidemiology, Toxicology, Occupational Health, Industrial Hygiene, Climate Change, or Environmental Policy.

Graduation Procedures

In order to receive the MS degree, students must:

- Submit an application using the link that is directly emailed from OSA in the Spring semester.

Form submission deadlines set by the School. **Note:** *Full-time students will complete the program in August, so they will receive their degree in October.*

August 1 for October degrees

December 1 for February degrees

February 1 for May degrees

The Mailman School of Public Health convenes one commencement ceremony annually. All graduates from that academic year are invited to participate in the May ceremony. However, only those students who have fully completed all degree requirements and are pending the final requirements as reviewed by the [Nina Kulacki](#) may march at graduation.

If a student submits an application for graduation but does not meet degree requirements in time, they cannot reapply for graduation until all requirements are fully completed and grades recorded. In this case, the student should request a meeting with Nina to review and confirm the plans for successful program completion.

Alumni Information

Contact with the Department

Upon completion of the program, we request that students provide the following information to [Nina Kulacki](#) (*typically requested via a survey/form*):

- Forwarding US mailing address
- Forwarding (*non-Columbia*) email address
- Details of next position (*if known*)

Important information about your Columbia email address upon graduation

Upon graduation, email addresses are slated for termination. If students would like to continue using their Columbia email address after graduation, they should [submit a request using this link](#).