

Appalachian State University – Beaver College of Health Sciences Master of Health Administration Program Policies

Admission

The Master of Health Administration (MHA) Program is a professional degree program with explicit requirements for admission and retention. To be admitted to the MHA program, students must meet the academic standards of Appalachian State University's ("Appalachian") [Cratis D. Williams Graduate School of Graduate Studies](#)¹ and the [Beaver College of Health Sciences](#)².

Students are also expected to abide by Appalachian's [Code of Student Conduct](#)³ and [Academic Integrity Code](#)⁴, and must comply with all applicable university and college policies and procedures. Failure to meet these standards may result in dismissal from the MHA program. The standards are more fully described on the university's [webpage](#)³.

Appalachian State University's Cratis D. Williams Graduate School of Graduate Studies requires applicants to have a baccalaureate degree from an accredited college or university and earned a 3.0 overall grade point average OR a 2.5 overall grade point average in the last earned degree and official scores at the 25th percentile level from the GRE or GMAT. Applicants must also complete the graduate application and pay the fee required by the Graduate School.

Admission to the MHA Program

In addition to the criteria above established by the Graduate School and the Beaver College of Health Sciences (BCHS), the MHA Program has developed specific criteria for admission that are consistent with the program's mission and goals. Preference will be given to applicants with at least two years of experience or who are currently employed in a health care setting. The required application materials are listed below and detailed on the MHA Program [website](#)⁵.

- Completed online [application to the Graduate School](#)¹
- Resume
- Official (sealed) transcript(s) from each college or university attended (other than Appalachian State University)
- Application fee
- Personal statement including career goals and personal experience in health care
- GRE/GMAT test scores no older than five years
- Three letters of reference pertaining to academic ability, professional competence and personal character.

Note: Applicants with a 3.0 GPA or higher may have their GRE/GMAT requirement waived if they have five or more years of paid full-time work experience of which three or more are in a health care setting or they have a graduate or professional degree. To request GRE/GMAT scores

¹ <https://graduate.appstate.edu/prospective-students>

² <https://healthsciences.appstate.edu/>

³ <https://studentconduct.appstate.edu/student-information>

⁴ <https://academicintegrity.appstate.edu/>

⁵ <https://distance.appstate.edu/programs/id/health-administration-mha>

be waived an applicant must submit their application including official transcripts, a completed [entrance exam waiver form](#)⁶, proof of five or more years of paid full-time employment. Proof of employment is typically in the form of a letter(s) from employer(s) stating the dates of full-time employment. The Graduate School will review and make the final determination once the application is complete (except for GRE scores).

Minimum admissions requirements include:

- ²A baccalaureate degree from an accredited college or university
- A minimum 3.0 overall GPA in the last earned degree OR a 2.5 overall GPA in the last earned degree and official GRE/GMAT scores showing at least the 25th percentile level. (Note: This is a minimum requirement for initial application review and does not guarantee acceptance.)
- A completed Application Package (noted in the previous section)
- Applicants must be currently employed in a health care setting. Applicants with two years of health care work experience are given preference for admission.

Admission into the MHA is competitive, and applications are evaluated based on the entire application package. A strong applicant is one who has at least a 3.0 overall GPA, evidence of two years or more of health care work experience, and GRE scores at the 50th percentile.

Orientation and Annual Fall Meeting

All incoming MHA Students are required to attend the MHA Program Orientation. The Orientation provides information related to Appalachian State University, the MHA Program, curriculum and requirements, policies and procedures, distance education, and the learning management system. Orientation is typically held on the first Friday of the fall semester. Incoming students are informed of the MHA program Orientation and Fall Meeting as well as other requirements via a welcome letter when admitted into the program.

All MHA students are required to attend the annual fall meeting, which is held on the first Saturday of the fall semester immediately following orientation. A reminder save the date email is sent to all MHA students in April. The annual fall meeting provides an opportunity for students to build professional relationships and to communicate with peers and faculty. In addition, students will participate in team building and leadership activities, hear program and college updates, and to attend face-to-face classes.

Academic Policies Academic Standards for Retention in the MHA Program

In order to meet our responsibilities to provide quality professional education and to ensure that our MHA graduates are able to function in a broad variety of professional situations, the Health Care Management program has set forth standards for students in the MHA Program.

⁶ https://graduate.appstate.edu/sites/graduate.appstate.edu/files/entrance_exam_waiver_form_0.pdf

MHA students must maintain the academic standards for retention set forth by Appalachian State University, [the Graduate School](#)¹, and the Health Care Management Program. MHA students are expected to abide by Appalachian's [Code of Student Conduct](#)³ and [Academic Integrity Code](#)⁴, and must comply with all applicable university and college policies and procedures. MHA students also must comply with the [American College of Healthcare Executive's Code of Ethics](#)^{7*}, and the following program standards: 1) Scholastic Performance; 2) Professionalism; 3) Ethical Behavior; 4) Interpersonal Relationships; and 5) Commitment to Diversity and Inclusion. Failure to meet the standards may result in dismissal from the program. The standards are delineated below, the expectations are illustrative not exhaustive.

1. Scholastic Performance Standards.

Maintain a minimum overall GPA of 3.0 or higher;
Must repeat courses in which the final grade is below a C-;
Dismissed from the program if they earn more than 3 C level grades; and
All courses with a grade of "F" or "U" must be repeated.

2. Professionalism Standards.

Function within the structure of the University, College, and Department including:
Abiding by established policies and processes;
Meeting deadlines; providing documentation as requested;
Completing required in-class and out-of-class assignments;
Being prepared for and attending class; and
Communicating respectfully and appropriately with faculty, staff, fellow students and others.

3. Ethical Behavior Standards.

Act in ways that will merit the trust, confidence, and respect of others;
Lead lives that embody an exemplary system of values and ethics;
Make decisions and take actions that reflect personal integrity and ethical leadership;
Conduct activities with honesty, integrity, respect, fairness and good faith in a manner that will reflect well upon the healthcare management profession;
Maintain competence and proficiency in health care management by implementing a personal program of assessment and continuing professional education.

4. Interpersonal Relationships Standards.

Interact with others, including peers, faculty, administrators, and community members with integrity, cooperation, and respect, to build and maintain effective working relationships; and

*MHA students are engaged in an academic program that will prepare them for professional activity. Appalachian's MHA program identifies with the core values of the American College of Healthcare Executives, including its Code of Ethics and professional standards. References to the ACHE Code of Ethics and other standards will be modified as appropriate to apply to MHA students who are not yet executives, but are advancing their profession.

¹ <https://graduate.appstate.edu/prospective-students>

³ <https://studentconduct.appstate.edu/student-information>

⁴ <https://academicintegrity.appstate.edu/>

⁷ https://www.ache.org/abt_ache/code.cfm

Demonstrate interpersonal skills that facilitate forming and sustaining effective helping relationships.

5. Commitment to Diversity and Inclusion.

Foster an inclusive environment and recognize the contributions of all members;

Encourage open dialogue to increase understanding, awareness, and improved decision-making;

Demonstrate respect for all people.

Academic Performance Concerns

Students in the MHA program are first and foremost Appalachian State University students. Therefore, they must adhere to the academic standards and performance standards set forth by the University for all students. According to the Appalachian State University Code of Student Conduct and Academic Integrity Code, “When students enter the University, they assume obligations of performance and behavior relevant to the University’s mission, processes, and functions. These expectations of students in an academic community are higher than those expected of other citizens.” Violations of the performance standards set forth by the university, including violations of the [Academic Integrity Code](#)⁴, will be referred to the [Office of Student Conduct](#)³. Please note that alleged threat or harassment complaints must be handled according to [university procedures](#)³. Further, students who fail to maintain the University’s scholastic requirements are subject to academic probation or dismissal as indicated in the Appalachian State University Graduate Bulletin: [Academic Requirements and Regulations](#)⁸. Additional review may also be undertaken that will follow the policies and procedures outlined in this handbook by the Department of Nutrition and Health Care Management and MHA program.

Because the MHA program is a professional program, MHA students must also adhere to the specific Academic Performance Standards set forth by the MHA Program. The MHA Program’s Academic Performance Standards and expectations of professional behaviors for each standard were developed to ensure clarity of expectations for behavior and achievement and to ensure that students from our program are well-suited for the professional demands, roles, and responsibilities of health care leaders. The MHA Program’s Academic Performance Standards and expectations of professional behaviors are the first step towards the development of specific competencies. The MHA Program has identified the following competencies as the basis for its curriculum, course content, learning objectives, and teaching and assessment methods:

1. Knowledge of the health-sector and health care management
2. Communications and interpersonal effectiveness
3. Critical thinking, analysis, and problem solving
4. Management and leadership
5. Professionalism and ethics

Competency development is an ongoing process, beginning with a basic level and understanding, then progressing towards greater knowledge and skills with a goal of advanced competence late in one’s career. Therefore, academic performance expectations will follow this developmental sequence, with increasing competency expected over time.

Student academic performance is monitored throughout the MHA Program. When concerns are noted in any of the areas outlined in the Academic Performance Standards for Retention, the Department will utilize the policies and procedures outlined in the following paragraphs. The severity of the concern will influence the level of intervention and steps followed.

1. When a minor academic, behavioral, or professional concern is identified the following steps are strongly recommended.
 - a. At a minimum, the faculty member or other supervisor/evaluator will meet with the student in person to discuss the concern.
 - b. An informal resolution will include written documentation of the concern and resolution, and may include the student's voluntary, signed agreement to take certain steps to address the concern.
 - c. If a student requests a reasonable accommodation in order to satisfy the required Professional Behaviors, the student will be referred to the [Office of Disability Services](#)⁹ (ODS). If ODS determines that reasonable accommodations should be approved, University and student records will be updated as appropriate to reflect that determination.
 - d. A copy of the informal resolution documentation will be provided to the MHA Program Director.
 - e. If the Faculty member and the student are not able to resolve the concerns informally, or if the MHA Program Director, upon receipt of documentation, determines that consideration by health care management faculty (HCM) and the Departmental Chair is appropriate. The MHA Program Director will convene a meeting with the Department Chair to identify two HCM faculty to consider the academic, behavioral, or professional concern.

If the MHA Program Director convenes a meeting of the HCM Faculty to consider an academic, behavioral, or professional behavior concern, the following procedures will govern. At minimum, this meeting will include the MHA Program Director, two tenured HCM faculty and the Department Chair.

- a. The MHA Program Director will convene the meeting as promptly as is reasonably possible.
 - i. If the MHA Program Director initiates a review or if there is another conflict of interest, another HCM Faculty member will be designated to chair the review meeting. The term "Chair" as used in these procedures shall refer to the MHA Program Director or another HCM Faculty member designated to chair the review meeting.
 - ii. The Chair will notify the student of the meeting via email. Unless unusual circumstances require otherwise, the student will be provided notice at least 48 hours in advance of the meeting. The notice to the student will include the following:

³ <https://studentconduct.appstate.edu/student-information>

⁴ <https://academicintegrity.appstate.edu/>

⁸ <http://bulletin.appstate.edu/content.php?catoid=7&navoid=292>

⁹ <https://odr.appstate.edu/>

1. Date, time, and location of the meeting (or that a virtual meeting will be held).
 2. A copy of the documented professional behavior concern.
 3. A copy of this Policy.
 4. A statement that the student's rights include, among other things, the student's right to speak on his or her own behalf, the right to be accompanied by a non-attorney support person, the right to present information, and the right to ask others (but not an attorney) to speak on the student's behalf.
- b. The Chair will preside over the meeting and is responsible for ensuring an orderly, fair, and efficient process to consider the concerns is adhered to. The formal rules of evidence do not apply and the Chair may decide whether testimony and/or documents would help the HCM faculty and the Chair to reach a considered, informed resolution.
 - c. The student may be accompanied by a support person. The support person may not be an attorney or be called upon to provide factual information at the hearing. The support person shall not be permitted to speak or to take any active role in the meeting. The student must provide the name of the support person to the Chair at least 24 hours in advance of the meeting.
 - d. The faculty member who prepared the written warning will present the concerns and the student will have an opportunity to speak on his or her behalf. HCM faculty members (including the Chair) may ask questions of the concerned faculty member and the student.
 - e. If the Chair believes it would be helpful to a fair consideration of the concerns, the Chair may request or permit other individuals to speak and/or present information at this meeting. The faculty member and the student also will have an opportunity to ask questions of such individuals. An individual who presents information pursuant to this section may not also serve as a support person.
 - f. After the presentation of testimony and documents is complete, the student (and, if applicable, the student's support person) will be excused.
 - g. If the student has been notified of the meeting but refuses to or does not attend, the meeting will be conducted in the student's absence.

The HCM faculty will consider the academic, behavioral, or professional review and all information presented at the meeting to determine whether the concerns raised have merit.

- a. The Department Chair may be present for deliberations to observe and hear first-hand the impressions and thinking of faculty members.
- b. The Department Chair shall not be present when the HCM faculty prepares its recommendations.
- c. The HCM faculty will submit its recommendation(s) in writing to the Department Chair indicating the faculty's assessment and any recommended consequences within three business days following the meeting, although that time may be extended if required by unusual circumstances.

Possible actions available to the HCM faculty include but are not limited to the items a-h below. The HCM faculty may consult with appropriate University and Department personnel to determine their recommended course of action to the Department Chair.

- a) Gather more information which may include contact with the student, faculty members, agency, or others;
- b) Conduct a meeting to resolve issues;
- c) Develop a written performance contract;
- d) Remove the student from the course;
- e) Referral for counseling
- f) Referral to the Office of the Dean of Students and/or the Office of Student Conduct
- g) Suspend/dismiss the student
- h) Other actions deemed appropriate by the HCM faculty

Upon receipt of the HCM Faculty's written recommendation, the Department Chair will consider all relevant information, determine whether the student has violated academic, behavioral, or professional behaviors and, if so, decide what consequences are appropriate along with the measures and timeline for follow-up. The Department Chair will communicate this decision to the student via email, ordinarily within 10 business days following receipt of the HCM faculty's recommendation. That time period may be extended based on extenuating circumstances.

Any active criminal charge or criminal conviction or active or substantiated violation of the Student Code of Conduct and Academic Integrity Code must be reported to the MHA Program Director or Department Chair. Failure to meet these reporting requirements may result in an Academic Performance Review and/or dismissal from the MHA Program.

Violence or threat of harm to any human being, cheating, or documented instances of plagiarism may result in immediate dismissal from the MHA Program. Engaging in conduct that results in dismissal from a course in the MHA Program may also result in immediate dismissal from the MHA Program. Any other actions required by law and/or University policy will also be taken.

Although every effort is made to identify and positively address student concerns as early as possible, the Department may conduct a review, or take other appropriate action, at any time to address concerns, even if the relevant issues arise late in the student's final semester. Concerns related to student academic performance, behavior, or professionalism can delay awarding the MHA degree or lead to dismissal from the program.

Recordkeeping and Access to Records

- a. The Graduate Program Director will maintain records of concerns, professional behavior review documents, professional behavior review meetings, and appeals in each student's records.
- b. Copies of the Professional Behavior Review documents and any related decisions or documentation (including appeals) will be available for review by supervisors working for or on behalf of NUT and other professional personnel as needed.

Grievance Procedures

Students who are dissatisfied with decisions regarding course concerns, final course grades, academic, behavioral, or professional behavior, or termination from the HCM Program are expected to follow University-wide, Graduate School, and Departmental grievance procedures as outlined below. Students must follow the procedure specific to their grievance.

Procedures for Course Concerns

The Department's student concern resolution procedures are described below. These procedures are designed to provide the student with a mechanism for communicating directly with those who can assist them in addressing the concern. The student is encouraged to take responsibility for resolving their concerns without additional faculty, staff, and peers becoming involved. If students have any questions about the procedure outlined below, please don't hesitate to discuss them with the MHA Program Director or Department Chair.

Concerns Specific to a Particular Course or Professor:

1. First, contact the professor and try to resolve the concern(s).
2. If you believe your concern(s) have not been adequately addressed, make an appointment with the MHA Program Director.
3. If you believe that the concern(s) have not been adequately addressed, make an appointment to seek advice from the Department Chair.

Concerns Specific to the Program of Study or Other Academic Areas:

1. First, contact MHA Program Director and try to resolve the concern(s).
2. If you believe that the concern(s) have not been adequately addressed, make an appointment to seek advice from the Department Chair.

If students have followed the procedure outlined above without resolution of their concerns, they may make an appointment with the Dean of the College of Health Sciences². Students may also contact the Office of Equity, Diversity, and Compliance¹⁰ or the university Ombudsperson¹¹ and will be assisted by these offices as appropriate.

If students have exhausted the steps outlined above without resolution of their concerns, they may utilize the [student grievance and appeal policies and procedures](#)¹² at Appalachian:

Procedures for Final Grade Concerns

² <https://healthsciences.appstate.edu/>

¹⁰ <https://edc.appstate.edu/>

¹¹ <http://ombuds.appstate.edu/>

¹² <https://academicaffairs.appstate.edu/resources/student-grievance-and-appeal-policies-and-procedures>

¹³ <https://facultyhandbook.appstate.edu/>

¹⁴ https://academicaffairs.appstate.edu/sites/academicaffairs.appstate.edu/files/final_grade_appeal_enabled.pdf

Please note there are specific criteria taken into consideration when appealing a final grade. The following information on grade appeals is taken from the Faculty Handbook (Section 6.12.¹³).

6.12.3 Final Grade Appeal Procedure 6.12.3.1¹⁴

(a) Any student considering a grade appeal should understand that each faculty member has the right and responsibility to determine grades according to any method chosen by the faculty member that is professionally acceptable, communicated to everyone in the class, and applied to all students equally. Prejudiced, arbitrary, or capricious academic evaluation by a faculty member, however, is a violation of the student's rights and is a valid ground for a final grade appeal.

6.12.3.2 Steps to take in final grade appeal:

(a) Any student who contests a course final grade shall first attempt to resolve the matter with the instructor. The student must explain her or his position to the instructor and attempt to understand the instructor's reasons for assigning the grade. The purpose of the meeting is to reach a mutual understanding of the student's situation and the instructor's actions and to resolve differences in an informal and cooperative manner. If the student fails to reach a satisfactory solution in consultation with the instructor, the student must present the appeal in writing (using the Grade Appeal Form) to the chair of the department in which the contested grade was awarded.

(b) The student must file the written appeal with the departmental chair within fourteen (14) calendar days after consulting with the instructor. The statement must be specific and concise and limit itself to citations of evidence pertaining to valid grounds for the appeal. Through conferring with the student and the instructor, the departmental chair will seek resolution by agreement. The student must provide the departmental chair with a course syllabus and all available tangible materials related to the grade (e.g., exam and term papers) as well as a list of any items used in the evaluation for which the student cannot provide documentation (e.g., unreturned exams, grades on class participation, attendance records);

(c) If there is failure to reach an agreement through consultation with the departmental chair, the student may file the written appeal with the Grade Appeals Committee through the office of the dean of the college or school in which the grade was awarded. The student must file this written appeal within thirty (30) calendar days after the beginning of classes in the next semester after the contested grade was awarded. When possible, the form must be signed and dated by both the instructor and the departmental chair as well as the student. In accordance with the instructions on the form, the student must present with it the documentary evidence furnished to the departmental chair and any other evidence relevant to the case;

(d) The dean or the dean's designee serves as convener of the Grade Appeals Committee of the college or school. Each full committee consists of the convener (who presides over hearings), the chair of the department in which the contested grade was assigned, three faculty, one undergraduate student, and one graduate student, all from the college or school which the committee serves. The departmental chair sits in a non-voting capacity, and the convener votes only in the case of a tie. The three faculty members, one alternate faculty member, and two students are appointed by the dean from among volunteers for

the assignment. A quorum for each committee shall consist of no fewer than one student and two faculty members, along with the convener;

(e) The Grade Appeals Committee has authority to screen out frivolous or unsubstantiated appeals. The convener will explain any such finding in writing to the student, the faculty member, and the departmental chair;

(f) If the committee grants a full hearing, the student will appear before it to present all evidence relevant to her or his case. The convener will also invite the instructor to appear and present any evidence in support of the instructor's grade decision. The committee may ask questions of either or both and will hold its deliberations in executive session after hearing the case. The dean, the departmental chair, the faculty member, and the student will receive prompt written notification of the committee's findings. **THE COMMITTEE'S DECISION IS BINDING.** If the committee supports the student's appeal, the instructor will be required to re-evaluate the student according to a specific method. The method of re-evaluation will depend on the circumstances of the appeal. Re-evaluation will not be used in a punitive manner toward the student. The student has fourteen (14) calendar days to inform the instructor, departmental chair, and convener in writing whether she or he consents to the proposed method of reevaluation (which must be completed within the semester of the finding). Should the student not consent to the proposed method of re-evaluation, the instructor, departmental chair, and committee will mutually agree on a method of recalculating the appealed grade. In either case, the resulting grade is final and may not be appealed.

Grievances Related to Academic Performance Reviews

A student who is dissatisfied with the Department Chair's decision following an academic, professional and/or behavioral review may appeal the decision as outlined below.

1. The student must submit any appeal by email to the Dean of the College of Health Sciences, with a copy to the Department Chair, within 10 business days of the date on which the Chair's decision was emailed to the student.
2. The appeal should state the basis for the appeal (e.g., procedures required by this policy were not followed, fundamental unfairness of the decision, etc.).
3. The Dean may consider any information deemed appropriate to reaching a considered and fair decision on the appeal.
4. The Dean shall communicate his or her decision via email to the student, with a copy to the Department Chair.
5. A student who is dissatisfied with the Dean's decision has the right to appeal the decision to the Provost or the Provost's designee in writing by email within 10 business days following the date of the Dean's decision. The Provost's decision is final.

Grievance Procedures Related to Termination from the MHA Program.

Appeals involving termination from a graduate program (e.g., denial of a probationary term, etc.) are handled through the program and the Graduate School, as described in the [Graduate Bulletin](#)¹⁵. The steps in this procedure are as follows.

1. Appeal to the program in writing through the MHA Program Director and/or the Department Chair.
2. If the situation cannot be resolved at the program level, the student may appeal to the Graduate School within thirty (30) calendar days of the program's denial of the first appeal by submitting documentation in writing to the Associate Dean for Graduate Studies. The program will also be given an opportunity to provide written documentation about the situation.
 - a. The program will provide specific details regarding why the program has denied the appeal and what steps were taken prior to the action, including a record of communication with the student regarding the action.
 - b. The Graduate School's primary role in the appeals process is to review the student appeal and the program decision to ensure that due process has been followed.

Appeals denied by the Graduate School will automatically be sent to the Graduate AP&P's Appeals Committee for review. The Appeals Committee is an ad hoc subcommittee of the Graduate AP&P consisting of graduate faculty from three departments other than the student's home department; the committee meets only on demand and does not usually meet with the student or the program. The committee's decision is binding. If the committee supports the student's appeal, the program will be required to accommodate the student's continuation in the program.

¹ <https://graduate.appstate.edu/prospective-students>

² <https://healthsciences.appstate.edu/>

³ <https://studentconduct.appstate.edu/student-information>

⁴ <https://academicintegrity.appstate.edu/>

⁵ <https://distance.appstate.edu/programs/id/health-administration-mha>

⁶ https://graduate.appstate.edu/sites/graduate.appstate.edu/files/entrance_exam_waiver_form_0.pdf

⁷ https://www.ache.org/abt_ache/code.cfm

⁸ <http://bulletin.appstate.edu/content.php?catoid=7&navoid=292>

⁹ <https://odr.appstate.edu/>

¹⁰ <https://edc.appstate.edu/>

¹¹ <http://ombuds.appstate.edu/>

¹² <https://academicaffairs.appstate.edu/resources/student-grievance-and-appeal-policies-and-procedures>

¹³ <https://facultyhandbook.appstate.edu/>

¹⁴ https://academicaffairs.appstate.edu/sites/academicaffairs.appstate.edu/files/final_grade_appeal_enabled.pdf

¹⁵ <http://bulletin.appstate.edu/content.php?catoid=7&navoid=294#suspension-and-dismissal>

Acknowledgements:

MHA Program Academic Concerns Policy and Academic Performance Review Procedures adopted in this policy are based on the Appalachian State University MSW & Graduate Nutrition Program Policies.

¹⁵ <http://bulletin.appstate.edu/content.php?catoid=7&navoid=294 - suspension-and-dismissal>