

## Graduation with Distinction: Global Health (GLHLTH)

***Students interested in pursuing an honors thesis in Global Health should read this guide before applying for graduation with distinction. The application is the last page of this guide.***

Students majoring in global health may pursue one of the following tracks leading to graduation with distinction:

- Graduation with distinction in global health
- Graduation with distinction in global health and the non-global health major through a double honors thesis

If students choose a topic which spans both of their majors, they are encouraged to write a double thesis in order to integrate both subject areas. Students earning double honors will have both distinctions indicated on their transcript and their names will appear in both programs' entries on the Commencement program.

**Students intending to pursue an honors thesis outside their major** can do so through [Graduation with Distinction Outside the Major \(GWDOM\)](#). Students pursuing this option will not graduate with Distinction in Global Health, but can still explore a global health topic and work with global health faculty. Those who intend to pursue a thesis outside the major must apply through Trinity and complete all Trinity thesis requirements. Applications are typically due in early October.

### Things to Consider

- **Why** do you want to pursue a thesis?
- How does this fit in with your **academic and/or career goals**?
- Do you have a clear idea of the **research question(s)** you would like to answer with your thesis?
- Do you have **access to data** that will allow you to answer the research question you have identified?
- If you have already worked on a research team that is studying your topic of interest, what new aspect will you bring to the research? Do you have a new approach or unexplored data that you will use for your thesis?
- Have you **identified a global health core or affiliate (not adjunct) faculty member** who may agree to mentor you during the entire year it will take to write your thesis?
- Are you **enthusiastic** about your thesis topic and mentor?
- **What do you need to give up** to have the time to pursue this thesis?

### FAQ

#### **Do I need to undertake a double-honors thesis?**

If your research lends itself to both of your majors, you are welcome to explore that possibility. If not, you are encouraged to choose one field in which to anchor your thesis.

#### **What type of time commitment is this?**

Aside from the Independent Study course, the time it will take you to manage your thesis project (research, data analysis, writing), adds up to be as much as an additional class.

#### **How do I find a faculty mentor or choose a research question?**

A research question can be based on work done during ELA or volunteer work, or about a topic or population you want to explore for the first time. Once you have an idea of a topic, you should begin searching for a

faculty mentor. You can find potential mentors using the [DGHI faculty page](#) (hint: the filter tool is useful in narrowing down faculty who align with your research interests).

**How do I get started?**

We recommend talking with your global health advisor about your plans as early as possible. You should also thoroughly read this document to ensure that you are eligible and have the time and resources to complete the thesis.

## Graduation with Distinction in Global Health

### Eligibility requirements and required coursework

Students who would like to write a senior thesis and be eligible to graduate with distinction must go through an application process and be approved to write a thesis. If approved, students must:

- Have an overall GPA of 3.3 and a 3.5 GPA in core and foundations global health classes
- Complete one independent study in global health (GLHTLH 393)
- Write an original thesis of approximately 30-40 pages in length
- Participate in an oral thesis defense in the Spring of your senior year

Students can use GLHTLH 393 as an elective credit for the major. Global health majors are **not** relieved of their Experiential Learning Activity (ELA) or GLHTLH 499 (Global Health Capstone) requirement by completing a global health thesis.

If students choose a topic that spans both of their majors, they are encouraged to write a double thesis in order to integrate both subject areas. The requirements of the co-major regarding Graduation with Distinction must also be followed, and students must decide to do a double thesis at the beginning of their project.

**Students should first identify a faculty member willing to mentor them for a senior thesis in the spring of their junior year.** The student and faculty member will agree upon the project structure and [fill out an application](#) for graduation with distinction. They must separately submit an [independent study request](#) for GLHTLH 393. Questions about graduation with distinction in global health should be directed to [Emilee Kerr](#).

### Timeline

What	When
Explore research opportunities	Freshmen to junior years
Identify a research question	Junior year spring/summer
Find a faculty mentor	Junior year spring/summer
Complete <i>Graduation With Distinction</i> application form for global health	Junior year spring/summer. Submit the form before the start of the term fall of your senior year or by the end of drop/add at the latest.
Submit IRB (if necessary) and begin collecting data	Summer between Junior and Senior year/early Fall senior year

Complete <i>Independent Study</i> application	By the end of the drop/add deadline for the term. Ideally, this would be submitted prior to the start of the term. Students are encouraged to take their independent study course in fall of their senior year.
Identify thesis committee	Early January senior year*
Defend thesis	Early April senior year* ( <i>exact date TBD</i> )

\*For a double thesis, these deadlines may be earlier, depending on the timeline from the other department

### Expected product

Students are expected to produce a written paper (thesis) addressing a global health research question. The thesis length will be determined in consultation with the student’s faculty mentor, with a recommended length of 30-40 pages. The thesis should include a table of contents, footnotes, and bibliography. Students will be expected to present their thesis publicly.

### Evaluative body

A thesis committee is comprised of a chair and two additional members:

- Committee Chair (1): Required to be affiliated or faculty with DGHI; likely your mentor.
- Committee Members (2):
  - One of the two members must be affiliated or faculty with the DGHI.
  - Postdoctoral or research scholars who have had an active role in the research project are allowed.
  - Outside scholars (from a collaborating university, NGO, etc) with a terminal degree are allowed.

### Evaluation procedure and levels of distinction

The thesis committee will determine distinction through an evaluation of the student’s written thesis and oral defense.

One level: Distinction.

## Graduation with Distinction in Global Health and in the Non-Global Health Major (double honors thesis)

**Per Trinity policy, students must propose a double-thesis in advance to both departments/programs and seek their approval together.** A student may not seek the approval of a second department or program after already proposing a thesis in one department/program and beginning work on it. To qualify as a legitimate double-thesis, it must clearly draw on advising from and work done for both departments/programs. Moreover, the thesis will be evaluated independently by each of the majors.

### Eligibility and required coursework

Students must complete all eligibility requirements for each of the majors including their respective GPA requirements. See page 2 for global health eligibility and coursework requirements. Students also must fulfill any required coursework of their non-global health major associated with Graduation with Distinction.

**Students who meet these requirements must submit the global health application form and required application materials for their non-global health major by the *earliest* program deadline. For some departments, this will be in the fall or spring of their third year.**

### Expected product

Students are expected to produce a single written paper (thesis). The thesis length will be determined in consultation with the student’s faculty mentor and by mutual agreement of the majors. The double thesis should include a table of contents, footnotes, and bibliography. Students will be expected to present their thesis publicly.

### Evaluative body

Two separate committees, one from global health and one from the non-global health department or program must evaluate the double honors thesis separately. Only the faculty mentor (thesis chair) may serve on both committees. The global health committee must include two faculty members affiliated or faculty with DGHI.

A student pursuing a dual thesis must have 2 committees, but the thesis chair can sit on both. The student can present the thesis to both committees at one time. Students should check the requirements of the other major as they may not require committee formation or have different regulations. **It is strongly recommended to have one advisor that acts as the thesis chair for both departments.**

The following examples of committee composition assume that both majors require a 3-member committee:

1. Thesis chair with a dual appointment in both majors. This arrangement is preferred, if possible.

**Global Health Committee**

Chair: Faculty A (DGHI & other major Faculty)

Member: Faculty B (DGHI Faculty or affiliate)

Member: Faculty C

**Non-Global Health Committee**

Chair: Faculty A (DGHI & other major Faculty)

Member: Faculty D

Member: Faculty E

2. Thesis chair from non-global health major serves on both committees (not dual appointed)

**Global Health Committee**

Chair: Faculty A (DGHI Faculty)

Member: Faculty B (DGHI Faculty or affiliate)

Member: Faculty C

**Non-Global Health Committee**

Chair: Faculty C

Member: Faculty D

Member: Faculty E

### Evaluation procedure and levels of distinction

The thesis committee in each of the majors will independently determine distinction through an evaluation of the student's written thesis and oral defense, as required.

Students should consult the levels established for each of the majors. Global Health awards only one level of distinction.

See also:

[Trinity Graduation with Distinction Policies](#)

[Duke Global Health Institute Graduation with Distinction](#)

## Application for Graduation with Distinction in Global Health

Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Email: \_\_\_\_\_

Graduation Date: \_\_\_\_\_ Non-Global Health Major: \_\_\_\_\_

Cumulative GPA (3.3 Required) \_\_\_\_\_ GPA in Core/Foundation Courses (3.5 required) \_\_\_\_\_

Application for: \_\_\_\_\_  
Graduation with distinction in global health  
Graduation with distinction through a double honors thesis

Thesis Mentor (Must be DGHI faculty or affiliate member): \_\_\_\_\_  
Proposed Thesis Title: \_\_\_\_\_

Thesis Abstract/Description:

**Signature of Thesis Mentor:**

**Date:**

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**Please email this completed form to [gh-education@duke.edu](mailto:gh-education@duke.edu).** You will be emailed after your application has been reviewed. Digital signatures are acceptable. If you have additional questions, please email [Emilee Kerr](#).  
**Deadline:** This form is due by the last day of drop/add fall semester of a student’s senior year or earlier as required by dual honor thesis requirements. In 2026, the Global Health deadline is Friday, September 4<sup>th</sup>, though students are encouraged to submit this form early.

### Internal Use Only

Signature of Global Health Director of Undergraduate Studies

(DUS): \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_