Overview

Leaders in the health care industry and in health care education have become increasingly vocal about the need for professionals with proficiency not only in STEM disciplines but also in humanities-based skills and approaches. As Bedwell et al (2018) noted in the *Journal of General Internal Medicine*, “Medicine today finds itself caught in a paradox. It has undoubtedly enjoyed many successes, and yet it is also the profession with the highest rate of suicide, a burnout rate greater than 50%, rampant depression, dwindling empathy, a negative view by the public, and a disturbing tendency for physicians to quit. This conundrum has... led to a revisiting of the relationship between medicine and the humanities.” The transdisciplinary field of medical and health humanities was founded on the premise that the methods and substance of the humanities have the power to transform health care for all by enhancing human connections; deepening capacities for empathy, self-reflection, and creativity; and improving understanding on the part of practitioners and others of the cultural, historical, and social contexts in which health, illness, and care occur. Taking the exploration of such contexts as a particular emphasis, UT-Austin’s MD/MA in Humanities, Health, and Medicine dual-degree program is designed to produce physicians who bring humanistic knowledge, skills, and frameworks to their work caring for patients, engaging in public advocacy, and educating medical students and trainees.

The interdisciplinary nature of Humanities, Health, and Medicine, along with the MA program’s combination of structure and flexibility, gives DMS students the ability to design, in collaboration with the HHM program’s Graduate Adviser, a coherent program of study that matches their own interests, desires, and post-degree goals. Although the HHM program is housed in the University of Texas Humanities Institute, eligible courses and participating faculty can be found across the UT-Austin campus, including in the College of Liberal Arts, the Moody College of Communications, the Steve Hicks School of Social Work, the School of Nursing, the School of Information, and the School of Education. Indeed, most courses used to fulfill HHM requirements are cross-listed with courses that originate in other departments, meaning that HHM students also have ample opportunity to study and collaborate with graduate student colleagues from around the university.
Curriculum

The MA-HHM degree is offered according to four plans, ranging from a coursework-only plan to plans that include coursework and three different varieties of culminating research experience. The plans are described here. All degree plans include:

**Required Course: HHM 380 Introduction to Humanities, Health, and Medicine**

Provides an overview of the history, aims, and challenges of the field and its current role in health-professional education and practice. Units focus on subfields within the health humanities, including, for example, literature, narrative, and health; history of medicine; medical anthropology; disability studies; and bioethics.

**Required Course: HHM 383 Topics in Theory and Methods in Humanities, Health, and Medicine.**

HHM 383 will be cross-listed with selected theory and methods courses offered by other departments. Sample courses include:

- Black Studies Methods (AFR);
- Introduction to Digital Humanities (ENGL);
- Theories of Interpersonal Communication (CMS);
- Qualitative Methods for Social Sciences (SOC);
- Feminist Theory (SOC)

**Prescribed Electives: Depending on degree plan selected, 3-5 different variants of HHM 385 Topics in Humanities, Health, and Medicine.**

HHM 385 will be cross-listed with selected topics courses offered by other departments. To meet this requirement, students must select topics courses cross-listed with at least two different academic departments. Sample courses include:

- Body in Indian Medicine and Myth (ANS);
- Health, Medicine, and American Literature since the Civil War (ENGL);
- History of Science (HIS); History of Physical Culture and Alternative Medicine (KIN);
- Sociocultural Influences on Health (NURS);
- Disability and Aging (SW).

**Electives: Three elective courses, chosen in conjunction with the HHM graduate advisor. These electives may but aren’t required to be cross-listed with an HHM course number.**

**Notes:** (1) Students may design their coursework to concentrate in a specific area of the health humanities such as, for example, medical anthropology, literature and medicine, or the history of medicine. (2) Students may count up to nine semester-credit hours from upper-division undergraduate classes towards the degree.

Degree Format

The MA-HHM degree program is typically delivered in an in-person format.

Degree Requirements

This program is only for third-year Dell Medical School students who are accepted into the MA-HHM dual-degree program. The Master of Arts degree in Humanities, Health, and Medicine requires the successful completion of 30 semester-credit hours. DMS students will have the opportunity to earn up to three semester-credit hours towards completion of their MA requirements by taking four DMS humanities enrichment electives at any point in their DMS trajectory and following them up with synthetic work in a conference course supervised by an HHM faculty member (HHM 386).

Tuition and Fees

There are no additional tuition or fees associated with this dual degree. Students will continue paying their regular medical school tuition to UT DMS. DMS will transfer the tuition to the College of Liberal Arts on behalf of the student. See the Tuition page for more information.

Application Instructions

Application Link: hhm@austin.utexas.edu

In order to apply for the MD/MA-HHM dual-degree program, students must be in good academic standing at Dell Medical School.
The application for admission opens in August each year. The priority deadline for DMS students is February 1; the final deadline is March 1.

Required application materials include:

- Online application
- Transcripts
- Statement of Purpose (750 words)
- 10-20 page writing sample no more than five years old
  - Many students draw their writing samples from academic papers (usually humanities or qualitative social science) written while pursuing another degree, including baccalaureate
  - DMS students will have the option of choosing instead to write an expanded Statement of Purpose (1500 - 2000 words)
- The Graduate School’s GRE requirement will be waived for DMS students

Orientation

This MA-HHM program typically holds a one-day orientation the week before the fall semester begins on the main campus. When known, the date will be listed in the DMS MS3 Academic calendar.

Graduation

See the Graduation page for more information.