

University of Pittsburgh
School of Public Health

Department of Behavioral and
Community Health Sciences
(BCHS)

Doctoral Student Manual

2022-2023

Welcome from the Doctoral Committee

Dear BCHS Doctoral Students,

Welcome!

We are thrilled to have you become part of the Department of Behavioral and Community Health Sciences. You are here because of your achievements, your clear goals for a future career in research, and your passion for public health.

This handbook has the latest information about the Doctoral Program, the requirements, and expectations. We hope it will be a useful guide to you.

During your studies, you will take courses with most of our faculty and most likely have the opportunity to collaborate with faculty members on research studies, manuscript development, and community-based work. We encourage you make the most of your time at BCHS to expand your public health network and develop professional relationships with many faculty members and other students in our department but also in the other departments here at the School of Public Health as well as the larger University.

It is our hope that you have a rewarding academic experience that will enable you to further define and advance your career goals. We are here to support you in these efforts.

Sincerely,

Patricia I Documet, MD, DrPH, Doctoral Committee Chair

Kar-Hai Chu, PhD, Doctoral Committee Member an

James Egan, PhD, MPH, Doctoral Committee Member

Mary Hawk, DrPH, LSW, Doctoral Committee Member

Noelle Spencer, MSc, Doctoral Committee Student Representative

Paul Markgraf, Academic Program Administrator

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The Department of Behavioral and Community Health Sciences

Departmental Overview

Social justice is the core value that guides the activities of the Department. Social justice emphasizes an affirmative stance for embracing diversity and health equity. Health equity is defined as the ability of all people to reach their full potential. In recent years, we developed a mission, vision, and values for BCHS. Our vision is to achieve “Healthy people living in thriving and equitable communities.” Our mission statement reads, “We seek to improve and promote health and equity by engaging individuals, communities, and systems through our research, teaching, and practice.” Below we list our values and strategic priorities.

- | Values |
|---|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Open communication• Active collaboration• Integrated and strength-based approaches• Social justice and health equity• Application of knowledge in the context of people’s lives |

- | Strategic Priorities |
|---|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Professional Development• Community Engagement• Health Equity• Evaluation• LGBT Health• Methods Innovation |

Departmental Organization

The Chairperson, and the Department Administrator, in conjunction with the Executive Committee conduct the general administration of the Department. The Vice Chairs for Education, Research and Practice sit on the Executive Committee. Additional standing faculty committees are the Doctoral Committee, and the MPH Admissions Committee. In addition, faculty participate actively in School and University work through committees as well as faculty and staff meetings. Departmental, School, and University committees include student representation.

BCHS has several centers and institutes, many of which offer certificates. They include the Center for LGBT Health Research, the Center for Social Dynamics and Community Health, the Concept Mapping Institute, and the Evaluation Institute for Public Health.

Research and Service

BCHS faculty and students conduct extensive research, often through partnerships with other departments, schools, universities, and communities. We collaborate directly with an array of local and regional public health systems, and leaders of many of these organizations serve on our faculty. We are involved in national and international projects funded by NIH, CDC, USAID, HRSA, and a number of NGOs and foundations. We are particularly noted for our community-based emphasis in research, practice, and evaluation. Faculty and student research sites extend from the US to Nepal, India, and Peru. Consistent with our social justice foundation, our faculty, students, and staff are involved in a myriad of community-engaged projects locally, nationally,

and globally with the goal of ensuring all stakeholders have an equal voice in behavioral and community research and practice.

Departmental service activities are integral to the educational and research programs of the department. Faculty and staff serve as members of organizational boards and expert committees of governmental, private, or voluntary organizations; provide consultations to community agencies; serve as members of professional organizational boards and committees; and participate as speakers or panelists at conferences or as visiting lecturers in other schools. Faculty also provide service to communities through advising and monitoring students who are engaged in fieldwork or community-based research.

Educational Programs

The academic programs in BCHS rely on a strong theory and knowledge base in the social and behavioral sciences, with an emphasis on social ecology as an organizing construct. Social ecology emphasizes the inexorable connection across the levels of human enterprise including the genetic, biophysical, intrapersonal, interpersonal, family, and social connections as well as groups, organizations, communities, and policies.

The Department is concerned with preparing individuals to apply theories, concepts and methods developed within the various social and behavioral science disciplines to the development of programs which have as their mission the prevention of illness and the promotion of health. The Department maintains two educational programs, Master of Public Health (MPH) and Doctor of Philosophy (PhD). Additionally, at the master's level the Department has joint programs with the School of Social Work (MPH/MSW, MPH/PhD), the Graduate School of Public and International Affairs (GSPIA) (MPH/MID/MIA/MPIA), and the Department of Anthropology in the Faculty of Arts and Sciences (MPH/PhD).

The People of BCHS

The Department has 17 primary faculty members. Additionally, 14 faculty members with primary appointments in other University departments hold secondary appointments in BCHS, and 12 persons have adjunct faculty appointments. For faculty and staff contact information, go to <https://www.publichealth.pitt.edu/behavioral-and-community-health-sciences/whos-who/faculty-all/primary-faculty>. There are approximately 138 students in BCHS, and 19 of them are currently enrolled in the doctoral program. We have 14 staff members that work to assist our students, faculty members, and chair with administrative, research, and community engagement work.

BCHS Doctoral Program: Overview

Mission and Competencies

The PhD in the Department of Behavioral and Community Health Sciences prepares students to conduct research and teach in the social and behavioral sciences areas of public health in academic settings.

The program is competency-based. Graduates will be able to:

- Apply critical thinking and problem-solving skills using various models and conceptual frameworks from the social and behavioral sciences.
- Employ a social ecological perspective to the design and implementation of public health research programs.
- Apply qualitative and quantitative methodologies to design and conduct rigorous and scientifically valid research at various levels of human activity including the intrapersonal, interpersonal, organizational, community, and public policy domains.
- Demonstrate a social justice perspective in the consideration of and sensitivity to ethical issues that influence public health, health policy, and the delivery of health care.
- Apply data management and analysis skills.
- Demonstrate effective oral and written communication skills in the dissemination of research findings.

Our Graduates

Our graduates follow careers in public health research, teaching, and administration. They work in federal, state, and local governmental organizations, as well as a range of private sector and public-funded agencies. **Table 1** provides a listing of dissertation titles and jobs of recent doctoral graduates. The range of research topics reflects the multidisciplinary nature of the Department and the varied interests of our doctoral students.

TABLE 1. Recent BCHS Graduates: Dissertation Titles and Current Employment

Name	Dissertation Title	Current Employment
2022		
Rahul Amrutahpuri, MD, DrPH	Partnership between diverse stakeholders: A potential solution to issues migrant construction workers face in Bengaluru, India	Senior Program Evaluation Specialist – University of Pittsburgh School of Pharmacy
Kelly Gagnon, PhD	An Implementation Science Study About Sexual History Screening and Dissemination of PrEP within a Multi-site Federally Qualified Health Center	Postdoctoral Fellow – University of Alabama at Birmingham Division of Infectious Disease
Emmett Henderson, PhD	Enacted Sexual Minority Stigma, Social Support, and Cognitive Function Among Midlife and Older Adult Men Who Have Sex with Men from the Multicenter AIDS Cohort Study	Postdoctoral Scholar – University of Southern California
Chinwoke Isiguzo, PhD	Psychosocial Factors Associated with Racial Disparities in Exclusive Breastfeeding	Senior Technical Advisor – Palladium
Sara Sanders, PhD	Spatial analysis of birth center locations and service catchment areas in the contiguous US: An application of Public Health Critical Race Praxis	Postdoctoral Associate – Pitt Public Health Department of Epidemiology
2021		
Brian Adams, PhD	Exploring Partner Violence and its Association with Minority Stress and Depression among YMSM Dyads	Research Specialist with the HIV Prevention and Care Project – IDM
Angela Lucente-Prokop, PhD	Insights for Community-based Organization Partnerships with Healthcare Delivery Systems: Perspective from an Evaluation of the Western Pennsylvania Community-based Care Transitions Program	Vice President of Operations – PA Health and Wellness
Abisola Olaniyan, PhD	Implicit Racial Bias in Prenatal Visit Patient-Clinic Communication, Prenatal Screening, and Interventions	Strategic Planning Consultant – Gateway Health
Jessica Thompson, PhD	Informing Cardiovascular Disease Prevention among Rural Appalachian Women: A Community-Engaged Mixed Method Study	Postdoctoral Scholar, Community Impact Office – University of Kentucky Markey Cancer Center

Table 1 continues on next page

Name	Dissertation Title	Current Employment
2019		
Cynthia Salter, PhD	Perceptions and Experiences of Birth Trauma among Maternity Health Care Professionals: An Exploratory Study	Assistant Professor – University of Pittsburgh, BCHS Department
Sara Baumann, PhD	A Visual, Community-Engaged Exploration of Menstrual Practices among Girls in Nepal	Assistant Professor – University of Pittsburgh, BCHS Department
Candice Biernesser, PhD, LCSW	Social Media and Adolescent Suicide: Exploring Risks, Benefits, and Opportunities for Prevention	Postdoctoral Scholar – University of Pittsburgh
Lycia Tramuja Vasconcellos Neumann, PhD	The Contribution of Managed Long-Term Services and Supports to Aging in Place: An Evaluation of the Use of Attendant Care Services to Avoid Nursing Facility Admissions	Senior Research and Evaluation Scientist – Highmark Wholecare; Research and Evaluation Strategic Coordinator – Instituto Oncoguia
Teagen O'Malley, PhD	Expanding HIV Prevention Options for Women in Abusive Intimate Relationships: Exploring the Potential of Pre-exposure Prophylaxis (PrEP)	Post-doctoral Associate, HIV Prevention and Care Project, University of Pittsburgh, IDM Department
Jonathan Raviotta, PhD	The Development Testing of the 4 Pillars Practice Transformation Program	Senior Research Specialist – University of Pittsburgh School of Medicine
Jordan Sang, PhD	Assessing Relational Cognitions among Young Gay and Bisexual Men on Outcomes of HIV and Mental Health	Postdoctoral Research Fellow – British Columbia Centre for Excellence in HIV/AIDS
Kelly Williams, PhD	Exploring the Identification and Treatment of Adolescent Anxiety in Primary Care: The Perceptions of Primary Care Providers	Senior Program Administrator – UPMC Center for High-Value Health Care
2018		
Christian Chandler, PhD	Psychosocial Associations of Biobehavioral HIV Prevention among Black Men who have Sex with Men in the United States	Assistant Professor of Medicine – Vanderbilt University School of Medicine
Francisca Flores, PhD	Community Resilience, Health, and Human Security: A Stakeholder-engaged Case Study on Gang Violence and its Harmful Effects on Adolescents in Belize	Associate Program Officer – The National Academies of Science, Engineering, and Medicine
Cortney Colonna-Kuza, PhD	Burnout among Critical Care Nurses and the role of ICU Telemedicine	Program Manager – Health Policy Institute
Cara Nikolajaski, PhD	Contraceptive and Family Planning Experiences, Priorities, and Preferences of Women with Serious Mental Illness	Senior Program Administrator – UPMC Health Plan

BCHS Doctoral Program: Admission

Holistic Admissions

The Doctoral Committee uses a **holistic approach** to decide on admissions. This means that the Committee considers all aspects of the application, including the personal statement and goals; letters of reference; CV (jobs, volunteer activities, awards); and grades.

Applicants must submit applications online through the Schools of Public Health Application Service website: <http://www.sophas.org>. The BCHS Doctoral Program only accepts applications for fall (August) admission. The due date to submit applications is December 15.

Requirements for Admission

- A post-baccalaureate degree in a discipline relevant to public health, such as social work or anthropology, or an MD or JD. International post baccalaureate degrees must be equivalent to a US post baccalaureate, as determined by the University of Pittsburgh's Office of International Services. The Committee will review these cases individually.
- A clear statement of what your research goals are and how the program of study will contribute to your career goals. You may use this statement to tell us your professional story, who you would like to work with, and clarify your skills. In addition, we strongly recommend you tell us your research goals, with which faculty members you would like to work and why. Understanding your potential fit with our department is an important part of our review process.
- Three letters of recommendation from individuals in a position to judge both your professional and academic abilities. At least one academic letter is suggested.
- Graduate quality or grade point average of at least 3.3. You must submit transcripts of all college level study.
- Completion of all courses listed on the Prerequisite Course Form for Pitt Public Health applicants.
- Spoken and written English language proficiency. If English is not your first language, you must submit scores from either the Test of English as a Foreign Language (TOEFL) or the International English Language Testing System (IELTS), unless you have earned a degree in the U.S. or in another country where the national language is English. If your TOEFL score is not higher than 600 on the PBT or 100 on the IBT, or you who have not scored above Band 7 on the IELTS, you must take an English proficiency test with the University's English Language Institute (ELI).

Additional points, desirable but not required

- Practice (applied) experience in a health-related field.
- Research experience in a health-related field.
- Presentations or publications of your work.
- Public health-related extracurricular activities.

Review Process

The Committee requests face-to-face, Zoom, or telephone interviews to those applicants whose credentials received a favorable review. One or more representatives of the Doctoral Committee and at least one potential faculty mentor/advisor take part in the interview.

The Dean's Office makes the final admission decision based upon the Doctoral Committee's and Departmental Chair's recommendation. After the interview, the Office of Student Affairs notifies applicants of the final decision.

Decisions about funding for admitted doctoral students will be made after notification of acceptance to the program.

BCHS Doctoral Program: Program of Study

Overview

The program of study includes departmental core courses and electives. As part of the doctoral program, you will gain research and teaching experience. The required coursework focuses on the multiple determinants of public health from a social-ecological and population perspective. Courses examine the behavior of individuals, organizations and communities, research design and methods, statistical analysis, interventions and the integration of public health research and practice. **Appendix A** shows flow charts depicting the various phases of the PhD program.

Number of credits

The PhD program requires 72 credits. Here is how to count the credits:

- You get 24 advanced standing credits awarded for an earned, relevant, post-baccalaureate degree. If you earned a post baccalaureate degree abroad, the Doctoral Committee will decide whether to award credit for it on a case-by-case basis. To accrue your advanced standing credits, you need to submit an application to the Director of Student Services.
- Most students complete 48 credits as doctoral students. You must complete a minimum of 36 credits at the University of Pittsburgh.
- You may request 12 extra advanced standing credits for relevant graduate work you took after earning your post-baccalaureate degree.
- All credits you take outside the University of Pittsburgh count toward the advanced standing credit limit.
- You can be a full time or part time student. A full credit load is nine to fifteen credits per term. You must register as a full-time student for at least one term during your program of study. Full Time Dissertation Research (FTDR) which carries no credits, will satisfy this requirement.

Required courses

Table 2 provides a checklist of requirements for the PhD degree in Behavioral and Community Health Sciences. The program of study covers the following areas:

1. Theories of behavior and community (6 credits)
2. Research design and methods (11 credits)
3. Elective theory and methods (3 credits)
4. Statistical analysis (9 credits)
5. Interventions (6 credits)
6. Integration of public health research and practice (3-8 credits)
7. Milestones (4 credits)

Table 2. Checklist of Requirements for the PhD Degree in BCHS

	Semester	Credits	Completed
Behavior & Community (6 credits)			
BCHS 2554 Intro to Community Health *	Fall, Spring	3	
BCHS 3555 Doctoral Seminar in BCHS Theories & Models *	Spring	3	
Research Design & Methods (11 credits)			
EPIDEM 2110 Principles of Epidemiology *	Fall, Sum	3	
BCHS 2525 Introduction to Applied Research *	Fall, Spring	3	
BCHS 3007 Ethnographic & Qualitative Methods *	Spring	3	
BCHS 3030 Measurement in the Social & Behavioral Sciences - offered every other year	Fall	2	
Elective: Theory & Methods (Choose any 3-credit graduate course)			
BCHS 3002 Health Surveys Methods	Spring	3	
BCHS 3003 Advanced Evaluation Techniques	Fall	3	
BCHS 3504 Doctoral Seminar on Health Communications	Spring	3	
BCHS 2608, 2609, 2610 Advanced Methods in CBPR series	Spring	3	
HPM 2010 Organization Studies	Spring	3	
OTHER (your choice)	TBD	3	
Statistical Analysis (9 credits)			
BIOST 2041 Intro to Statistical Methods 1 *	Fall	3	
BIOST 2049 Applied Regression Analysis	Spring, Fall	3	
BCHS 3707 Applied Multiple Regression Analysis & Causal Mod.	Spring	3	
Interventions (6 credits)			
BCHS 2558 Health Program Evaluation *	Spring	3	
BCHS 3506 Implementation Science in Public Health OR CLRES 2215 Fundamentals for Implementation Science for Rsrch, Prctce, & Innov and CLRES 2016 Fundamentals for Implementation Science: From Bedside to Hlth Systems	Fall	3 1 1	
Integration of Public Health Research and Practice (6-8 credits)			
BCHS 3004 Integrative Research Seminar: Grant Writing - offered every other year	Spring	1	
BCHS 3006 Integrative Research Seminar: Writing for Publication	Fall	1	
PUBHLT 2011 Essentials of Public Health (required if no MPH)	Spring	3	
PUBHLT 2022 Public Health Grand Rounds	Fall	0	
PUBHLT 2022 Public Health Grand Rounds	Spring	0	
FACDEV 2200 University Teaching OR the Achievement in Pedagogy Badge from UCTL + + BCHS 2511: Teaching Practicum Ind Study OR 6 UCTL Workshops + BCHS 2511 (see below)	Fall, Spring Any Term	3 1-3	
Manuscript submission as first author	Any term	0	
Electives (1-6 credits)			
Advanced Standing Credits			
Prior post-baccalaureate degree		24	
Additional graduate level credits (if applies)		0-12	
Milestones (0-4 credits)			
Preliminary Examination		0	
BCHS 3888 Prep for Comprehensive Exam	Any Term	1-3	
Comprehensive Examination		0	
Dissertation (FTDR 3999 = 0 credits or BCHS 3010 = 1 credit)	Any Term	0-1	
Dissertation Overview		0	
Number of credits required		48	
Total Required Credits for PhD		72	
* Required courses for the Preliminary Examination; also required: Independent Development Plan and the Ethics modules (page 16)			

There are some courses that offer flexibility, depending on your need to accrue more credits or to demonstrate full-time status:

- You have the option to earn 1-3 credits preparing for your comprehensive exam (BCHS 3888).
- After completing 48 credits or have passed the comprehensive examination, you have the option to either register for a minimum of 1 dissertation credit or register for Full Time Dissertation Research (FTDR; 0 credits).

You can find descriptions for all courses in the Pitt Public Health Website

<https://publichealth.pitt.edu/home/academics/courses/course-descriptions?subject=&term=&filter=>

To substitute FACDEV 2200,

1) Enroll in the Achievement in Pedagogy Badge from the University Center for Teaching and Learning (UCTL). Select six workshops across three concentrations and submit corresponding assignments (<https://teaching.pitt.edu/graduate-student-teaching/pedagogy-credential/>). The badge may be completed at any time over two years, with workshops offered year-round in the Fall, Spring, and Summer terms.

AND

2) Register for a 1-credit independent study in which you practice instruction (e.g., lecture planning and delivery; grading) under faculty supervision. You can do this with any faculty in the School.

Cross-enrollment

With advanced approval, you may take courses at another graduate institution to obtain experience not available at the University of Pittsburgh and transfer the credits. Remember that the total transfer (i.e., advanced standing) credits cannot exceed 12 credits.

Exemption from a required course

You may apply for a course exemption if you have already taken a course you believe is equivalent to a required course or have extensive experience in the area. The designated instructor will make the decision regarding comparability.

To apply for an exemption, you need to:

- Complete a Course Exemption form (see Program Office or <https://publichealth.pitt.edu/behavioral-and-community-health-sciences/academics/student-handbooks-forms>)
- Provide a transcript showing a passing grade and a copy of the syllabus
- Alternatively, explain the extensive experience in the topic that you have
- Have your advisor sign the form

- Drop the form in the Program Office

Other requirements

Ethics in research

As part of your studies, you need to complete a minimum of two IRB online modules related to human subjects' research available at <http://www.citi.pitt.edu/citi/about.aspx>. These modules are required to take the Preliminary Examination and are:

- Research Integrity
- Human Subjects Research in Social and Behavioral Sciences

Independent development plan (IDP)

The IDP is an advising and career planning tool you need to complete twice before graduating. Your first IDP is required to sit for the Preliminary Examination.

<https://www.publichealth.pitt.edu/academics/academic-requirements/independent-development-plan>)

Manuscript submission

In any semester before graduation, you need to submit a first-author manuscript to a journal for publication based on your dissertation or other research.

Research competency

To graduate, you are expected to demonstrate that you have developed various research skills. You may develop these skills through your work as a graduate student researcher (GSR), through other research under the supervision of a faculty member, or through prior experience. The research competencies include participating in research design, IRB submission, project management, data collection, data management, data analysis, writing for reporting or publication, presenting research results, and review of grants and/or manuscripts. This requirement carries no credits.

Academic integrity

All students are expected to adhere to the school's standards of academic honesty. Cheating/plagiarism will not be tolerated. The Graduate School of Public Health's policy on academic integrity, which is based on the University policy, is available online in the Pitt Public Health Academic Handbook www.publichealth.pitt.edu/home/academics/academic-requirements. The policy includes obligations for faculty and students, procedures for adjudicating violations, and other critical information. Please take the time to read this policy. All new students must complete the Pitt Public Health online Academic Integrity Module in your first semester. You must email a certificate of completion of each module to the Program Office.

Student Status

To maintain your active student status in good standing you need to:

- Be registered for at least one credit in each 12-month period. If you do not register for any credits for three consecutive terms you will be considered inactive and must re-apply to the program. Readmission is not guaranteed and requires that you will meet current program requirements. You should not expect to receive guidance and direction from members of the faculty, check out books from the library, use inter-library loan, request on-line database searches or have a Network Authorization Account for computer usage unless you are registered.
- Maintain a 3.0 or higher Quality Point Average (QPA; School requirement). If you do not, the Educational Performance and Curriculum Committee (EPCC) will place you on probation. You will receive written information on how to remove the probation.
- Maintain a 3.3 or higher QPA (BCHS requirement). The BCHS Doctoral Committee periodically reviews the progress of all doctoral students in the department. If you do not, or if you have a required course with a grade of B- or less, the Doctoral Committee will require you to meet with your advisor to devise a remediation strategy in writing. The Doctoral Committee may recommend modifications to the strategy. The Program Office will keep a copy of the strategy in your file. The Doctoral Committee may recommend placing you in inactive status if you are not making appropriate progress in your academic program and have not followed the remedial strategy. This would require you to reapply to the program and take additional courses if recommended by the Doctoral Committee.

Statute of limitations

The purpose of the statute of limitations is to ensure that a graduate degree from the University of Pittsburgh represents mastery of current knowledge in the field of study. You must complete the dissertation defense within ten (10) years of the first term of enrollment. If you have an MPH degree from BCHS, then you must complete your doctoral degree within eight (8) years of your first term of enrollment in the doctoral program.

Under exceptional circumstances, you may apply for an extension of the statute of limitations. The Doctoral Committee, the Department Chairperson, and the Dean must approve. If you made such a request, you must demonstrate proper preparation for the completion of all current degree requirements.

Certificates

The Department houses several centers and institutes that offer certificates. You may apply to any certificate. PhD students usually can fit a certificate in their required credit load. In addition, there are other School or University level certificates that may be of interest to you. More information on certificate programs offered at Pitt Public Health can be found at: <https://publichealth.pitt.edu/certificates>.

The BCHS available certificate are the following

- Community-Based Participatory Research and Practice (CBPR)
- Evaluation of Public Health Programs

- Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, and Transgender Individuals' Health and Wellness (LGBT)

Forms

There are many forms that you may need to register for courses, request exemption from a course, or register for an independent study.

They are available online here <https://publichealth.pitt.edu/behavioral-and-community-health-sciences/academics/student-handbooks-forms>.

Student Life

There are several student organizations you be interested in. They provide the opportunity to network and develop your leadership skills. Pitt Public Health maintains a list of student and professional organizations (<https://publichealth.pitt.edu/student-orgs>).

BCHS Doctoral Program: Advising

Upon admission, the Doctoral Committee matches you with an advisor based on your interests, as expressed in your application and admission interview. In the administrative role, your advisor will discuss the courses you plan to take and sign your registration form. It and it is your responsibility to be aware of registration deadlines.

Most importantly, the mentorship relationship with your advisor will facilitate your professional and intellectual development. Your advisor's role includes encouraging and, at times, assisting you in the process of refining your ideas and areas of research interest so that, ultimately, you will be prepared to present your work at professional and academic meetings as well as publish in professional journals. In addition, advisors may also facilitate other aspects of professional development, such as joining professional organizations, attending trainings and workshops, obtaining funding for your travels and other activities that would be beneficial to you.

Your advisor will also mentor you. However, in BCBS we believe that developing multiple mentoring relationships is beneficial to you. You are encouraged to develop relationships with several faculty members to enhance your intellectual development.

After you pass the Comprehensive Examination, you choose a dissertation advisor to assist you through the Overview and Dissertation process. This person now has administrative responsibility for you. Your dissertation advisor is often, but does not need to be, your academic advisor.

To assist in the conversations between you and your advisor, you need to complete an independent development plan (IDP, <https://www.publichealth.pitt.edu/academics/academic-requirements/independent-development-plan>) at least twice, the first time during your first year of study. By expressing your training and career goals in the IDP, your advisor can orient you to learning, research, and service opportunities.

It is your responsibility to ensure that you meet with your advisor a minimum of two times during the semester and to request other meetings when you consider it necessary. Your advisor will fulfill an administrative and a mentorship role until you have successfully completed the Comprehensive Exam. If you wish to change your advisor, you must approach the Director of the Doctoral Program, to make official arrangements. The same applies if you wish to change your dissertation advisor.

BCHS Doctoral Program: Milestones

Overview

You must complete several milestones on your road to completing your doctoral degree. They are the Preliminary Examination, Comprehensive Examination, Dissertation Overview, and the final Dissertation Defense. For each milestone, the Academic Program Administrator will prepare a form called Report on Requirements for a Doctoral Degree. The Committee for each milestone and the Department Chair must sign this form and submit it to the Office of Student Affairs for official recording.

Timeline

Table 3 shows an approximate timeline for the completion of each of your milestones in the BCHS doctoral program. Times will vary depending on your full-time or part-time status and the number of advanced standing credits you have. The average time to dissertation defense is 4 calendar years although a few students have completed all requirements in 3 calendar years.

Table 3. Approximate Timeline for Milestone Completion		
Milestone	Approximate Time	
	Full time	Part time
Preliminary Examination: Taken after completion of designated required courses or their equivalent.	After 2 semesters	After 4 semesters
Comprehensive Examination: Taken after completion of ALL required courses.	After 4 semesters	After 8 semesters
Dissertation Overview	After 5 semesters	After 9 semesters
Dissertation Defense: The earliest a defense can occur is eight months after the completion of the comprehensive exam.	After 7 semesters	After 11 semesters
Times for full time students assume 12-13 credits per semester.		

Requirements for all milestones

- Register in the term in which you complete any milestone.
- Have a QPA ≥ 3.3 .
- Contact the Program Office

Milestone committees

Each milestone requires a committee. The rules for committee formation for each milestone are in **Table 4**. Each committee is an official body; the Department Chair and the Dean's Office must approve it. Changing your committee requires official paperwork. If you need to change a

member of your Comprehensive Examination or Dissertation Committee, you should approach your Committee Chair and the Doctoral Program Director to discuss the reasons for the change. Such a change requires approval of the Doctoral Committee.

Table 4. Committee formation guidelines			
Milestone	Committee composition	Who sets up the committee?	Responsibility for paperwork
Preliminary Exam	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -At least 3 people -The majority of members must be on the core list of at least one Pitt Public Health department -The chair must be on the BCHS core list -The majority of members must be graduate faculty of the University of Pittsburgh -At least one member must not be on the BCHS core list 	The BCHS Doctoral Committee	The BCHS Doctoral Committee and the Program Office notify the student of the Committee composition
Comprehensive Examination	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -If you take the comprehensive exam separately from the dissertation overview proposal, then the committee composition for the preliminary exam apply. -If you take the comprehensive exam at the same time as the dissertation overview, then the committee composition for the dissertation applies 	The Comprehensive Examination Committee chair and the student	The student notifies the Program Office of the desired committee composition. The Program Office will prepare the paperwork
Dissertation (overview and defense)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -At least four University of Pittsburgh -The chair must be on the BCHS core list -At least two members must be on the core list of at least one Pitt Public Health department -At least one member must not be on the BCHS core list -The majority of members must be graduate faculty of the University of Pittsburgh -Any committee that has a member who is not University of Pittsburgh faculty must have in addition four University of Pittsburgh faculty 	The Dissertation Committee chair and the student	

BCHS Doctoral Program: The Preliminary Examination

Objectives

The Objective of this first milestone is to “assess the breadth of the student’s knowledge of the discipline, the student’s achievement during the first year of graduate study, and the potential to apply research methods independently.”¹ The exam also provides an opportunity for the faculty to give you constructive feedback on areas for improvement.

BCHS focuses on research and evaluation that emphasize the conceptualization and study of public health topics according to the different levels of the social ecological model and the interrelationship among those levels. Research in behavioral and community health sciences often requires the participation of several disciplines and uses both quantitative and qualitative paradigms and methodologies. This research follows the philosophical orientation of *social justice* which emphasizes equity, fairness, inclusion, and belonging.

Requirements

You will usually take the Preliminary Examination during the third semester of full-time study. You need to:

- Have completed no more than 30 credits in the program
- Complete your first IDP with your advisor
- Complete the online ethics modules
- Have a B or higher grade on the courses marked with an asterisk (*) on the Checklist of Requirements:
 - BCCHS 2525
 - BCCHS 2558
 - BCCHS 2559 or BCCHS 2554
 - BCCHS 3007
 - BCCHS 3555
 - BIOST 2041
 - EPIDEM 2110
- If you were admitted pending receipt of a final transcript from your post-baccalaureate degree, you must submit your final transcript to the Office of Student Affairs prior to taking the Preliminary Examination.

Process and timing

The sequence of events is detailed below and on **Table 5** (the dates are just for the sake of the example.)

- The Director of the Doctoral Program will contact you asking for a topic of your interest. This topic does not need to be related to your dissertation topic. It is advisable that your

¹ <https://catalog.upp.pitt.edu/content.php?catoid=171&navoid=15353>

topic be sufficiently narrow that you can propose research designs that you could actually do yourself.

- Once you have selected a topic, the Director of the Doctoral Program will help you determine the appropriateness of your topic and approve it. If your topic is not appropriate, the faculty will assist you in revising it.
- You must not discuss your topic with any faculty member after submitting it for approval. However, you may discuss it with fellow students.
- The Doctoral Committee will organize an approximately one-hour workshop for all students taking the Examination to discuss the Examination and practice responding to the paper outline. This workshop is optional.
- You submit your Preliminary Examination paper. Limit the paper to 15-20 double-spaced pages (excluding references) and be sure to address all items in the outline. Use 12-point font and 1-inch margins. Parts I, II, and III should be approximately of the same length. Part IV may be relatively shorter. The outline of the paper and the grading rubric are in **Appendix B**.
- The Preliminary Examination defense takes place.
 - *Oral presentation*: Use this opportunity to highlight the most important points of your paper. Remember that all committee members have read your paper and you should not repeat everything that is in it. Please prepare the presentation using Power Point. Equipment for the Power Point presentation will be set up for your use. Your presentation should last approximately 15 minutes.
 - *Questions and Answers*: Each committee member will ask questions. This portion of the exam will last approximately 30 to 40 minutes. Be mindful that questions may relate to different aspects of the topic you are addressing, or to the research methods you are using or not using. For example, if you are using a purposive selection strategy, the committee may ask why you are not using a stratified random sample. You will need to justify your choice.
- The Committee will make written comments to all students regarding their performance and recommendations for growth and improvement.

Table 5. Approximate timeline for the Preliminary Examination

What will happen?	Approximate date
You turn in your topic to the Program Director	July 10
Your topic is approved	July 17
Workshop with senior faculty	July 24
You turn in your Preliminary Examination paper (pdocumet@pitt.edu)	August 14, 5 pm
Your Examination takes place	August 27 or 28

Grading

The Preliminary Examination Committee will assess your performance based on the written paper, the presentation, and the response to questions. The possible results are:

- Passing without any changes

- Being asked to revise certain parts of the paper and resubmit it (the most frequent outcome)
- Failing. If failed, you can retake Preliminary Examination only once.
- If you decide at any point after your topic has been approved to not submit or complete the exam, it will be counted as a failed attempt.

BCHS Doctoral Program: Comprehensive Examination

Objectives

The purpose of the comprehensive examination is to “to assess the student's mastery of the general field of doctoral study, the student's acquisition of both depth and breadth in the area of specialization within the general field, and the ability to use the research methods of the discipline.”²

If you have a topic of interest, yet still have to narrow down the specific aspect you want to research for your dissertation, this is the opportunity to do so. In that case, you would do your Comprehensive Examination separate from your overview.

If you, on the other hand, have already a narrow topic, you may do your Comprehensive Examination at the same time as your Dissertation Overview.

Be mindful that University regulations say the comprehensive examination “should be administered at approximately the time of the completion of the formal course requirements and should be passed at least eight months before the scheduling of the final oral examination and dissertation defense.”³

Requirements

You will typically take the Comprehensive Examination after four semesters of full-time study or its equivalent of part-time study. You need to:

- Have taken 48-52 credits
- Have passed your preliminary examination

Process and timing

- You may register for BCHS 3888, “Preparation for the Comprehensive Examination” (1-3 credits). Note that is not required.
- You meet with your Chair to decide on your topic, and to select committee members who have expertise relevant to the topic.
 - Once you have a tentative list of committee members, you must check if your committee meets the university requirements with the Program Office.
 - You then approach your proposed committee members and ask them to serve on your committee.
 - After your proposed committee members have agreed to serve on your committee, contact the Academic Program Administrator to initiate paperwork to officially establish your committee.
- BCHS requires a minimum of two meetings with your full committee, one of which is the final defense of your comprehensive examination paper.

² <https://catalog.upp.pitt.edu/content.php?catoid=171&navoid=15353>

³ <https://catalog.upp.pitt.edu/content.php?catoid=171&navoid=15353>

- Your chair convenes a full committee meeting early in the process to determine the scope of work. This is an informal meeting, and you only need to submit an annotated outline. (A list of topics with a brief description and a list of potential bibliographic sources.) At this meeting, the Committee may suggest modifications to your scope of work and suggest new literature to include.
- You work on your Comprehensive Examination document. This document should include the central themes, issues, and questions about which you need to have substantial knowledge to conduct research on the topic you have chosen as well as the main theoretical concepts and methodologies you plan to use for your dissertation work. BCHS encourages continued communication with all committee members, who are intellectual resources for your comps.
- When your committee chair (in consultation with the rest of the committee) considers your work adequate to sit for the comprehensive examination, contact the Program Office to schedule the Examination.
- Submit your paper to your committee members at least two weeks before the meeting date.
- The document will form the basis of the discussion with your comprehensive examination committee. You may decide to do a visual presentation.
- At your comprehensive examination meeting, you will discuss your paper as well as other aspects of your research topic with your committee members and receive feedback from them including possible modifications. This meeting takes 1-2 hours.

Grading

The committee will judge the quality of your work based on the written paper and the questions and answer session. The possible results are:

- Passing without any changes
- Being asked to revise certain parts of the paper and resubmit it (the most frequent outcome)
- Failing. If failed, you can retake Comprehensive Examination only once.
- The Director of the Doctoral Program will assign and “S” to you on the “Preparation for the Comprehensive Examination” (BCHS 3888) once you have successfully passed your comprehensive examination.

BCHS Doctoral Program: Dissertation Overview

Objectives

In accordance with University of Pittsburgh policy, the Dissertation Overview “requires the student to carefully formulate a plan and permits the doctoral committee members to provide guidance in shaping the conceptualization and methodology of that plan.”⁴ For this, you need to demonstrate your expertise in the public health topic or substantive area of your dissertation, and to delineate research and scholarly parameters for your dissertation work. After passing the Dissertation Overview, you become a PhD degree candidate, signifying that the dissertation research phase has begun.

Requirements

You may do the dissertation overview at the same time or after your Comprehensive Examination. If you defend them in the same meeting, you must first address the Comprehensive Examination and then the Overview. For the Overview you need to have:

- Passed your comprehensive examination
- Completed all your coursework, including electives

Process and Timing

- You meet with your Chair to decide on your topic, and to select dissertation committee members who have expertise relevant to the topic.
 - Once you have a tentative list of committee members, you must check if your committee meets the university requirements with the Program Office.
 - You then approach your proposed committee members and ask them to serve on your committee.
 - After your proposed committee members have agreed to serve on your committee, contact the Academic Program Administrator to initiate paperwork to officially establish your dissertation committee.
 - Note that if you are defending your Comprehensive Examination and your Dissertation overview at the same time, you must do paperwork for two different committees (even if the same committee members are involved).
- You prepare the dissertation overview document, which includes a critical review of the literature and a plan with the conceptualization and methodology for the research you will undertake.
- It is good practice to seek the advice of your committee members during the preparation of your overview. They have a particular expertise that is relevant to your topic or research methods.
- Once you and your dissertation chair agree that you are ready to sit for your dissertation overview defense, contact the Academic Program Administrator to schedule the defense. Submit your overview proposal to your committee at least two weeks before

⁴<https://catalog.upp.pitt.edu/content.php?catoid=171&navoid=15353>

your dissertation overview defense date.

- Your committee conducts the overview defense.
- As your research progresses you may need to revise your research methodology, which may require further meetings with your doctoral dissertation committee.
- Before proceeding with data collection, you need to obtain approval from the University of Pittsburgh Institutional Review Board (IRB, <https://www.irb.pitt.edu/>)

Grading

Passing the overview requires unanimous approval from the Committee. It is the responsibility of the committee to ensure that you meet appropriate academic standards and to approve your research plan. Therefore, the committee has the authority to require that you rewrite any portion or the entire overview. The possible results of the defense are:

- Passing without any changes
- Being asked to revise certain parts of the paper and resubmit it.
- Failing. If failed, you can defend the dissertation overview only one more time.

BCHS Doctoral Program: The dissertation

Objectives

“Each student must write a dissertation that presents the results of a research project carried out by the student. An appropriate research project involves a substantive piece of original and independent research grounded in an appropriate body of literature. It is relevant to an identifiable field as it is currently practiced. It presents a hypothesis tested by data and analysis and provides a significant contribution or advancement in that field. It is the responsibility of the student’s doctoral committee to evaluate the dissertation in these terms and to recommend the awarding of the doctoral degree only if the dissertation is judged to demonstrate these qualities.”⁵

Requirements

To defend your dissertation, you must have:

- Defended your dissertation overview.
- A minimum of eight months between your comprehensive exam and final defense. In no case can you take the comprehensive examination in the same term in which you defend the dissertation.

Dissertation format

The dissertation may be presented in one of two formats. You may choose to produce a traditional single, integrated document or you may choose to present your results as three articles of publishable quality. Please note that the articles typically “replace” the Results section of the dissertation document, although sometimes, one of the articles “replaces” the Background.: The articles “must be logically connected and integrated into the dissertation in a coherent manner, and sufficient detail must be presented to satisfy the characteristics of a dissertation.”⁶ Introductory and methodological chapters need to precede the articles. An overall Discussion and Conclusions must follow the articles.

Process and timing

During the preparation of your dissertation, you should be in frequent contact with your doctoral dissertation committee chairperson and meet, as appropriate, with the committee members for continued guidance. Preparation of your dissertation requires a minimum of eight months (or two terms) with time allowed for members of the doctoral dissertation committee to review, critique, and monitor the research.

Your dissertation presents the results of your research project. It should be clearly written with careful documentation where necessary. It involves a substantive piece of original and independent research grounded in an appropriate body of literature. Your dissertation must include an abstract (350-word limit) that contains a statement of public health relevance,

⁵ <https://catalog.upp.pitt.edu/content.php?catoid=171&navoid=15353>

⁶ <https://catalog.upp.pitt.edu/content.php?catoid=171&navoid=15353>

significance and/or importance.

The University's Style and Form Manual should be followed in the preparation of your dissertation and, if necessary, additional guides for the writing of a dissertation should be used. All dissertations must be submitted electronically using Electronic Theses and Dissertations (ETD). Information regarding ETD can be found online (<https://etd.pitt.edu/>) and by contacting Allison Faett in the office of Student Affairs.

You may use the assistance (or may be advised to use the assistance) of a professional editor in the preparation of your dissertation. The assistance must be limited to use of language and not to subject matter or meaning. You must describe and acknowledge all editorial assistance in the dissertation document.

Once you and your dissertation chair have agreed that you are ready to defend your dissertation, you need to

- Contact the Program Office to arrange a time and place for the dissertation defense meeting.
- Schedule the examination so that the defense date aligns with Pitt Public Health timeline (check the website <https://www.publichealth.pitt.edu/graduation>)
- Submit it to the Director of the Doctoral Program one month before your defense, who will check it for completeness (e.g., presence of an abstract and names of committee members).
- Provide the final draft to each committee member at least three weeks before your defense.
- You need to post information about their doctoral defense at least one month in
 - University Times <https://www.utimes.pitt.edu/got-news>
 - Mike Dolinger, Director of Student Services (mikedolinger@pitt.edu)
 - Allison Faett amf191@pitt.edu
 - Caitlin McCullough for inclusion in the Pitt Public Health Weekly Update phcomm@pitt.edu
- In the above-mentioned announcements, you need to provide the following information
 - Identify as doctoral defense
 - Title of the dissertation
 - Your department and school
 - Your name and contact information including phone number and e-mail address
 - The date, time, and place of defense
 - The committee members may also be listed
- The final oral examination in defense of the doctoral dissertation is open to the public.
- All members of your doctoral dissertation committee must attend the examination.

Grading

"The final oral examination in defense of the doctoral dissertation is conducted by the doctoral committee and need not be confined to materials in and related to the dissertation. Any member of the Graduate Faculty of the University may attend and participate in the

examination. Other qualified individuals may be invited by the committee to participate in the examination. Only members of the doctoral committee may be present during the final deliberations and may vote on the passing of the candidate.

A report of this examination, signed by all the members of the doctoral committee, must be sent to the dean. If the decision of the committee is not unanimous, the case is referred to the dean for resolution. The chair of the doctoral committee should ensure that the dissertation is in final form before requesting signatures of the members of the committee.”⁷

⁷ <https://catalog.upp.pitt.edu/content.php?catoid=171&navoid=15353>

Graduation

To graduate, you must file an official Application for Graduation in the Graduate School of Public Health Office of Student Affairs according to the academic calendar. Deadlines for filing are posted online; they are usually three months before the date of graduation. You are responsible for being aware of these strict deadlines. There is a penalty for late filing. If you do not meet graduation requirements, you must submit a new Application for Graduation for a later graduation and register for at least one credit.

Requirements

You need to fulfill these requirements to apply for graduation:

- Have a passing grade in all required courses.
- Fulfill all academic requirements, including all milestones and the related paperwork. The BCHS Program Office will review your file to certify you for graduation.
- Be registered for at least one credit (or FTDR) in the semester you graduate.
- Ensure that you have met the requirements for full status if you were admitted provisionally.
- For a complete list of requirements, visit <https://publichealth.pitt.edu/graduation>.

Timing

There are four graduation times per year: December, April, June, and August. However, the University holds only one ceremony per year, in late April. Pitt Public Health holds a separate ceremony, usually in a different day of the University commencement event. Graduates of the previous June, August, and December are invited to participate in the spring ceremony.

The Registrar mails diplomas to graduates. Diplomas are not ordered until after graduation; therefore, it is usually several months after graduation before they are available.

Financial Aid and Funding

You are advised to tell the Director of the Doctoral Program about your need for financial aid. The Program Director will advise you concerning the possible sources. Funding is not guaranteed but the department makes every effort to secure two years of funding for students with demonstrated need or merit.

Graduate Student Researchers

GSRs are graduate students who are receiving financial support from research funds in return for duties performed to meet research goals assigned to them. The primary goal of the appointment, from the point of view of both the University and the student, is to provide financial support to the graduate student. You, as a GSR, receive a letter from the Department, co-signed by the principal investigator or your supervisor, that states the general conditions of the appointment, specifies the salary, general types of duties, duration, benefits, and any other pertinent terms of appointment. Duration of the appointment may be for one, two, or three terms.

You can find Pitt Public Health's information about GSRs here:

<https://publichealth.pitt.edu/home/admissions-aid/tuition-and-financial-aid/types-of-aid/student-assistantships>.

BCHS Student Scholarships

Purpose

There are four Departmental scholarships available to BCHS students enrolled in a degree program. The general purpose of these awards is to provide some financial assistance to students in the completion of their academic programs (<https://publichealth.pitt.edu/behavioral-and-community-health-sciences/admissions-aid/financial-aid>). Funds may be used for research or practice activities or as otherwise directed by the specific award requirements. It is the policy of the Department to use these limited funds to benefit the largest number of students. As such, students may apply for more than one scholarship, but preference will be given to students who have not received a previous award.

Eligibility Criteria

All BCHS students are eligible to apply for the Ricci, McAllister, Silverman, and Peterson Scholarships. However, the Peterson Scholarship will give preference to MPH students. The Silverman Scholarship is only available to doctoral students. In addition to these Scholarships, students may apply for BCHS Research Support funds to assist them with their MPH or doctoral dissertation research. The specific eligibility criteria for the individual scholarships is as follows:

Carol L. McAllister Student Resource Fund: A BCHS student must demonstrate need, merit, a commitment to social justice and a dedication to improving the lives of women and children. Awards will be made to support work that is qualitative, ethnographic, and community-based participatory in nature.

Karen S. Peterson Memorial Research Award for Women's Health: A BCHS student must have a demonstrated interest in research or practice leading to improvements in women's health. Preference will be given to MPH students.

Joseph and Brigida Ricci Award Fund: This annual award is for the purpose of assisting with the recruitment and retention of BCHS students.

Silverman Scholarship Fund: A BCHS doctoral student must be currently enrolled, have an undergraduate degree in anthropology or another social science discipline and have demonstrated financial need.

BCHS Research Support Fund: These funds are available for BCHS MPH and doctoral students to assist with the costs of conducting research toward the MPH or PhD degrees. MPH students must have formed their committees and obtained IRB approval to be eligible. Doctoral students must have passed their Overview and have IRB approval to be eligible.

Reporting Requirements

Please refer to the individual award pages for the specific reporting requirements.

Award Range

The amount of the above awards may vary but will be within an annual range of \$500-\$1,000.

Notification/Payment Mechanism

Written award notification will be sent to the selected awardee. Payment will be processed via the awardees University tuition account.

The BCHS Doctoral Committee

Administrative responsibility for the doctoral program resides with the Doctoral Committee for the department, and the director of the program. The Doctoral Committee is a standing committee in the Department of Behavioral and Community Health Sciences (BCHS). It is chaired by Dr. Patricia Documet, who also serves as the program director. Members of the doctoral committee include Drs. Kar-Hai Chu, James Egan, and Mary Hawk. Currently, Noelle Spencer is the student representative. A doctoral student representative to the committee is selected by the doctoral students of the program. To be eligible for membership, students must have already passed their preliminary exams. The student representative provides important feedback for program assessment and further development from the students' perspective.

Charge

The Doctoral Committee is charged with designing and coordinating the doctoral program within BCHS to train public health professionals and scholarly researchers in the areas of teaching, research, and practice. This includes performing both oversight and program development functions.

Committee Functions

Oversight

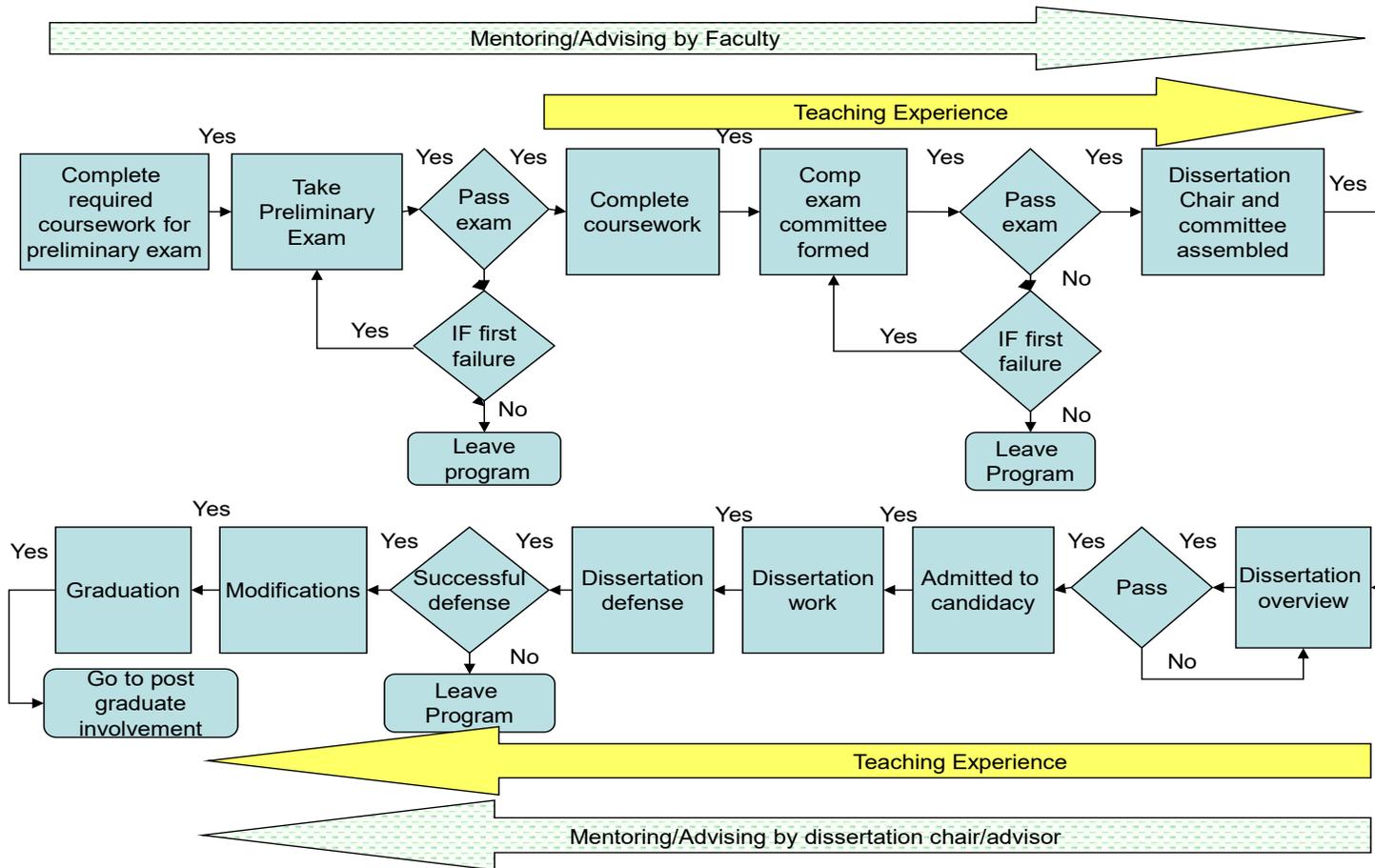
- Review all candidate applications and make recommendations for admission to the doctoral program in BCHS.
- Engage in both local and national recruitment of promising students with post-baccalaureate degrees in related disciplines or professions to further increase the quality of entering doctoral students and promote diversity, equity, and inclusion.
- Develop, administer, and evaluate required student examinations (preliminary and comprehensive examinations) in the program in accordance with University and School requirements.
- Oversee and recommend doctoral dissertation overview and final defense committees, as selected by the student and the student's advisor, in terms of professional expertise relevant to the task and topic.
- Continuously monitor and evaluate student progress in the program, making sure that program requirements are fulfilled in a timely fashion.

Program Development

- Implement a mechanism for systematic evaluation of the doctoral programs that will highlight their strengths and weaknesses to continually update and improve the program and to maintain national standards.
- Explore and facilitate linkages with other academic doctoral and certificate programs in related social science disciplines to expand the knowledge base and experience of doctoral students in BCHS.

Appendix A: BCHS Doctoral Program Flowchart

Doctoral Program Flow Chart -- Program of Study



Appendix B: Preliminary Examination Outline and Rubric

BCHS Doctoral Preliminary Examination Paper Outline

Explore a public health topic of your choice within a social ecological framework and design two parallel research/evaluation studies to address it. One of your studies will use quantitative methodology and the other will use qualitative methodology – you may start with either study. These studies can be original research designed to explore a certain aspect of the issue, or evaluation studies of a current program implemented to address the public health issue. Try to use what you have learned in your doctoral coursework, relating this to your public health issue. Be sure to explain how the various sections relate to each other, e.g. how your review of the social and cultural aspects of your issue inform your research questions and designs. Again, be mindful that you will be asked to justify your choices. For example, if you are proposing a quasi-experimental design, the committee may ask why you are not using an experimental one.

In preparing your paper, please address the following areas and components as relevant:

Background (approximately 4-6 pages)

A. Description of the Public Health Topic

Identify and describe the specific issue you are addressing and its public health significance. Make sure to refer to epidemiological concepts and data.

B. Social Ecological Aspects of the Public Health Topic

Discuss the relevant aspects of the public health issue you have chosen as it relates to the different layers of the social ecological model (e.g., individual, interpersonal, community, organizational and policy).

C. Social and Cultural Aspects of the Public Health Topic

All issues are constructed and embedded in fundamental socio-cultural contexts. Describe the social, structural, and cultural factors that impact the issue you are addressing, including SES, ethnicity, political ideology, culture, and social values. If appropriate, discuss the issue as it relates to the social inequalities in health and/or health disparities.

D. Conclusion: How this Background Informs Your Research Plan

End this section with a brief summary of how the social ecological and sociocultural background you have described informs your research/evaluation question(s) and research designs. Finish by briefly stating your general research/evaluation question and summarize the public health significance of this question.

Study Design

Quantitative Research/Evaluation Study (approximately 4-6 pages)

A. State your major research/evaluation question(s), posing specific hypotheses.

- B. Identify the theoretical framework guiding your research or evaluation.
- C. Conceptualize the major constructs related to your research or evaluation question(s) and hypotheses.
- D. Describe your study population and indicate why you chose this population
- E. Describe your study design (e.g., cross-sectional, quasi-experimental, time series).
- F. Discuss the methods you would use to collect your data and justify why you would use these particular methods. Specifically, be prepared to justify your choices.
- What methods would you use to collect your data and why? Describe each method in enough detail that the reader gains a clear sense of your procedures.
 - Explain how you will operationalize your constructs into variables and how you plan to measure your variables.
 - Explain the advantages and disadvantages of the methods you have chosen.
 - A secondary data set may be used.
- G. Describe your selection strategy. Include the following:
- Describe and justify your sampling strategy.
 - Describe your sampling unit and your sampling frame.
 - Discuss what factors will influence your sample size
 - How will your choice affect the generalizability of your findings?
 - What steps will you take to deal with sample bias?
- H. Discuss your analysis. Include the following:
- Discuss the general goals, procedures, and principles of data analysis.
 - Include the statistical tests you would use and why.
- I. Address issues of validity and reliability in your research/evaluation study.
- J. Identify and discuss the ethical issues associated with your research/evaluation study. How are you addressing them in your design?

Qualitative Research/Evaluation Study (approximately 4-6 pages)

- A. State your major research/evaluation question(s).
- B. Identify the theoretical framework guiding your research or evaluation.
- C. Conceptualize the major constructs related to your research or evaluation question(s).

D. Describe your setting and indicate why you chose it.

E. Describe your study design.

F. Discuss the methods you would use to collect your data and justify why you would use these particular methods.

- Explain what methods you would use to collect your data and why. Describe each method in enough detail that the reader gains a clear sense of your procedures.
- Explain the advantages and disadvantages of the methods you have chosen.
- Explain how you will explore the constructs you have defined for your study.
- Explain how you will gain access to the setting and how you plan to maintain field relations.

G. Describe your selection strategy. Include the following:

- Describe how you will select study participants, or contexts for observation for each of your data collection methods. Justify your decision.
- Explain how you will determine the number and characteristics of the participants, and justify your choice.
- Describe the times and places you have chosen for your data collection. Justify your choices.
- Discuss any major issues, considerations, and concerns that entered into selection of study participants.

H. Discuss your analysis. Include the following:

- Discuss the general goals, procedures, and principles of data analysis.
- Include how you will examine the data to identify themes, issues etc.
- Discuss the role of triangulation in your research/evaluation study.

I. Address issues of authenticity/constituent validity in your research/evaluation study.

J. Identify and discuss the ethical issues associated with your research/evaluation study. How are you addressing them in your design?

Discussion Section (approximately 1-2 pages)

A. Discuss what you hope to accomplish with each of your studies. Be sure to tie your discussion back to the social ecological, cultural and social justice background of the topic. Discuss in what ways these studies will impact the topic. What is the relative contribution of each methodological approach to the topic you have chosen?

B. Discuss dissemination and utilization of your results. Include the following:

- Describe and justify your intended audience(s) and/or stakeholders.
- Identify and discuss the ways in which you will disseminate your results.
- Discuss the ways in which your research or evaluation results will be helpful to your intended audience.

PRELIMINARY EXAM FACULTY GUIDE - EVALUATION RUBRIC *
 Score each of the 17 sections 1-4 scale: 1 = Not Competent; 4 = Competent

BACKGROUND

1. Description of the PH topic

Does not describe the significance of the PH issue.	Identifies and describes the PH issue and its significance. Limited justifications on why the issue can be appropriately addressed by public health professionals.	Identifies and describes the PH issue and its significance. Refers to epidemiological concepts and data.	Identifies and describes the PH issue and its significance. Justifies why the issue can be appropriately addressed by public health professionals. Refers to epidemiological concepts and data.
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2. Social ecological aspects of the PH issue

Mentions social ecological model without detail and without connecting it to the issue.	Explains social ecological model. Limited discussion of the ecological dimensions of the PH issue.	Explains social ecological model. Discusses at least three ecological dimensions of the PH issue.	Explains social ecological model. Discusses at least three ecological dimensions of the PH issue. Presents an argument for the relevance of considering these ecological dimensions of the PH issue.
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3. Social and cultural aspects of the PH topic

Limited description of the social and cultural context. Does not offer relevant examples of how the context affects/modifies the issue.	Describes social and cultural context. Gives relevant examples of how the context affects/modifies the issue. (Student addresses < 3 of the following: SES, ethnicity, political ideology, culture, social values)	Describes social and cultural context. Gives relevant examples of how the context affects/modifies the issue. (Student addresses at least 3 of the following: SES, ethnicity, political ideology, culture, social values)	Describes social and cultural context. Gives relevant examples of how the context affects/modifies the issue. (Student addresses at least 3 of the following: SES, ethnicity, political ideology, culture, social values) Discusses the issue as it relates to the social inequalities and/or health disparities.
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1	2	3	4
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← Not Competent

Competent →

STUDY DESIGN

4. Apply an appropriate theoretical framework to guide the proposed research			
Limited application of theory.	Identifies relevant theories but perhaps not at the appropriate ecological level. Limited relation between theoretical constructs and study concepts.	Identifies relevant theories at the appropriate ecological level. Translates theoretical constructs into study concepts.	Identifies relevant theories at the appropriate ecological level. Translates theoretical constructs into study concepts. Justifies use of chosen theory.

5. Identify an appropriate study population			
Describes the population but uses no data.	Describes the population using limited data.	Describes the population using data (age, income, race/ethnicity, location, etc.)	Describes the population using data (age, income, race/ethnicity, location, etc.) Demonstrates the appropriateness of selecting this population to study this issue.

IDENTIFY AN APPROPRIATE DESIGN

6. Quantitative approach			
States either research question(s) or hypotheses but unclearly.	States research question(s) and hypotheses but somewhat unclearly.	States clear research question(s). States clear hypotheses. Argues how this design will answer research question(s).	States clear research question(s). States clear hypotheses. Argues how this design will answer research question(s). Proposes alternative designs and/or justifies choice of current design.

7. Qualitative approach			
Does not state clear research question(s).	States clear research question(s). Suggests but does not argue how this design will answer research question(s).	States clear research question(s). Argues how this design will answer research question(s).	States clear research question(s). Argues how this design will answer research question(s). Proposes alternative designs and/or justifies choice of current design.

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← Not Competent		Competent →	

METHODOLOGY

8. Quantitative approach			
Methods inappropriate to answer research question(s). Does not describe how to measure variables.	Identifies appropriate methods to answer research questions. Describes how to measure chosen variables. Does not operationalize theoretical constructs into study variables.	Identifies appropriate methods to answer research questions. Operationalizes theoretical constructs into study variables. Describes how to measure chosen variables. States data collection procedures.	Identifies appropriate methods to answer research questions. Operationalizes study concepts into study variables. Describes how to measure chosen variables. Clearly states data collection procedures. Evaluates advantages and disadvantages to methods.

9. Qualitative approach			
Methods inappropriate to answer research question(s).	Identifies appropriate methods to answer research questions. States procedures. Does either of the following: Discusses how to explore the constructs defined for study. OR Describes how to gain access to setting and maintain field relations.	Identifies appropriate methods to answer research questions. States data collection procedures. Discusses how to explore the constructs defined for study. Describes how to gain access to setting and maintain field relations.	Identifies appropriate methods to answer research questions. States data collection procedures and discusses how to explore the constructs defined for study. Describes how to gain access to setting and maintain field relations. Evaluates advantages and disadvantages to methods.

SAMPLING STRATEGY

10. Quantitative approach			
Mentions sampling frame with no description. Mentions the sampling strategy but does not explain it in detail.	Describes the sampling frame to a limited extent. Discusses inclusion/exclusion criteria or unit of analysis but is unclear. Proposes a sampling strategy (e.g., SRS, stratified) and explains it without sufficient detail.	Clearly describes the sampling frame. Adequately describes inclusion/exclusion criteria and the unit of analysis. Proposes a sampling strategy (e.g., SRS, stratified) and explains it with detail. Explains the factors that will affect the sample size.	Clearly describes the sampling frame. Adequately describes inclusion/exclusion criteria and the unit of analysis. Proposes and justifies a sampling strategy (e.g., SRS, stratified) and explains it with detail. Explains the factors that will affect the sample size.

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← Not Competent		Competent →	

11. Qualitative approach			
Mentions inclusion/exclusion criteria but with little discussion. Mentions the sampling strategy but does not explain in detail why the strategy was chosen.	Adequately describes inclusion/exclusion criteria. Proposes a selection strategy and explains it with sufficient detail.	Adequately describes inclusion/exclusion criteria. Discusses the unit of analysis. Proposes a selection strategy and explains it with sufficient detail. Explains the factors that limit sample size.	Adequately describes inclusion/exclusion criteria. Discusses the unit of analysis. Proposes a selection strategy and explains it with sufficient detail. Explains the factors that influence sample size. Justifies the selection strategy.

DATA ANALYSIS

12. Quantitative			
Does not discuss a data analysis strategy.	Limited discussion about goals, procedures and principles of data analysis. Describes data management plan. Statistical tests inappropriate.	Explains goals, procedures and principles of data analysis. Describes data management plan. Identifies appropriate statistical tests.	Clearly explains goals, procedures and principles of data analysis. Describes data management plan. Identifies appropriate statistical tests. Justifies choice of statistical tests. Discusses importance of statistical power. Discusses statistical and practical significance.

13. Qualitative			
Does not discuss a data analysis strategy.	Limited discussion about goals, procedures and principles of data analysis. Generally unclear about interpretive strategy.	Explains goals, procedures and principles of data analysis. Explains how to identify themes/new constructs, etc.	Clearly explains goals, procedures and principles of data analysis. Clearly explains how to identify themes/new constructs, etc. Clearly discusses the role of triangulation in this study.

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← Not Competent →

14. Study limitations			
Little or no discussion on study limitations.	Limited discussion on major limitations to study. Limited attention to validity and reliability.	Identifies and explains major limitations to study. Adequately addresses validity and reliability. Explains how to deal with study limitations.	Identifies and explains major limitations to study. Clearly addresses validity and reliability. Explains how to deal with study limitations. Proposes different study design/methods to address stated limitations.

15. Study implications			
Does not identify study implications.	Limited discussion on what the research intends to accomplish regarding social ecological, cultural, and social justice aspects of topic. Limited discussion on how research will impact public health topic.	Discusses what the research intends to accomplish regarding social ecological, cultural, and social justice aspects of topic. Explains how research will impact public health topic.	Discusses what the research intends to accomplish regarding social ecological, cultural, and social justice aspects of topic. Explains how research will impact public health topic. Discusses relative contribution of each methodological approach to topic.

16. Ethical issues			
Does not identify or discuss ethical issues associated with study.	Identifies but does not discuss or address ethical issues associated with study.	Identifies and discusses the ethical issues associated with study.	Identifies and discusses the ethical issues associated with study. Addresses these issues in study design.

17. Dissemination and utilization			
Does not describe intended audience or dissemination strategy.	Describes intended audience and/or stakeholders but justification for audience is limited. Identifies a strategy to disseminate results but discussion is limited.	Describes and justifies intended audience and/or stakeholders. Identifies and discusses a strategy to disseminate results.	Describes and justifies intended audience and/or stakeholders. Identifies and discusses strategy to disseminate results. Discusses the ways that the research will be helpful to intended audience.

