

University of Pittsburgh  
School of Public Health

Department of Behavioral and  
Community Health Sciences  
(BCHS)

# Doctoral Student Manual

## 2024-2025

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## Welcome from the Department Chair

Welcome to BCHS!

We are so glad to have you join our community of behavioral scientists, health educators, students, staff, and community partners. As you know, our work spans many focal areas, but we all share the commitment to equity, justice, and improving the health of the public. You are here because you share these goals and have already demonstrated your success and potential in creating healthy communities.

During your time in BCHS you will have many opportunities to collaborate with faculty and peers including through coursework, manuscript development, and community-based work. Building community here will be integral to your success, so please engage fully in whatever ways are most meaningful to you. We aim to help you expand your professional network with people in our department, across the school and university, and beyond.

This handbook has lots of important information about the Doctoral Program, its requirements, and how you can be successful as you enter this work. We hope it will be a useful guide, but no manual can be exhaustive as each student brings unique strengths and needs. Please let us know how we can help.

We hope your BCHS experience will be academically and personally rewarding. We are here to support you and look forward to working with you!  
Sincerely,

Mary Hawk, DrPH, LSW  
Professor and Chair, BCHS

## Contents

<b>The Department of Behavioral and Community Health Sciences</b> .....	6
<b>Departmental Overview</b> .....	6
<b>Departmental Organization</b> .....	6
<b>Research and Service</b> .....	6
<b>Educational Programs</b> .....	7
<b>The People of BCHS</b> .....	7
<b>BCHS Doctoral Program: Overview</b> .....	8
<b>Mission and Competencies</b> .....	8
<b>Our Graduates</b> .....	8
<b>BCHS Doctoral Program: Admission</b> .....	11
<b>Holistic Admissions</b> .....	11
<b>Requirements for Admission</b> .....	11
<b>Additional points, desirable but not required</b> .....	11
<b>Review Process</b> .....	12
<b>BCHS Doctoral Program: Program of Study</b> .....	13
<b>Overview</b> .....	13
<b>Number of credits</b> .....	13
<b>Required courses</b> .....	13
<b>Cross-enrollment</b> .....	16
<b>Exemption from a required course</b> .....	16
<b>Other requirements</b> .....	16
<b>Ethics in research</b> .....	16
<b>Independent development plan (IDP)</b> .....	16
<b>Manuscript submission</b> .....	16
<b>Research competency</b> .....	17
<b>Academic integrity</b> .....	17
<b>Student Status</b> .....	17
<b>Statute of limitations</b> .....	18
<b>Certificates</b> .....	18
<b>Forms</b> .....	18
<b>Student Life</b> .....	18
<b>BCHS Doctoral Program: Advising</b> .....	19

Changing Advisors .....	19
<b>BCHS Doctoral Program: Milestones .....</b>	<b>20</b>
Overview .....	20
Timeline .....	20
Requirements for all milestones .....	20
Milestone committees .....	21
<b>BCHS Doctoral Program: The Preliminary Examination .....</b>	<b>22</b>
Objectives .....	22
Requirements .....	22
Process and timing .....	22
Grading .....	24
If you failed the exam .....	24
<b>BCHS Doctoral Program: Comprehensive Examination .....</b>	<b>25</b>
Objectives .....	25
Requirements .....	25
Process and timing .....	25
Grading .....	26
<b>BCHS Doctoral Program: Dissertation Overview .....</b>	<b>27</b>
Objectives .....	27
Requirements .....	27
Process and Timing .....	27
Grading .....	28
<b>BCHS Doctoral Program: The dissertation .....</b>	<b>29</b>
Objectives .....	29
Requirements .....	29
Dissertation format .....	29
Process and timing .....	29
Grading .....	31
<b>Graduation .....</b>	<b>32</b>
Requirements .....	32
Timing .....	32
<b>Financial Aid and Funding .....</b>	<b>33</b>
Student Assistantships .....	33

<b>BCHS Student Scholarships</b> .....	33
<b>Purpose</b> .....	33
<b>Eligibility Criteria</b> .....	33
<b>Reporting Requirements</b> .....	34
<b>Award Range</b> .....	34
<b>Notification/Payment Mechanism</b> .....	34
<b>The BCHS Doctoral Committee</b> .....	35
<b>Charge</b> .....	35
<b>Committee Functions</b> .....	35
Oversight.....	35
<b>Appendix A: BCHS Doctoral Program Flowchart</b> .....	36
<b>Appendix B: Preliminary Examination Outline and Rubric</b> .....	37
<b>BCHS Doctoral Preliminary Examination Paper Outline</b> .....	37
<b>BACKGROUND (APPROXIMATELY 4-6 PAGES)</b> .....	37
<b>OVERALL STUDY DESIGN (1-2 PAGES)</b> .....	38
<b>QUANTITATIVE APPROACH (APPROXIMATELY 4-5 PAGES)</b> .....	38
<b>QUALITATIVE APPROACH (APPROXIMATELY 4-5 PAGES)</b> .....	39
<b>DISCUSSION (APPROXIMATELY 1-2 PAGES)</b> .....	40

# 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

- 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

- 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. Other standing faculty committees are the Academic Committee, 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 several 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 Japan 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 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 18 primary faculty members. Additionally, 18 faculty members with primary appointments in other University departments hold secondary appointments in BCHS, and 16 people 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 about 119 students in BCHS, and 22 of them are 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.
- Apply 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**

<b>Name</b>	<b>Dissertation Title</b>	<b>Current Employment</b>
<b>2024</b>		
Flor de Abril Cameron, PhD	A Quantitative Exploration of Latinx Childbearing People’s Experiences of Obstetric Violence and Respectful Maternity Care in the United States: A Secondary Analysis of the Giving Voices to Mothers Survey	Assistant Professor – University of Pittsburgh School of Medicine
Stephanie Christian-Afflu, PhD	Health Screening Events as a Community-Clinical Linkages Strategy for Addressing Chronic Illnesses in Black Communities	Postdoctoral Research Fellow – Memorial Sloan Kettering Cancer Center
Brayden Kameg, PhD	The Relationship Between Substance Use, Suicidality, and Access to Care Among Women Veterans: A Secondary Analysis of the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration National Survey on Drug Use and Health	Assistant Professor – University of Pittsburgh School of Nursing
Xinran Liu, PhD	Use of Mobility Devices among Community-dwelling Older Adults: A Comparison Between the United States and China	Postdoctoral Fellow – Department of Social Medicine and Health Education, Peking University School of Public Health
<b>2023</b>		
Jessica Frankeberger, PhD	Social Ecological Contexts of Hospital Admissions in the First Year Postpartum among Persons with Opioid Use Disorder	Postdoctoral Scholar – UC San Diego
Noelle Spencer, PhD	Exploring the Current States and Emerging Priorities of the Menstrual Equity and Period Poverty Movements in the United States and the United Kingdom	Research Specialist – Our Bodies Ourselves Today
<b>2022</b>		
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	Research Scientist – University of Pittsburgh School of Public Health
Beth Hoffman, PhD	Leveraging Entertainment Narratives to Decrease Adolescent E-Cigarette Use	Assistant Professor – University of Pittsburgh School of Public Health

Chinwoke Isiguzo, PhD	Psychosocial Factors Associated with Racial Disparities in Exclusive Breastfeeding	Director, Monitoring, Evaluation and Learning – 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
<b>2021</b>		
Brian Adams, PhD	Exploring Partner Violence and its Association with Minority Stress and Depression among YMSM Dyads	Research Associate – Military Workplace Climate Research Team at Fors Marsh
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 – Highmark Wholecare
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

## 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. You can find a link here: <https://www.sph.pitt.edu/admissions-aid/how-apply>. The BCBS 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 Pitt Public Health school-wide prerequisites.
- 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), the International English Language Testing System (IELTS), or Duolingo, unless you have earned a degree in the U.S. or in another country where the national language is English. Though the University of Pittsburgh requires a minimum TOEFL score of 80 on the Internet test, BCBS requires scores of 100 on the TOEFL, Band 7.0 on the IELTS, or **130** on Duolingo for consideration. If your test score is lower than these requirements, you are not eligible for admission. You must take the test within two years of application. [See more details.](#)

### 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. Credits are counted as follows:

- 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 would 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, Mike Dolinger (mikedolinger@pitt.edu).
- 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.
- To count for the PhD, all credits need to be graduate credits.

### 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 (12 credits)
3. Elective theory and methods (3 credits)
4. Statistical analysis (9 credits)
5. Interventions (5- 6 credits)
6. Integration of public health research and practice (5-10 credits)
7. Milestones (4 credits)

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

	<b>Semester</b>	<b>Credits</b>	<b>Completed</b>
<b>Behavior &amp; Community (6 credits)</b>			
BCHS 2554 Intro to Community Health *	Fall, Spring	3	
BCHS 3555 Doctoral Seminar in BCHS Theories & Models *	Spring	3	
<b>Research Design &amp; Methods (12 credits)</b>			
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 3200 Scale Development & Survey Design in Social & Behavioral Sciences	Spring	3	
<b>Elective: Theory &amp; Methods (Choose any 3-credit graduate course)</b>			
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	
<b>Statistical Analysis (9 credits)</b>			
BIOST 2041 Intro to Statistical Methods *	Fall	3	
BIOST 2049 Applied Regression Analysis	Spring	3	
BCHS 3707 Applied Multiple Regression Analysis & Causal Mod.	Spring (alt)	3	
<b>Interventions (5-6 credits)</b>			
BCHS 2558 Health Program Evaluation *	Spring	3	
BCHS 3506 Implementation Science in Public Health <b>OR</b> CLRES 2215 Fundamentals for ImS for Research, Practice, & Innovation + CLRES 2016 Fundamentals for ImS: From Bedside to Health Systems	Spring	3 1 1	
<b>Integration of Public Health Research and Practice (5-10 credits)</b>			
BCHS 3100 Grant Writing	Fall	3	
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 <b>OR</b> Achievement in Pedagogy Badge from UCTL + BCHS 2511: Teaching Practicum Ind Study	Fall, Spring Any Term	3 1-3	
Manuscript submission as first author	Any term	0	
<b>Electives (1-6 credits)</b>			
TBD			
<b>Advanced Standing Credits</b>			
Prior post-baccalaureate degree		24	

Additional graduate level credits (if applies)		0-12	
<b>Milestones (1-4 credits)</b>			
Preliminary Examination		0	
BCHS 3888 Prep for Comprehensive Exam	Any Term	1-3	
Comprehensive Examination		0	
Dissertation (FTDR 3999 = 0 credits or BCBS 3010 = 1 credit)	Any Term	0-1	
Dissertation Overview		0	
<b>Number of credits required</b>		<b>48</b>	
<b>Total Required Credits for PhD</b>		<b>72</b>	
<b>* Required courses for the Preliminary Examination; also required: Independent Development Plan and the Ethics modules (page 16)</b>			

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 (BCBS 3888).
- After completing 48 credits or having 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).
- Before completing 48 credits, if you are a GSR/GSA in the summer, you can register for a Summer Milestone Course, SMSR 3666, which carries zero credits. This will avoid payment of FICA taxes.

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=>

#### Teaching/pedagogy requirement

Students have two options for completing the teaching requirement. They can take FACDEV 2200 (a three-credit class), or they can substitute this class for following:

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 after you have taken some or all of the Badge's workshops. Note that if you need to reserve credits for electives, you do not need to register for the Independent Study; you can do

the lecture planning and delivery, and grading without registering for credits. Your advisor will send a memo for your file certifying this.

### **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 Academic Administrator 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 AND the instructor for the course you are exempting sign the form.
- Send the form to Paul Markgraf and Jaime Sidani for final approval.
- NOTE: If you are exempted from a required course, you will still need to complete the assigned credits via another course that aligns with your training goals.

### **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. Your second IDP is required before your dissertation overview (<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 devoting time to research 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 [Academic Handbook | School of Public Health \(pitt.edu\)](#). The policy includes obligations for faculty and students, procedures for adjudicating violations, and other critical information. Please take the time to read this policy. As a new student, you 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 Academic Administrator.

### 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 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 strategy will vary, and may consist of additional readings, exercises, written pieces, or a new class, among other things. Your advisor will send an email to the Academic Administrator with the remediation strategy you agreed to. The Doctoral Committee may recommend modifications to the strategy. The Academic Administrator 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. If you are a full-time student, you must complete the dissertation defense within eight (8) years of the first term of enrollment. If you are a part time student, must complete the dissertation defense within ten (10) years of the 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>).

Our BCHS student study area can be found in room 6121C at the end of our hallway. Doctoral student desks are on the lefthand side of the room. They are first come, first serve. If all the desks are taken, feel free to use an open desk on the right side of the room. There are also lockers available to store your belongings, a refrigerator, microwave, and printer for you to utilize. The Academic Administrator can provide you with the code to open the door.

## 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 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, your advisor may also facilitate other aspects of professional development, such as joining professional organizations, attending trainings and workshops, and obtaining funding for your travels and other activities that would be beneficial to you.

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 administrative and mentorship roles until you have successfully completed the Comprehensive Exam.

In BCCHS 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.

### Changing Advisors

If you wish to change your advisor, you must approach the Director of the Doctoral Program in person or via email, 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. You must obtain this form and have it with you during your presentation for committee members to sign. 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
<b>Preliminary Examination:</b> Taken after completion of designated required courses or their equivalent.	After 2 semesters	After 4 semesters
<b>Comprehensive Examination:</b> Taken after completion of ALL required courses.	After 4 semesters	After 8 semesters
<b>Dissertation Overview</b>	After 5 semesters	After 9 semesters
<b>Dissertation Defense:</b> 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. BCHS 3888 Prep for Comprehensive Exam, SMSR 3666 (Summer), or any other course may fulfill this requirement.
- Have a QPA  $\geq 3.3$ .
- Contact the Academic Administrator

## 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 the approval of the Doctoral Committee.

<b>Table 4. Committee formation guidelines</b>			
<b>Milestone</b>	<b>Committee composition</b>	<b>Who sets up the committee?</b>	<b>Responsibility for paperwork</b>
Preliminary Exam	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-At least 3 people</li> <li>-The majority of members must be on the core list* of at least one Pitt Public Health department</li> <li>-The chair must be on the BCHS core list (Associate or Full Professor)</li> <li>-The majority of members must be graduate faculty** of the University of Pittsburgh</li> <li>-At least one member must not be on the BCHS core list*</li> </ul>	The BCHS Doctoral Committee	The BCHS Doctoral Committee and the Academic Administrator notify the student of the Committee composition
Comprehensive Examination	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-If you take the comprehensive exam separately from the dissertation overview proposal, then the committee composition for the preliminary exam applies.</li> <li>-If you take the comprehensive exam at the same time as the dissertation overview, the committee composition for the dissertation applies.</li> </ul>	The Comprehensive Examination Committee chair and the student	The student notifies the Academic Administrator of the desired committee composition. The Academic Administrator will prepare the paperwork
Dissertation (overview and defense)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-At least four University of Pittsburgh faculty members</li> <li>-The chair must be on the BCHS core list*</li> <li>-At least two members must be on the core list* of at least one Pitt Public Health department</li> <li>-At least one member must not be on the BCHS core list*</li> <li>-The majority of members must be graduate faculty** of the University of Pittsburgh</li> <li>-Any committee that has a member who is not University of Pittsburgh faculty must have in addition four University of Pittsburgh faculty</li> </ul>	The Dissertation Committee chair and the student	The Academic Administrator will prepare the paperwork
<p>* <a href="https://www.pitt.edu/school-of-public-health/core-faculty-for-committees">Core Faculty for Committees   School of Public Health (pitt.edu)</a>            ** <a href="#">Graduate Faculty List</a></p>			

## 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.”<sup>1</sup> 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:
  - BCHS 2525
  - BCHS 2558
  - BCHS 2554
  - BCHS 3007
  - BCHS 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

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

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

- Once you have selected a topic, the Doctoral Committee 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 strongly recommended workshop is an opportunity to ask questions about how to address the components of the instructions for the Preliminary Exam.
- 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. Example timeline for the Preliminary Examination**

What will happen?	Approximate date
You turn in your topic to the Program Director	July 9
Your topic is approved	July 17
Workshop with senior faculty	July 24
You turn in your Preliminary Examination paper (jaime.sidani@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 the 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.

## If you failed the exam

- The Chair of the Preliminary Examination Committee, with input of the rest of the committee, will provide you feedback in writing (with copy to your advisor and the Academic Administrator) specifying what the problem areas were, offering avenues for future improvement.
- You and your advisor will devise a remediation strategy in writing. The strategy will vary, and may consist of additional readings, exercises, written pieces, or a new class, among other things. Your advisor will send an email to the Academic Administrator with the remediation strategy you agreed to.
- You will need some time to implement the remediation strategy. In most cases, you will sit for the Preliminary Exam again at the beginning of the next semester.
- At that time, you may write a modification of your original submission or submit a completely different exam (e.g., on a different topic, or a different angle of the same topic).
- Because we want to increase the number of faculty providing oversight on the student progress, the members of the Preliminary Examination Committee will be different from the members on your first 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.”<sup>2</sup>

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, already have 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.”<sup>3</sup>

### 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 (this includes your Advanced Standing 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. When choosing committee members, consider that they will guide you in aspects of your topic and future research that fall within their expertise, and often this is a mentorship relationship.
  - Once you have a tentative list of committee members, you must check if your committee meets the university requirements with the Academic Administrator.
  - You or your advisor 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.

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

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

- BCHS requires a minimum of two meetings with your full committee, one of which is the final defense of your comprehensive examination paper.
- Your chair convenes a full committee meeting early in the process to determine the scope of the 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.
- You can request examples of prior annotated bibliography and comprehensive exam documents; just ask the chair of the Doctoral Committee.
- When your committee chair (in consultation with the rest of the committee) considers your work adequate to sit for the comprehensive examination, contact the Academic Administrator 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 you fail, 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.”<sup>4</sup> 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. When choosing committee members, consider that they will guide you in aspects of your dissertation that fall within their expertise, and often this is a mentorship relationship. It will be your responsibility to contact the committee members and meet with them as you need their input or you need to appraise them of changes in your study.
  - Once you have a tentative list of committee members, you must check if your committee meets the university requirements with the Academic Administrator.
  - 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 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

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

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 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 Human Research Protection Office (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.”<sup>5</sup>

### 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.”<sup>6</sup> 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,

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

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

significance and/or importance.

You should follow the University's Writing Style Manual to prepare your dissertation (<https://www.brand.pitt.edu/downloads/writing-style-manual>). 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 the 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 Academic Administrator 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](mailto:mikedolinger@pitt.edu))
  - Allison Faett [amf191@pitt.edu](mailto:amf191@pitt.edu)
  - Inclusion in the Pitt Public Health Weekly Update [phcomm@pitt.edu](mailto: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.”<sup>7</sup>

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<sup>7</sup> <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 Academic Administrator 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 on 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.

### Student Assistantships

Graduate student assistants, graduate student researchers, teaching assistants, and teaching fellows are students who receive support while gaining teaching, teaching-related, or research experience under the guidance of a faculty mentor. You can find Pitt Public Health's information about assistantships 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 ([Financial Aid | School of Public Health \(pitt.edu\)](https://publichealth.pitt.edu/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, and 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 typically 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. Jaime Sidani, who also serves as the program director. Members of the doctoral committee include Drs. Steven Albert, Kar-Hai Chu, and James Egan as well as Mr. Paul Markgraf, Academic Administrator. Currently, Michelle Dougherty 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

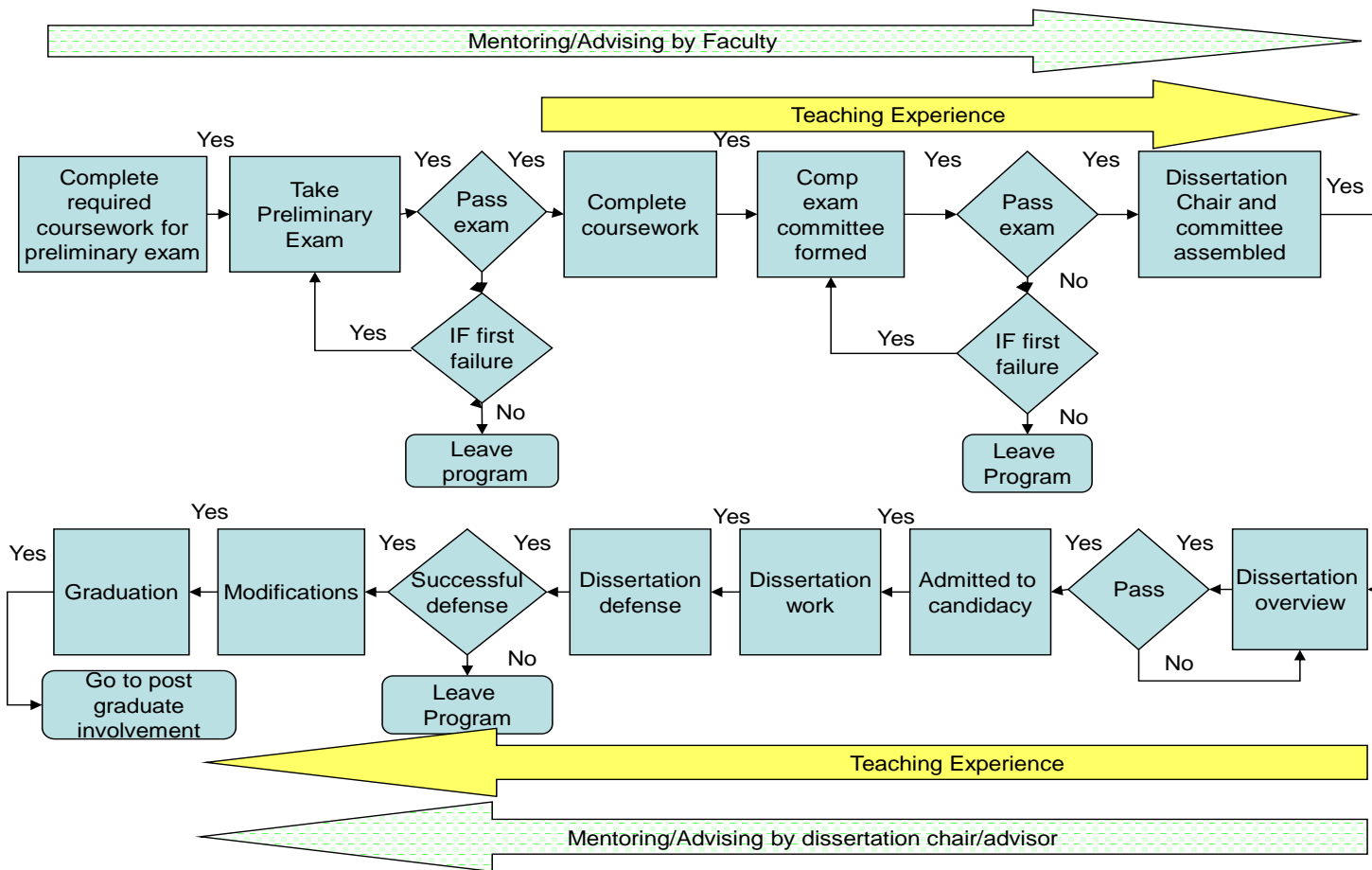
- Review all candidate applications and make recommendations for admission to the doctoral program in BCHS.
- Engage in both local and national recruitment of promising students with post-baccalaureate degrees in related disciplines or professions to further increase the quality of entering doctoral 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.

### Doctoral Program Flow Chart -- Program of Study

### Appendix A: BCHS Doctoral Program Flowchart



## Appendix B: Preliminary Examination Outline and Rubric

### BCHS Doctoral Preliminary Examination Paper Outline

Explore a public health issue of your choice and design a research/evaluation study to address it. Your study needs to include two arms (i.e., components or aims), one using a quantitative approach and the other using a qualitative approach. This study can be original research, or an evaluation of a current program implemented to address your chosen public health issue. Use what you have learned in your doctoral coursework. Be sure to explain how the various sections relate to each other (e.g., how the social and cultural aspects of your issue inform your research questions and designs.) 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.

The **page limit is 20 pages**, not including references or title page.

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

#### **BACKGROUND (APPROXIMATELY 4-6 PAGES)**

##### **1. Description of the Public Health Issue**

Identify and describe the specific issue you are addressing and its public health significance. Make sure to refer to epidemiological concepts and data and justify why the issue can be appropriately addressed by public health professionals.

##### **2. Social Ecological Aspects of the Public Health Issue**

Provide an overview of the social ecological model as it relates to your issue. Discuss at least three ecological dimensions (e.g., individual, interpersonal, community, organizational and policy) of your issue. Present an argument for the relevance of considering these ecological dimensions of your public health issue.

##### **3. Social and Cultural Aspects of the Public Health Issue**

All public health issues are constructed and embedded in fundamental socio-cultural contexts. Describe social, structural, and cultural factors that impact the issue you are addressing, including at least three of the following: SES, ethnicity, political ideology, culture, and social values. Give relevant examples of how these contextual factors affect or modify your issue. If appropriate, discuss the issue as it relates to health equity.

#### **4. How this Background Informs Your Research Question**

Briefly state your general research/evaluation question and summarize the public health significance of this question.

### **OVERALL STUDY DESIGN (1-2 PAGES)**

#### **5. Theoretical Framework**

Identify a relevant theory or theories at the appropriate ecological level guiding your research or evaluation. Explain why this theory is appropriate for the proposed study and conceptualize the major constructs related to your research or evaluation question(s) and hypotheses. You may choose one theory for both the qualitative and quantitative components of your study or describe separate theories for each.

#### **6. Study Population and Setting**

Describe your study population using data (age, income, race/ethnicity, location, etc.) and justify why this population is appropriate for answering your research question. Describe your setting and indicate why you chose it. Explain how you will gain access to this setting and how you plan to maintain field relations.

**For the next portion, you can start with either your quantitative or qualitative approach.**

### **QUANTITATIVE APPROACH (APPROXIMATELY 4-5 PAGES)**

#### **7. Quantitative Design**

State your major research/evaluation aim, posing a specific hypothesis or hypotheses. Describe your study design (e.g., cross-sectional, quasi-experimental, time series) and justify why it is appropriate for answering your research question. Remember that your aim has to derive from the overall research question.

#### **8. Quantitative Data Collection**

Discuss your proposed method(s) of data collection and justify your choice of method(s), including their advantages and disadvantages. 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.

## 9. Quantitative Sampling

Describe and justify your selection strategy, including:

- Your sampling strategy (e.g., SRS, stratified).
  - your sampling unit and your sampling frame.
  - your inclusion/exclusion criteria
- How will your choice affect the generalizability of your findings?
- What steps will you take to deal with sample bias?
- Discuss what factors will influence your sample size (e.g., group comparison, ability to find enough participants) along with the importance of statistical power.

## 10. Quantitative Data Analysis

Discuss your analysis. Include the following:

- Discuss the general goals and procedures
- Data management plan
- Identify key variables and the statistical tests you would use and why.

## QUALITATIVE APPROACH (APPROXIMATELY 4-5 PAGES)

### 11. Qualitative Design

State your major research/evaluation aim(s). Describe your study design and justify why it is appropriate for answering your research question. Remember that your aim has to derive from the overall research question.

### 12. Qualitative Data Collection

Discuss the methods you would use to collect your data and justify why you would use these methods, including advantages and disadvantages. Describe each method in enough detail that the reader gains a clear sense of your procedures. Explain how you will explore the constructs you have defined for your study.

### **13. Qualitative Sampling**

Describe your selection strategy, including:

- 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 considerations for the selection of study participants.

### **14. Qualitative Data Analysis**

Discuss your analysis. Include the following:

- Discuss the general goals, and procedures (e.g., codes that emerge from the data, predefined codes, or both).
- Include how you will examine the data to identify themes.
- Discuss the role of triangulation in your research/evaluation study.

## **DISCUSSION (APPROXIMATELY 1-2 PAGES)**

### **15. Study limitations**

Explain major limitations to your proposed study and how they could be addressed. (e.g., address issues of validity and reliability in your research/evaluation study, or lack of generalizability.) Describe alternative design/methods that could address these limitations.

### **16. Ethical Issues**

Identify and discuss the ethical issues associated with your research/evaluation study. How are you addressing them in your design? Consider the three ethical principles in research (beneficence, justice, and respect for others) when you assess confidentiality, inclusion of diverse participants, and compensation.

### **17. Study Implications**

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



## **18. Dissemination and Utilization of Results**

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

- Describe and justify your intended audience(s) (e.g., the groups with an interest or concern regarding your study).
- 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.

### **\*\*FINAL SCORING\*\***

**PASS:** 15 or more items are rated 3 or 4 (averaged across all committee members)

**REVISE AND RESUBMIT:** 12-14 items are rated 3 or 4 (averaged across all committee members)

**FAIL:** 11 or fewer items are rated as 3 or 4 (averaged across all committee members)

**PRELIMINARY EXAM FACULTY GUIDE - EVALUATION RUBRIC \***

Score each of the 18 sections 1-4 scale: 1 = Not Competent; 4 = Competent

**BACKGROUND**

**1. Description of the public health issue**

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 public health 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 public health issue**

Limited description of the social, structural, 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 health equity and/or health disparities as appropriate.
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1	2	3	4
← Not Competent			Competent →

<b>4. Research question</b>			
Unclear how significance connects with research question. States a research question that can be answered empirically, but question is not specific (e.g., population is not defined). The research question can be addressed only with quantitative or qualitative methods, but not both.	Unclear how significance connects with research question. States a research question that can be answered empirically, but question is not specific (e.g., population is not defined). Part of the research question can be addressed with quantitative methods, and part with qualitative methods.	Briefly summarizes the public health significance (2-3 sentences). States a research question that can be answered empirically, but question is not specific (e.g., population is not defined). Part of the research question can be addressed with quantitative methods, and part with qualitative methods.	Briefly summarizes the public health significance (2-3 sentences). States a specific research question that can be answered empirically. Part of the research question can be addressed with quantitative methods, and part with qualitative methods.

## OVERALL STUDY DESIGN

<b>5. Theoretical framework</b>			
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.

<b>6. Study population and setting</b>			
Describes the population but uses no data. Does not describe how to gain access to setting or how to maintain field relations.	Describes the population using limited data. Describes how to gain access to setting but not how to maintain field relations.	Describes the population using data (age, income, race/ethnicity, location, etc.) Describes how to gain access to setting and maintain field relations.	Describes the population using data (age, income, race/ ethnicity, location, etc.) Demonstrates the appropriateness of selecting this population to answer stated research question. Describes how to gain access to setting and maintain field relations.

1	2	3	4
← Not Competent		Competent →	

## QUANTITATIVE APPROACH

<b>7. Quantitative design</b>			
States <b>either</b> research aim(s) or hypotheses but unclearly.	States research aim(s) <b>and</b> hypotheses but somewhat unclearly.	States clear research aim(s). States clear hypotheses. Argues how this design will answer research question(s).	States clear research aim(s). States clear hypothesis or hypotheses. Argues how this design will answer research question(s). Proposes alternative designs and/or justifies choice of current design.

<b>8. Quantitative data collection</b>			
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.

<b>9. Quantitative sampling strategy</b>			
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. Discusses importance of statistical power.

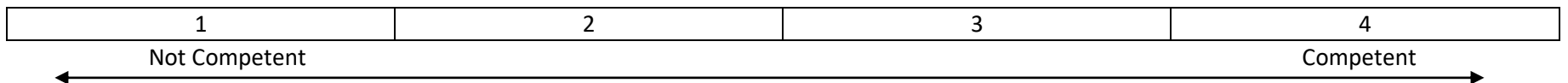
1	2	3	4
← Not Competent		Competent →	

<b>10. Quantitative data analysis</b>			
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 and procedures of data analysis. Describes data management plan. Identifies appropriate statistical tests. Justifies choice of statistical tests.

## QUALITATIVE APPROACH

<b>11. Qualitative design</b>			
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 aim(s). Argues how this design will answer research question(s). Proposes alternative designs and/or justifies choice of current design.

<b>12. Qualitative data collection</b>			
Methods inappropriate to answer aim(s).	Identifies appropriate methods to answer research aim(s). Does not state procedures. Discusses how to explore the constructs defined for study.	Identifies appropriate methods to answer research aim(s). States data collection procedures. Discusses how to explore the constructs defined for study.	Identifies appropriate methods to answer research aim(s). States data collection procedures and discusses how to explore the constructs defined for study. Evaluates advantages and disadvantages to methods.

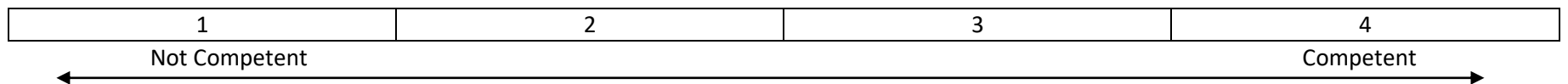


<b>13. Qualitative sampling strategy</b>			
Adequately describes how to select participants or places.	Adequately describes how to select participants or places. Proposes a selection strategy and explains it in sufficient detail.	Adequately describes how to select participants or places. Proposes a selection strategy and explains it in sufficient detail. Explains how to determine the number and characteristics of the participants.	Adequately describes how to select participants or places. Proposes a selection strategy and explains it in sufficient detail. Explains how to determine the number and characteristics of the participants. Justifies the selection strategy.

<b>14. Qualitative data analysis</b>			
Does not discuss a data analysis strategy.	Limited discussion about goals and procedures. Generally unclear about interpretive strategy.	Explains goals and principles of data analysis. Explains how to identify themes/new constructs, etc.	Clearly explains goals and procedures. Clearly explains how to identify themes/new constructs, etc. Clearly discusses the role of triangulation in this study.

## DISCUSSION

<b>15. Study limitations</b>			
Limited discussion on major limitations to study. Does not explain how to deal with study limitations. Does not propose different study design/methods to address stated limitations.	Identifies and explains major limitations to study. Does not explain how to deal with study limitations. Does not propose different study design/methods to address stated limitations.	Identifies and explains major limitations to study. Explains how to deal with study limitations. Does not propose different study design/methods to address stated limitations.	Identifies and explains major limitations to study (e.g., address issues of validity and reliability, or authenticity or lack of generalizability.) Explains how to deal with study limitations. Proposes different study design/methods to address stated limitations.



<b>16. Ethical issues</b>			
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.

<b>17. Study implications</b>			
Does not identify study implications.	Limited discussion on what the research intends to accomplish regarding social ecological, cultural, and social justice aspects of issue. Limited discussion on how research will impact public health issue.	Discusses what the research intends to accomplish regarding social ecological, cultural, and social justice aspects of issue. Explains how research will impact public health issue.	Discusses what the research intends to accomplish regarding social ecological, cultural, and social justice aspects of issue. Explains how research will impact public health issue. Discusses relative contribution of each methodological approach to issue.

<b>18. Dissemination and utilization</b>			
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.

