

**2024-2025**

**DEPARTMENT OF  
HEALTH POLICY AND MANAGEMENT**

**Graduate Student Handbook  
PhD program in  
Health Services Research and Policy**

October, 2024



**UNIVERSITY OF  
GEORGIA**  
College of Public Health

**University of Georgia Policy Statement**

The University of Georgia, College of Public Health and the Department of Health Policy and Management reserve the right to change policies, curricula, or any matter in this handbook without prior notice. Students will be notified of major changes as soon as practicable after they are decided.

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## **I. College of Public Health**

### **A. Establishment and Leadership**

UGA's College of Public Health (CPH) was established in 2005 by the University System of Georgia Board of Regents to address the public health issues within the State of Georgia. The College applied for accreditation in 2006. In Fall 2009, the College received full accreditation by CEPH and was again fully reaccredited twice in the Fall of 2014 and Fall of 2022. In December 2018, the College's Founding Dean, Phillip Williams, retired after 25 years of service to the University of Georgia and 14 years as Dean. From January-June 2019, Marsha Davis, Associate Dean for Outreach and Engagement and Professor in Health Promotion and Behavior served as the interim dean. After a national search, Dr. Davis was named the second dean of the College with her tenure beginning July 1, 2019. Three Assistant/Associate Deans support the missions of the college: Associate Dean for Research and Faculty Affairs; Associate Dean for Academic Affairs; Assistant Dean for Strategic Initiatives and Assessment; and the Director of Inclusive Excellence. The College is made up of four academic departments and 77 faculty who teach and conduct research in: Environmental Health Science, Epidemiology and Biostatistics, Health Policy and Management, and Health Promotion and Behavior. In addition, there are three interdisciplinary research institutes: Global Health Institute, Institute for Disaster Management (IDM), and Institute of Gerontology (IoG).

### **B. Degrees Offered in the College**

The College currently offers seven graduate degrees, including three masters (MPH, MHA, and MS) and five doctoral degrees (DrPH and PhDs in environmental health science, epidemiology and biostatistics, health promotion and behavior and Health Services Research and Policy) which are all on campus. In addition, the college also offers Online Masters in Public Health. A new PhD program in Health Services Research and Policy in the Department of Health Policy and Management was approved in the Spring of 2024. Faculty members also participate in the Interdisciplinary Toxicology Program, University of Georgia's Obesity Initiative, and other interdisciplinary initiatives. There are two undergraduate degrees in Environmental Health Science and Health Promotion and Behavior.

### **C. College Mission and Vision Statement**

**Mission Statement:** To advance the health of all. Through research, hands-on learning, and community engagement, we commit to improving the public's health in Georgia, our nation, and the world.

**Vision Statement:** A healthier, safer, more equitable world for all in Georgia and the world.

The College has also adopted several core values. These values are: Collaboration, Compassion, Courage to promote and protect the health of all, Data-driven for assessing progress toward goals, Diversity in backgrounds, culture, and experience,

Engagement with communities and populations, Equity to ensure democratic processes, equal opportunity, and justice for all, Excellence in quality of work, Inclusion of all voices and all perspectives in all endeavors, Innovation, creative solutions and novel approaches for advancing public health, Integrity in all interactions, Perseverance in addressing the challenges of public health, Respect the rights of individuals in the community, and Social Justice for all by breaking down individual, structural, and institutional barriers to health.

## **II. The Department of Health Policy and Management (HPAM)**

### **A. Establishment and Leadership**

The Department of Health Policy and Management is the youngest among the four departments in the College and was established in 2008. The department is currently led by Department Head and John A. Drew Professor in Healthcare Administration Dr. Mahmud Khan. Dr. Khan is an applied economist by training with a PhD from Stanford University, his area of expertise is in the field of health economics, economic evaluation, disparity in the utilization of health care services, maternal and child health and large scale nationally representative health sector surveys.

### **B. HPAM Faculty**

The [faculty](#) in the department conduct research in the areas of public health, health services research, economic evaluation, health economics, childhood obesity, chronic disease and cancer, child and adolescent health, aging, Alzheimer's disease and related dementias substance use disorder, HIV, social determinants of health, health workforce, and emergency preparedness. These faculty members have extensive experience leading and co-leading interdisciplinary grants and contracts to better inform healthcare policy making and healthcare management decisions at the local, state, and national levels. HPAM also houses the [Economic Evaluation Research Group](#) and shares space and resources with this working group of researchers. There are currently eleven full time research and teaching faculty, four full time teaching faculty, and several part-time faculty in the Department. The department functions are supported by four full-time staffs. Please visit the [department website](#) for up-to-date information on faculty and staff.

### **C. HPAM Facility and Resources**

HPAM occupies 10,000 square feet in the University of Georgia's new Health Science Campus. This current space has 36 finished private offices, 15 large staff areas, 3 conference rooms, 7 large student spaces, and one classroom. This location also provides ample space in which to maintain all paper and electronic copies of data, including transcripts and surveys that are archived in secure data storage files in private, locked offices.

### **D. Degrees Offered in the Department**

The Department currently offers the DrPH program- an advanced professional degree program for professionals working in the fields of public health and health care; the Master of Health Administration for students pursuing careers in leadership and management positions in hospitals, health systems, consulting firms, and other healthcare delivery system; and the Masters in Public Health in Health Policy and Management programs and minor in Health Policy and Management. The Department also oversees the Certificate in Obesity and Weight Management, and the Certificate in Disaster Management. The department has also launched the PhD program in Health Services Research and Policy from Summer 2024.

## **E. HPAM Mission**

The mission of the Department of Health Policy and Management is to prepare its students to be leaders in the public health field. Areas of study include policy analysis, public health law and ethics, health economics, health care finance, public health and health care system management with the aim of improving health care quality and access.

## **III. The PhD Program in Health Services Research and Policy**

The Department of Health Policy and Management offers a Doctor of Philosophy (PhD) in Health Services Research and Policy. The requirements of the program are explained in this section.

### **A. Educational Goals of the program**

The PhD program in Health Services Research and Policy is designed for students who are interested in a career in academia- teaching and research in private or public universities, governmental and public agency settings, and research positions related to health policy, health care management, health services research, health economics, etc. Students enrolled in this program will examine the organization and financing of health systems and services, assess the impact of health policies on population health, evaluate programs and policies to provide evidence during the policy-making process, and inform local, state, and national policies. Furthermore, it is not limited to studying the impact of upstream policies on population health. The program participants will also study the social determinants of health, health disparities, and challenges of adopting policies downstream, striving for equitable impact. The students will follow a holistic approach to clinical-community integration. The range of interest is not limited to domestic health topics but extends to global health. The program is interdisciplinary in nature, nurturing students to expand on specific areas they are interested in, such as gerontology, disaster management, policy and program evaluation, and health management. Regardless of the focus area, the program will provide an interdisciplinary application of the social and behavioral sciences to health issues.

The goal of the program is to prepare graduate students to play leading scientific roles to address many challenges of healthcare and healthcare systems in the nation and around the globe. Graduates will make significant contributions in the fields of

health services research and health policy through teaching, research, policy practice, and leadership.

## **B. Student Obligations**

Students interested in this PhD program must carefully read this handbook and meet all the requirements and deadlines. Students are required to meet with the PhD Program Coordinator at least once each semester to ensure they are on track and have met the program obligations.

## **C. Academic Honesty**

The students in this program must follow and abide by the university's Culture of Honesty

“A Culture of Honesty is the academic honesty policy and procedures at UGA. These procedures are designed to protect academic integrity while providing due process when suspected violations of the academic honesty policy occur”

UGA seeks to promote and ensure academic honesty and personal integrity among students and the university community. Academic honesty is vital to the very fabric and integrity of the university.

For more information please visit [Academic Honesty, University of Georgia](#)

## **D. Culture of Belonging**

*You belong here*, be who you are at the Department of Health Policy and Management and at the College of Public Health. Inclusive Excellence is at the core in the University, in the College and in the Department. [Reach out to us!](#) or the [University of Georgia Office of Student Affairs](#).

## **E. Admission Criteria and Application Requirements**

The [University of Georgia Graduate School](#) (referred to as Graduate School hereafter) policies govern the administration of the Ph.D. degree program. This handbook will supplement but not supersede the University of Georgia Graduate School Policies. Students should become familiar with the Graduate School regulations and policies contained in their website. Below are a set of requirements that pertain to the admission and application requirements:

### Pre-requisites

1. Students applying to the University of Georgia must be accepted by [the Graduate School](#). Specific to this PhD program, all potential students holding a Master's degree in areas related to Public Health (for example social/behavioral sciences, psychology, economics, epidemiology, management, policy, biological sciences, and health professions etc.) are eligible to apply for admission. We also encourage students from a diverse field of training but looking to advance their career in public health, health services research, and policy to apply to this program.
2. Must have earned at least a 3.0 grade point average (based on a 4.0 scale) in

previous graduate course work.

### Application Requirements

1. Graduate School Transcript
2. Foreign applicants whose native language is not English must submit the results of the Test of English as a Foreign Language (TOEFL) scores or other equivalent English language test. The minimum English proficiency scores required can be found on the [UGA Graduate School website](#). If prior academic experience in the U.S. illustrates that the student is proficient in English, this requirement may be waived, with concurrence from the Graduate School.
3. Three letters of recommendation must be submitted from practitioners (academic, industry, for-profit, non-profit, and government sector) who can reflect upon the applicant's prior academic and professional performance. At least one from experts in academia.
4. The applicant must provide a career goal statement with a focus on the applicant's research interests and how the PhD program will help in achieving the career goals.
5. A current curriculum vita
6. Scholarly/academic writing sample
7. Graduate Record Examination (GRE) score is not required but applicants are encouraged to submit GRE scores (GMAT scores may be substituted for GRE).

Short-listed applicants may be interviewed by departmental faculty members to ensure that the applicant will be a good fit with the ongoing research interests of the faculty members.

## F. Courses and Curriculum

PhD in Health Services Research and Policy requires completion of 50 hours of post-master's course work, including 12 hours of doctoral research and dissertation hours (HPAM9300).

The 50 hours course requirements include

- 15 hours of departmental core courses,
- 9 hours of core courses in methods, and
- 9 hours of elective courses that will define the concentration area,
- 4 hours of doctoral seminar (1 credit each),
- 1 hour of GradFirst seminar, and
- 12 hours of doctoral dissertation courses.

The course work is designed to consist of 16 or more hours of 8000 and 9000 level courses in addition to research, dissertation writing, and directed study.

**No grade below C will be accepted on the program of study and the student must maintain a 3.0 average on the transcript and program of study.**

These guidelines adhere to the [University of Georgia guidelines for PhD program](#).

### Departmental and Methods core courses

***Students must complete the departmental core and the methods core within the first two years of study, unless waived based on prior graduate work (see transfer credits section below).*** The departmental and methods core requirements are essential for passing the comprehensive examinations. Students may repeat a core doctoral course in the department only once. Not receiving a grade of B or better in a doctoral departmental core course on the second attempt will lead to automatic termination from the program. Enrollment in all courses requires the approval of the PhD program coordinator or the academic advisor of the student.

### Public Health Core Course

A 3 credit hour Public Health core course (PBHL 7100) is required for all students. Students with a MPH or an equivalent degree from a School of Public Health are not required to complete the public health core course. This is in addition to the 50 credit hours for the PhD degree.

### Electives/Research concentration

Outside of the departmental and methods cores, the students are required to identify three graduate level (at the 7000 or higher level) elective courses that define the research concentration of the student. The concentration area is defined by the student in consultation with the academic advisor and/or the PhD coordinator. The courses can be taken from any department in UGA provided that the courses justify a focused interest/concentration and are relevant the students dissertation research.

**PhD Program course requirements (50 hours)**

|   |  |
|---|--|
| <b>Graduate School course: GradFirst GRSC 7001</b>  | <b>1 hour</b>                                    |
| <b>HPAM Core Requirements</b>   | <b>15 hours</b>                                  |
| HPAM 7600, Health Economics I*  | 3 credit hours                                   |
| <i>HPAM 8600, Advanced Health Economics</i>   | 3 credit hours                                   |
| <i>HPAM 8400, Advanced Policy Analysis in Public Health</i>   | 3 credit hours                                   |
| HPAM 8340 (or HPAM 8340E), Social Determinants of Health and Health Disparities   | 3 credit hours                                   |
| HPAM 7760, Public Health Law and Ethics for Public Health Practitioners   | 3 credit hours                                   |
| <b>Methods Core Requirements</b>  | <b>9 hours</b>                                   |
| <i>HPAM 8300, Research Methods in Health Policy</i>   | 3 credit hours                                   |
| <i>HPAM 8350, Research Methods II in Health Policy (new)</i>  | 3 credit hours                                   |
| <i>BIOS 8010, Regression and Analysis of Variance</i>   | 3 credit hours                                   |
| <b>Seminars and Doctoral Research</b>   | <b>16 hours**</b>                                |
| HPAM 8011, HPAM 8021, HPAM 8031 and HPAM 8041: Sequence of Doctoral Seminar courses for preparing students in writing research proposals and articles for publication | 1 credit hour/semester for the first 4 semesters |
| HPAM 9300, Doctoral Dissertation  | 12 or more hours                                 |
| <b>Electives**</b>  | <b>9 hours</b>                                   |
| <b>Total</b>  | <b>50 hours</b>                                  |

\*For students who have completed a master’s program in health policy or health services research, HPAM 7600 and HPAM 7760 may be waived.

\*\* Electives will be selected by the student in consultation with the major professor and dissertation committee members if applicable. Electives will define the concentration area and must align with the dissertation research. Courses across campuses may be taken as elective courses in consultation with the doctoral committee.

\*\* Additionally, student can take GRSC 7770 Graduate Teaching Assistant Seminar to satisfy one of the requirements of “teaching experience” for doctoral students. See section (O) for details.

Transfer credits

With the exception of doctoral level competency courses and doctoral dissertation research, up to 12 hours may be transferred from previous relevant graduate coursework with the approval of the student’s academic advisor and the PhD program coordinator. No more than six hours can be waived if the hours were applied toward a graduate degree. Students may transfer an additional six credit hours of relevant graduate level course-work if the credit hours were not applied towards a degree). To formalize transfer credits from a prior program, a student will have to submit the Preliminary Doctoral Program of Study that lists all courses the student plans to take at UGA during the doctoral program, including 12 hours of dissertation hours. The student must also submit a memo to the PhD program coordinator listing the relevant graduate courses taken in UGA or elsewhere that are being used to reduce the credit hour requirements.

**Table: A Model PhD Program of study (recommended sequence for required courses to allow students to complete the written and oral comprehensive exam on time)**

| Course                  | Course #                    |   | Hours     | Year 1    |           | Year 2    |           | Year 3               |          | Year 4   |   |
|-------------------------|-----------------------------|---|-----------|-----------|-----------|-----------|-----------|----------------------|----------|----------|---|
|                         |                             |   |           | F         | S         | F         | S         | F                    | S        | F        | S |
| TA training             | GRSC 7770                   | TA training*                                      | 1         |           |           |           |           |                      |          |          |   |
| GradFirst Seminar       | GRSC 7001                   | Seminar   | 1         | X         |           |           |           |                      |          |          |   |
| PH Core                 | PBHL 7100                   | Public Health***                                  | 3         |           |           |           |           |                      |          |          |   |
| HPAM Core               | HPAM 7600                   | Health Economics I***                             | 3         |           | X         |           |           |                      |          |          |   |
| HPAM Core               | HPAM 8400                   | Policy Analysis                                   | 3         |           | X         |           |           |                      |          |          |   |
| HPAM Core               | HPAM 8600                   | Health Economics II                               | 3         |           |           | X         |           |                      |          |          |   |
| HPAM Core               | HPAM 8340                   | Social Determinants of Health                     | 3         | X         |           |           |           |                      |          |          |   |
| HPAM Core               | HPAM 7760                   | Public Health and Healthcare Ethics               | 3         |           |           | X         |           |                      |          |          |   |
| Methods Core            | HPAM 8300                   | Research Methods I                                | 3         | X         |           |           |           |                      |          |          |   |
| Methods Core            | HPAM 8350                   | Research Methods II (prerequisite BIOS 8010)      | 3         |           | X         |           |           |                      |          |          |   |
| Methods Core            | BIOS 8010                   | Regression and Analysis of Variance               | 3         | X         |           |           |           |                      |          |          |   |
| Elective^               |                             |   | 3         |           |           | X         |           |                      |          |          |   |
| Elective^               |                             |   | 3         |           |           |           | X         |                      |          |          |   |
| Elective^               |                             |   | 3         |           |           |           | X         |                      |          |          |   |
| Seminar/ Research       | HPAM 8011, 8021, 8031, 8041 | Seminar I, II, III and IV                         | 4         | X         | X         | X         | X         |                      |          |          |   |
| Seminar/ Research       | HPAM 9000                   | Doctoral Research (3 to 6 cr/semester, if needed) | 6         |           |           |           | 3         | 3                    |          |          |   |
| Seminar/ Research       | HPAM 9300 <sup>++</sup>     | Doctoral Dissertation (3 to 9 credits/semester)   | 6         |           |           |           |           |                      | 3        | 3        |   |
| <b>Total (required)</b> |                             |   | <b>50</b> | <b>11</b> | <b>10</b> | <b>10</b> | <b>10</b> | <b>3<sup>c</sup></b> | <b>3</b> | <b>3</b> |   |

<sup>+</sup>The credits do not count towards the 50 credits required for the degree

<sup>++</sup>To be taken after completing and passing the oral and written comprehensive examination

\*Students may take GRSC7770 to fulfill a criterion for teaching requirement (see teaching requirement section O below)

\*\*This course is required only for students entering the Ph.D. with a non-public health degree or without public health core taken elsewhere, the minimum credit will be 53 with this course)

\*\*\*HPAM may waive HPAM7600 requirement on a case by case basis

<sup>^</sup> Elective courses can be taken at any time in consultation with the academic advisor.

<sup>c</sup> Written comprehensive examination

## G. Written Comprehensive Examination

The written part of the comprehensive examination must be taken following the completion of core course requirements (departmental core and methods core *italicized in the Program of Study table above*). *The written comprehensive examination needs to be taken no later than 4<sup>th</sup> regular semester after matriculation. The comprehensive examination will be offered in May every year. For a student starting in spring, if PhD core courses (departmental and methods) are completed, student may take the comprehensive examination in the 3<sup>rd</sup> semester.*

The written exam is a cumulative exam that tests students on the content areas of the core courses. The examination will be given as two separate sections:

- one section on health economics and policy analysis/evaluation, and
- the second section on quantitative methods.

The comprehensive examination will be offered once per year, in May. Specific dates in May will be selected each year and the students will be notified of the examination date in March (of the same semester). The comprehensive examination is taken in the Department of Health Policy and Management and is closed book, unless indicated otherwise for a specific section. One or both sections of the examination may require the use of statistical software for the analysis of data. Each section of the comprehensive examination is graded by a faculty member of the department teaching the core (departmental and methods) courses.

Students will be notified of their results in writing within two weeks of taking the examination. Examination results will be reported as Pass or Fail. A student may request re-evaluation of their results in any or all the sections of the comprehensive examination in writing (to the PhD Program Coordinator) within a week of receiving the result (the date the letter is sent to the student email will be counted as the date the exam result is received by the student). Once the re-evaluation request is received, the examination section(s) being contested will be sent to a new examiner(s) and if the result assigned by the new examiner matches (Pass or Fail) the result assigned before re-evaluation, the original result will be considered final. If the result assigned by the new examiner is different from the original result, a third examiner will review the exam section. The result assigned by the third grader will be considered final. The PhD coordinator will notify the student(s) in writing of the final results (Pass or Fail) for each of the sections after the re-evaluations. All the re-evaluations will be completed within two weeks of receipt of the formal request for re-evaluation.

If a student fails in either one of the areas of the written part of comprehensive examination, the examinations must be repeated the next time they are offered. A grade of “Fail” in any one section of the comprehensive examination in the second try will mean termination from the program.

## **H. Oral Comprehensive Examination**

The oral comprehensive examination will be administered early during the Fall semester (preferably in the fall semester following the semester the student passed their written comprehensive exam) by the comprehensive examination committee. If the student has already identified a faculty advisor, the comprehensive examination committee will co-opt the academic advisor as an additional member of the committee for the student. If the student has already identified a dissertation committee with the academic faculty adviser, this committee may serve as the comprehensive examination committee. The students must pass the written comprehensive examination prior to taking the oral comprehensive examination. The examination will be scheduled to occur before September 30<sup>th</sup> in the fall following the passing of the written comprehensive in the preceding spring. The contents of the oral comprehensive examination are as follows:

1. The oral part of the examination will include presentation and discussion on a National Institutes of Health (NIH) RO3 type proposal on a research topic prepared by the student (see Annex A for the organization of the proposal). This proposal could be the first partial draft of the potential dissertation prospectus. The draft may not be a substitute for the dissertation proposal or oral proposal defense (see section J below). The notice of oral comprehensive examination must be submitted to the graduate school and must come from the graduate coordinator at least two weeks prior to the exam ([see graduate school requirements](#)) (See G168 Written and Oral Comprehensive Examination).
2. Each member of the Comprehensive Examination Committee will vote “pass” or “fail” after the oral examination. Majority of members must vote “pass” to receive a passing grade in the oral comprehensive examination.
3. The PhD program coordinator will report the results to the Graduate School (See G168 Written and Oral Comprehensive Examination).
4. In case of failure in oral comprehensive examination, the student will be allowed to rewrite the RO3 type proposal based on the comments received. The comprehensive examination committee will review the resubmitted documents and assign a grade. Failure to pass the examination on the revised draft will lead to termination from the doctoral program. Another oral presentation may be required, if needed. The re-examination must be scheduled within the same semester that the oral examination was taken the first time.
5. The student can apply for doctoral candidacy after passing the oral comprehensive exam.

## **I. Dissertation Research hours**

Students may take doctoral dissertation research credit hours (HPAM 9300) after successful completion of written and oral comprehensive examinations. HPAM 9300 must be taken under the supervision of a faculty member of the Department who would most likely be the Chair of the Dissertation Committee. If completion of the comprehensive examination is delayed, students may have to complete more than the required minimum credit hours of course-work in the PhD program. Students must start discussing formation of the PhD Dissertation Committee prior to the completion of the comprehensive examinations so that the student can start taking

Doctoral Dissertation credit hours under the supervision of the PhD Committee chair.

In the first semester with HPAM 9300, students start working towards identifying a dissertation research area or topic. A concept note with the research idea, reference list and sources of data should be submitted to the supervisor no later than the second semester of enrolling in HPAM 9300. Not submitting the full concept note by the end of second semester of HPAM 9300 will lead to an “unsatisfactory” grade in the course.

By the end of the third semester, the student must prepare chapter 1 of the proposed dissertation research and submit the chapter to the supervisor for approval in order to receive “satisfactory” grade. Thereafter, a student signing up for HPAM 9300 must show consistent and substantial progress towards the completion of proposal and proposal defense, and then towards final dissertation. If a student fails to demonstrate substantial progress in her/his doctoral research, the faculty member in charge of the HPAM 9300 section may assign an unsatisfactory grade. Receiving unsatisfactory grade in more than two semesters (i.e., three semesters) in HPAM 9300 will lead to termination from the doctoral program.

## **J. Dissertation Proposal Defense**

Steps in this process include development of a dissertation concept paper, identification of major professor if not already identified, appointment of a Doctoral Dissertation Committee if not already formed, submission of the dissertation proposal, and defense of the dissertation proposal.

The student must submit a research proposal to a faculty member within the Department of Health Policy and Management, with the request that the faculty member serve as the Dissertation Committee Chair if a Chair has not already been identified prior to the comprehensive exam.

### Advisory committee formation

The Dissertation Committee Chair, who must be a tenured or tenure-track or clinical track faculty member of the University affiliated with the Department of Health Policy and Management will guide the student in selecting no less than two additional Committee members. The Committee formation is a mutual process between the student and the major professor that is student led, the student must consult with the dissertation advisor in selecting the remaining Committee members and reach out and request them to serve on the Dissertation Committee. The Committee will share responsibilities to monitor graduate student progress and guide the student toward timely completion of their degree program. The Committee must consist of no less than three members, of whom 50% or more must be from the department of Health Policy and Management and at least one member from another academic department in the University in a related research area or providing subject matter or analytic expertise to the student’s dissertation topic. Selection of the outside faculty member(s) must be consistent with the Graduate School policy on academic qualifications for Committee membership.

Once the members have informally agreed to serve, the student must complete Dissertation Committee appointment form and submit it to the PhD Program Coordinator through the Chair of the Dissertation Committee (The PhD Program Coordinator will submit the Advisory Committee G130 form).

The Dissertation Committee must receive the dissertation proposal at least 2 weeks in advance of the proposal defense. Student must submit an outline following the graduate school guidelines with a first draft with no less than three chapters: an introduction chapter, which briefly outlines the importance of the topic and the questions to be examined, a chapter on literature review, and a chapter outlining the theoretical and empirical methodology to be followed including sources of data and descriptive analysis of the data to be used. After the Dissertation Committee (or Chair) has reviewed the proposal and determined that the proposal is ready to be presented, the proposal defense may proceed. The student should be prepared to give a 30-45 minute presentation of the proposal to the Committee. The proposal defense generally takes about two hours.

The student will be notified of the outcome of proposal defense after the presentation of the proposal. The student may receive a “pass” on the proposal defense, which allows the student to pursue the dissertation research; a “qualified pass” which results in the student being given some additional remedial work to complete that is supervised by the Dissertation Committee Chair before being allowed to pursue the dissertation research; or a “fail”. If the student fails the defense, he or she must start the process over. The Dissertation Chair, PhD Program Director, and other Committee members will determine if a new Committee is to be formed and whether a new dissertation topic must be selected or if the current topic needs major revision. A student may only be allowed to do proposal defense twice. Failure on the second try of proposal defense will mean dismissal from the program.

The Chair of the Dissertation Committee or the student will notify the PhD Coordinator of the date and time of the proposal defense at least 10 working days prior to the defense. The proposal defense announcement will then be posted on the departmental website. The dissertation proposal defense is open to all (students, faculty and community members), although the Doctoral Committee members will deliberate in private to evaluate the performance of the student and to decide whether to pass or fail the dissertation proposal or recommend revisions.

## **K. Dissertation Defense**

Doctoral candidates are required to prepare and successfully defend a dissertation based on original research. When the research is completed, the student and Committee members meet, and the dissertation is defended. The dissertation and its defense must be approved by a majority (> 50%; i.e. 2 of 3 of a 3-member committee; 3 of 4 of a 4-member Committee) of Committee members. The process of arranging the dissertation defense is similar to the process of organizing the proposal defense. Dissertation defense is also open to all students, faculty and community members. After the oral presentation of the dissertation there will be a question and answer session. Committee members will ask questions first and then the floor will be open to others in the audience. At the end

of the Q&A session, the Chair of the Dissertation Committee will excuse others to meet as a committee and evaluate the student's performance. At this stage, the Committee can choose one of the following four options: (a) Dissertation accepted as drafted without any changes (b) Dissertation accepted with minor changes (c) Dissertation to be accepted with major changes (d) Dissertation not accepted as submitted. If the dissertation is accepted with major changes, all Committee members should be provided a revised version of dissertation and the Committee may decide whether to accept the revised version with or without another defense. The student will be terminated from the program if the student fails the dissertation defense twice. The Chair of the Committee will notify the student and the PhD Coordinator in writing of the outcome of the dissertation defense. The announcement must come from the graduate coordinator's office at least two weeks prior to the exam. The dissertation defense must be completed at least 30 days prior to graduation.

[Please check the Graduate School website for timeline to meet the requirements for graduation.](#)

## **L. Minimum GPA Requirement**

All graduate students must maintain a GPA of 3.0 or better during the entire duration of graduate studies. Students facing academic difficulties are strongly advised to discuss their issues with academic advisors. If necessary, students may take a leave of absence for one or two semesters before taking additional courses. A student will be placed under academic probation if the overall GPA becomes less than 3.0 in any semester. In addition, graduate students in the Department of Health Policy and Management must maintain a grade of B or better in all graded courses. If a student receives an unsatisfactory grade or less than B in three courses, the student will be placed under academic probation. A fourth unsatisfactory grade or less than B will result in termination from the program.

## **M. Enrollment Requirements and Time Limits**

### Minimum Enrollment

All enrolled students pursuing graduate degrees at the University of Georgia must register for a minimum of 3 hours of credit during any semester in which they use University facilities and/or faculty/staff time. This includes semesters in which they are completing comprehensive examinations and defending their thesis or dissertation.

### Continuous Enrollment Policy

All enrolled graduate students must maintain continuous enrollment from matriculation until completion of all degree requirements. Continuous enrollment is defined as registering for a minimum of three (3) credits in at least two semesters per academic year (Fall, Spring, Summer) until the degree is attained or status as a degree-seeking graduate student is terminated.

Doctoral students must maintain enrollment during fall and spring semesters (breaking only for summer semesters) until the residency requirement has been met.

The residency requirement for the PhD degree is interpreted as 30 hours of consecutive graduate course work that is included on the approved program of study. All students must be enrolled for at least three graduate credits in the semester in which degree requirements are completed.

Doctoral students must complete their studies within six years of matriculation or must repeat course work. Transferred credits must be within the six-year period as well. Doctoral dissertation must be completed within five years after the acceptance into doctoral candidacy. If the dissertation is not completed within the timeframe, students will have to retake a comprehensive examination. If a student is accepted after applying for readmission, the academic rules and standards in effect at the time of readmission will supersede those in effect at the time of initial admission.

## **N. Doctoral Seminars**

Doctoral seminar sessions are offered in a sequence of four seminars and students must take these offerings sequentially. By the end of the seminar sequence, student will develop a RO3 type proposal.

Seminar I, Faculty presentations – Each week, one faculty member will present a research topic of interest and/or on an area of expertise. The presentation should provide an introductory overview of the research and also details of one (or more) research projects in which the faculty member will present the specific aims, conceptual model and research strategy for the project. Seminar 1 has two goals: i) to introduce students to faculty and their research early in the program, potentially creating connections for research and mentorship ii) to model research concepts and familiarize students with research steps which will be covered in upcoming seminars. The faculty presentations must have all the required sections of a good research proposal/study: (a) Introduction, (b) specific aims, (c) research strategy (significance and methodology/approach), (d) empirical analysis conducted and (e) results/policy implications/conclusions

Seminar II, Specific Aims – Students will spend the semester working on how to craft specific aims. This seminar will provide an opportunity for students to begin to formalize their research interests and fellow students will serve as reviewers of their work. The final product by the end of the seminar would be 2-3 well-developed specific aims.

Seminar III, Background and Conceptual Framework – Students will focus on how to write the background of the research question they will identify and create the conceptual frameworks and how to use a conceptual framework to underpin their research objectives. A few frameworks will be reviewed throughout the course of the seminar and students will continue to develop their aims by selecting a supporting conceptual framework.

Seminar IV, Research Strategy – The final seminar will cover concepts related to research strategy. Students in this final seminar will explore the statistical approach and methods that could be used to explore their specific aims.

### **O. Teaching and mentoring experience requirements for PhD program**

All doctoral students in the PhD program are required to participate in teaching activities of the department. The students are expected to complete the teaching-related requirements with or without compensation. The requirements must be completed between the time of matriculation and the dissertation defense. The requirements can be fulfilled by completing any three of the following five items:

- a. Completing the Teaching Assistant training course
- b. Working as a teaching assistant for at least one course in the department,
- c. Presenting at the doctoral student seminar series arranged by the department and participating in the seminar series regularly
- d. Presenting in regional, national and international conferences (either poster or oral presentation)
- e. Guest lectures
- f. Participating in mentoring program in the College or University

These requirements related to teaching must be satisfied before the student can request a date for the dissertation defense. Students should submit a letter with documentations to the PhD Program Coordinator indicating that the requirements have been completed.

### **P. Research experience requirement for PhD program**

PhD students are required to work for at least two semesters at 10 hours per week or one semester at 20 hours a week as research assistants in research projects of departmental faculty members. Since not all research initiatives of faculty members are funded, students may not be compensated for the work. Research experience may also be satisfied by publishing an article in a peer-reviewed journal where the student will take a leadership role in conceptualizing and drafting the paper or submitting a research proposal for funding. This requirement should be completed prior to the dissertation proposal defense date. The student must submit a letter to the PhD Program Coordinator from the mentoring faculty mentor to indicate the successful completion of research involvement requirement. Doctoral students are also encouraged to submit abstracts to national and international conferences in collaboration with faculty members of the department.

## **Annex A: Proposal Instructions for Proposal to be Submitted Prior to the Oral Examination**

### **1. Title of proposal:**

### **2. Project Summary (Abstract):**

- No longer than 30 lines of text.
- Summary of the proposed activity suitable for dissemination to the public.
- Briefly state the specific aims and research design.
- Provide info on the significance (i.e., the gap the study is addressing and the public health significance).

### **3. Project Narrative:**

- No more than 3 sentences.
- Describe the relevance to public health.
- Be succinct and use plain language appropriate for a lay audience.

### **4. Specific Aims:** 1-page limit. The Specific Aims do NOT count toward your Research Strategy, which has a 6-page limit. Concisely state the goals of the proposed research. Summarize the expected outcomes, including the impact of research on fields involved. Succinctly list objectives of proposed research (e.g., to test a hypothesis, create a novel design, solve a specific problem, etc.).

### **5. Research Strategy:** Cannot exceed 6 pages. This section includes the following new headings: Significance, Innovation, Approach.

**A. Significance:** (i) Explain the importance of the problem or critical barrier to progress in the field that the proposed project addresses, (ii) Explain how the proposed project will improve scientific knowledge, technical capability, and/or clinical practice in one or more broad fields, (iii) Describe how the concepts, methods, technologies, treatments, services, or preventative interventions that drive this field will be changed if the proposed aims are achieved.

**B. Innovation:** (i) Explain how the application challenges and seeks to shift current research or clinical practice paradigms, (ii) Describe any novel theoretical concepts, approaches or methodologies, instrumentation or intervention(s) to be developed or used, and any advantage over existing methodologies, instrumentation or intervention(s). (iii) Explain any refinements, improvements, or new applications of theoretical concepts, approaches or methodologies, instrumentation or interventions.

**C. Approach:** (i) Describe the overall strategy, methodology, and analyses to be used to accomplish the specific aims of the project. Include how the data will be collected, analyzed, and interpreted, (ii) Discuss potential problems, alternative strategies, and benchmarks for success anticipated to achieve the aims

## Annex B: Proposal Grading Rubric for Comprehensive Examination Committee

|  |     |
|--|-----|
| <b>Title of proposal:</b> Limited to 81 characters including spaces and punctuation marks (-1 point if not in compliance)  |     |
| <b>Project Summary (Abstract):</b><br>No longer than 30 lines of text. (-1 point if not in compliance)<br>Summarize the proposed activity suitable for dissemination to the public. (0-1)<br>Briefly state the specific aims and research design. (0-1)<br>Provide info on the significance (literature gap study and the public health significance).(0-2)  | /4  |
| <b>Project Narrative:</b><br>No more than 3 sentences. (minus 2 if not in compliance)<br>Describe the relevance to public health. (0-2)<br>Write succinctly and use plain language appropriate for a lay audience. (0-2)   | /4  |
| <b>Specific Aims:</b> 1 page limit. (-2 if not in compliance with page limit) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Concisely state the larger purpose that the proposed research will serve. (0-4)</li> <li>• Summarize the expected outcomes including impact of research on fields involved (0-4)</li> <li>• Succinctly list the specific aims/objectives of the proposed research (0-4)</li> </ul>  | /12 |
| <b>Research Strategy:</b> Cannot exceed 6 pages. (-10 if not in compliance with page limit)  |     |
| <b>Significance:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Explain the importance of the problem or critical barrier to progress in the field that the proposed project addresses, (0-10)</li> <li>• Explain how the proposed project will improve scientific knowledge, technical capability, and/or clinical practice in one or more broad fields, (0-10)</li> <li>• Describe how the concepts, methods, technologies, treatments, services, or preventative interventions that drive this field will be changed if the proposed aims are achieved. (0-10)</li> </ul>   | /30 |
| <b>Innovation:</b> At least one of the 3 items addressed in the innovation section. (0-10): <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Explain how the application challenges and seeks to shift current research or clinical practice paradigms,</li> <li>• Describe any novel theoretical concepts, approaches or methodologies, instrumentation or intervention(s) to be developed or used, and any advantage over existing methodologies, instrumentation or intervention(s).</li> <li>• Explain any refinements, improvements, or new applications of theoretical concepts, approaches or methodologies, instrumentation or interventions.</li> </ul> | /10 |
| <b>Approach:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Describe the overall strategy (0-10)</li> <li>• Detail proposed methodology including data source, collection method and variables (0-10)</li> <li>• Propose analyses to be used to accomplish the specific aims of the project and interpretation (0-10)</li> <li>• Identify potential problems, alternative strategies, and benchmarks for success anticipated to achieve the aims (0-10)</li> </ul>   | /40 |
| <b>Total Score</b>   |     |
| <b>Overall Recommendation</b><br><b>Pass</b> <input type="checkbox"/><br><b>Revise and resubmit</b> <input type="checkbox"/><br><b>Fail</b> <input type="checkbox"/>   |     |

