

2022-2023

**DEPARTMENT OF  
HEALTH SERVICES POLICY AND MANAGEMENT**

**Graduate Student Handbook  
Ph.D. Program**

Approved August 2022



**UNIVERSITY OF  
SOUTH CAROLINA**

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**Arnold School of Public Health**

This Handbook of the programs, policies, and practices of the Department of Health Services Policy and Management is not an official University document. If there are discrepancies between this Handbook and the University's Graduate Studies Bulletin, the Graduate Studies Bulletin supersedes.

HEALTH SERVICES POLICY AND MANAGEMENT  
Ph.D. STUDENT HANDBOOK: 2021-2022

## Contents

I.	The Arnold School of Public Health.....	1
II.	The Department of Health Services Policy and Management .....	2
	<b>A. Mission, Vision, Goals, and Objectives .....</b>	<b>2</b>
III.	Doctoral Program .....	3
	<b>A. Educational Goals of the Doctor of Philosophy (PhD) program.....</b>	<b>3</b>
	<b>B. Program-Related Information: Doctor of Philosophy.....</b>	<b>4</b>
	Admission Criteria and Application Requirements.....	4
	Financial support	
	Advice to Students.....	5
	PhD Curriculum .....	5
	Doctoral Seminar (HSPM 800 sessions) .....	6
	Teaching requirements for PhD program.....	7
	Research experience requirement .....	7
	<b>C. Degree Requirements.....</b>	<b>8</b>
	<b>D. Time Limits.....</b>	<b>8</b>
	<b>E. Qualifying Examination .....</b>	<b>8</b>
	<b>F. Comprehensive Examination.....</b>	<b>9</b>
	Flow chart for PhD studies (first two years) .....	10
	<b>G. Dissertation Proposal Defense .....</b>	<b>10</b>
	<b>H. Dissertation Defense.....</b>	<b>11</b>
	<b>I. Doctoral Residency Requirement .....</b>	<b>12</b>
IV.	Student Responsibilities and Code of Ethics .....	12
	<b>A. Academic Progression.....</b>	<b>12</b>
	<b>B. Academic termination.....</b>	<b>13</b>
	<b>C. Academic Integrity .....</b>	<b>13</b>
	<b>D. Professional Responsibility.....</b>	<b>13</b>
V.	INFORMATION ON DOCTORAL DISSERTATION.....	14
	Definition of a HSPM Doctoral Dissertation .....	14
	Concept Paper development .....	14
	Dissertation Formats .....	15
	<b>Annex A: R03 Proposal Instructions for Comprehensive Examination.....</b>	<b>16</b>
	<b>Annex B: R03 Grading Rubric for Evaluating Qualifying Examination.....</b>	<b>17</b>
	<b>Annex C: Comprehensive Examination Completion Form .....</b>	<b>20</b>

## **I. The Arnold School of Public Health**

The Arnold School of Public Health, of the University of South Carolina, was established in 1974 in response to a mandate from the South Carolina Legislature. The first students were admitted in late 1974. The growing number of students necessitated a reorganization of the School and the permanent formation of a full-time faculty, in July 1977. In 2000, we became the Arnold School of Public Health, in honor of a generous donation to the School by Norman J. Arnold. Presently, the School has a faculty of more than 100 members and over 700 graduate students.

Since 1979, the School has been accredited by the Council on Education for Public Health (CEPH), the accrediting body for schools of public health in the United States. The mission of the Arnold School of Public Health is to expand, disseminate, and apply the body of knowledge regarding the following: prevention of disease, disability and environmental degradation, promoting health and wellbeing in diverse populations; and providing effective, efficient and equitable health services.

Principal responsibilities of the Arnold School of Public Health are: (1) educational preparation of undergraduate and post-baccalaureate students for academic and professional careers within public health and health services organizations; (2) research on significant public health problems and/or issues; and (3) development and delivery of continuing professional education for health services personnel outside the immediate university community.

There are six departments within the Arnold School of Public Health: Health Services Policy and Management; Health Promotion, Education, and Behavior; Environmental Health Sciences; Epidemiology and Biostatistics; Exercise Science; and Communication Sciences and Disorders.

## **II. The Department of Health Services Policy and Management**

### **A. Mission, Vision, Goals, and Objectives**

#### **Mission**

The mission of the Department of Health Services Policy and Management is to advance the provision of effective, efficient and equitable health services by preparing individuals for positions in health services management, policy, public health programs, research, and education. The Department serves South Carolina while attracting students from throughout the United States and other countries.

Revised and approved November 2009

#### **Vision**

The Department of Health Services Policy and Management will be a resource for excellence in graduate education and in research in South Carolina, the nation and in distinct international markets. Through its masters and doctoral programs, it will produce well-trained graduates ready to assume or progress to leadership positions in health services, public health, and research/academic organizations. The Department will serve as a networking/integrating resource for alumni, providers and leaders in health services in South Carolina and beyond. The Department will offer programs that continually seek to improve through new ideas and new technology, and by responding to the changing needs of the dynamic healthcare environment. Through research, teaching, service and consulting, faculty will create a Department on the leading edge of health services management, policy, and research.

Revised and approved November 2009

#### **Goals and Objectives**

The Department will implement its vision by providing students in the Master of Health Administration, Master of Public Health, Doctoral program, and other degree programs with the highest quality graduate education based on excellence in teaching, research, and service.

### III. Doctoral Program

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

#### A. Educational Goals of the Doctor of Philosophy (PhD) program

The educational goal of the PhD Program is to prepare students to make a substantive impact in health services policy and management through teaching, research and policy leadership.

Upon completion of the degree program, students will be able to:

- Demonstrate expert level of knowledge of the structure, financing, functioning, population access, and performance outcomes of health systems on individual and population health outcomes, with emphasis on the US health system (HSPM 845)
- Demonstrate expert level of knowledge of the healthcare delivery system, key stakeholders, care delivery, and outcomes, and the theoretical frameworks informing optimum healthcare delivery and health organizational performance (HSPM 846)
- Describe and distinguish the strengths and limitations of the major methodological approaches to health services research (retrospective and prospective studies, survey research, qualitative research, experimental studies) (HSPM 717, HSPM 719)
- Identify and plan appropriate statistical approaches for research questions typical in health services research, complex dataset management and statistical data analysis, interpretation of results, drawing valid inferences, identifying study limitations, and articulating evidence-based conclusions based on the evidence generated; (BIOS 757, HSPM 719, HSPM 717, HSPM 830)
- Describe the major theories of and develop conceptual frameworks to understand and inform health services delivery, health services research, and problem solving; (HSPM 845, 846)
- Conceptualize, plan, and conduct original research. (HSPM 830, HSPM 800 – 4 seminars of 1-credit each, Comprehensive exam, Dissertation development and defense, and engagement in faculty-mentored research projects)

Deliver lectures on health service research and health services delivery at the graduate and/or undergraduate level. (Teaching practicum).

#### *Measurable indicators for each of the objectives/competencies*

Objective 1a:

- a) Demonstrate expert level of knowledge of the structure, financing, functioning, population access, and performance outcomes of health systems on individual and population health outcomes, with emphasis on the US health system
- b) Demonstrate expert level of knowledge of the healthcare delivery system, key stakeholders, care delivery, and outcomes, and the theoretical frameworks informing optimum healthcare delivery and health organizational performance

Related curriculum:

1a: HSPM 845 – Advanced topics (Health systems design, financing, delivery and performance, internationally and in the United States)

1b: HSPM 846 – Advanced topics II

**Objective 2:**

Demonstrate knowledge of health services research methodologies, selection and application of appropriate methodologies, skills of data management and statistical analysis, and inference/interpretation of findings.

**Curriculum:** Required courses, HSPM 717 - Research Methods I (Introductory Econometrics for Policy Analysis), HSPM 719 – Research Methods II (Introduction to Health Services Research), BIOS 757 – Intermediate Biometrics, HSPM 830 - Advanced Data Structures and Analysis for health services research.

Optional courses: Examples are: HSPM 730 – Research Methods III (Treatment Effect Estimation with Observational Data); Courses offered by other departments, Qualitative data methods, Mixed methods in research, Latent variable research, Survival analysis, etc), at the discretion of student and academic advisor, consistent with the student's educational and dissertation plan.

**Objective 3:** Demonstrate ability to plan and conduct original health services research, and communicate the findings through professional written communications and oral presentations.

**Curriculum:** All courses, and HSPM 800 4 seminars of 1-credit each

## **B. Program-Related Information: Doctor of Philosophy**

### ***Admission Criteria and Application Requirements***

- Applicants to the doctoral program should have a master's degree in Health Administration, Business Administration, Public Health, Public Administration or a discipline relevant to public health, health services policy or management. To be eligible for full admission without conditions, previous graduate-level course work should have included public health courses, including introduction to biostatistics/ statistics, the US healthcare system, and epidemiology. A 6 credit-hour package of 2 courses covering the above content is offered at UofSC and will have to be completed during Year 1 of the program by those without prior public health core course work (see Public Health core courses under PhD curriculum). Applicants without a public health-related master's degree or public health core coursework will be admitted with conditions, that they will complete the Public Health core courses (see page 6). Applicants without a graduate-level statistics course completed with a B or better grade will be required to complete the introductory graduate level biostatistics course after matriculation in the first semester. Pre-requisite courses taken to make up prior coursework deficits do not count towards the required doctoral program credit hours.
- Up to 18 credit hours earned in previous graduate course work may be transferred based on faculty-determined relevance to the HSPM doctoral program of study (relevance to be determined by syllabus review). For master's work in the same discipline and same university (HSPM/health administration MPH or MHA degree), only 9 credits from such master's programs can be used towards the doctoral program. If the course work is in the same discipline but from another university, up to 12 credits can be transferred. Notably, the MPH core courses (5 courses) cannot be used towards the doctoral program. For coursework from other discipline(s), up to 18 credits can be transferred if from a different university. However, no more than 12 credits can be shared between two degree programs of U of SC, regardless of discipline. Therefore potentially, the maximum credit hour reduction using prior work is 18 credits from all sources, which would reduce the doctoral coursework requirement to 42 credits including 12 dissertation credits. The Department will determine eligibility for course transfer based on the syllabus. The student must submit the transcript showing a B or better grade on a 4-point scale for the courses to be transferred, as well as the course syllabi of the years and semesters when the student took the courses regardless of whether taken at U of SC or at another university.
- An academically exceptional student may be admitted with a bachelor's degree, upon the

recommendation of the doctoral admissions committee. The criteria for such admissions are determined on a case-by-case basis. However, the academic and test score requirements cannot be lower than for a student with a graduate degree.

- Applicants should have earned at least a 3.0 grade point average (based on 4.0 scale) in previous graduate course work.
- Unofficial transcripts from universities in the United States are acceptable during the application process. In such cases, admitted students can submit official transcripts during the first semester, a requirement to register for credits in the following semester. Similarly, for international applicants, a degree and GPA verification report submitted by authorized bodies (e.g. World Education Services, WES) will serve the purpose at the application stage.
- Graduate Record Examination (GRE) scores must be submitted (GMAT scores may be substituted for GRE). The GRE/GMAT requirement may be waived for applicants with health-related terminal degrees (e.g., DDS, MD, JD) on a case-by-case basis. The department, however, uses GRE/GMAT scores in allocating the limited amount of financial assistance available and if an applicant wishes to be considered for financial assistance, GRE/GMAT scores must be submitted. It is expected that applicants will have a combined verbal and quantitative GRE score of at least 295 (or the equivalent GMAT score) with the quantitative section score approximating or exceeding the 50<sup>th</sup> percentile. Lower-than-desirable GRE scores will be evaluated in light of the candidate's total portfolio including personal statement on their career and research goals, previous involvement in research and publications, and the interview.
- 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. Applicants must submit a satisfactory score on TOEFL, IELTS Intl. Academic Course Type 2 exam, PTE Academic, or Duolingo. The minimum TOEFL is 80 (Internet-based test), or 570 (paper-based test). The minimum acceptable overall band score on the IELTS Intl. Academic Course Type 2 exam is 6.5. The minimum acceptable score on PTE Academic is 53, and for Duolingo, 115. For more information please visit: [https://sc.edu/study/colleges\\_schools/graduate\\_school/apply/international\\_applicants/index.php](https://sc.edu/study/colleges_schools/graduate_school/apply/international_applicants/index.php) If prior academic experience in the U.S., or in other English-native language nations (e.g., U.K., N.Z., Australia), illustrates that the student is proficient in English, this requirement may be waived, with the concurrence of the Graduate School.
- Three letters of recommendation must be submitted from persons who can reflect upon the applicant's prior academic and professional performance.
- The applicant should provide a reflective career goal statement with a focus on the applicant's research interests, describing, if applicable, completed or in-process research or professional projects (such as graduate research or practicum projects), and how the HSPM program and/or faculty research align with their research interests. Applicants should also submit a current curriculum vita with the application.
- Applicants should review the PhD program curriculum. Applicants should also review of curriculum vitae of HSPM faculty members and identify potential mentors whose research areas/interests/background align with their own and with whom they would like to work. A HSPM faculty member should accept mentoring responsibility for the applicant in order to be admitted to the program.
- Based on review of the applicant's portfolio, the PhD admissions committee short-lists applicants for interview. These applicants are interviewed by a departmental faculty member(s) with allied research interests as part of the admission process. Interview reports are used in admission decisions by the committee.



- The applicant may submit copies of her/his peer-reviewed publications, if any, to enhance their application portfolio for selection to be admitted and for offer of scholarship.
- All applicants are encouraged to review the tuition and fees payable at [https://www.sc.edu/study/colleges\\_schools/public\\_health/apply/graduate\\_applicants/tuition\\_fees/index.php](https://www.sc.edu/study/colleges_schools/public_health/apply/graduate_applicants/tuition_fees/index.php). Please note that in addition to the university and school-level tuition/fees, all HSPM students are required to pay a one-time \$1,000 matriculation fee payable in the first semester.

### ***Financial support for doctoral students***

Financial support for qualifying candidates is possible from a few sources. Applicants should note that high GRE scores are required to qualify for most scholarships, unless an applicant with somewhat lower scores shows evidence of an exceptional record of research and professional writing skills (e.g. strong publication record of empirical research led by the applicant or evidence of strong data analysis skills). We highly encourage candidates who may qualify for waiver of GRE scores (those with a terminal degree from a US university) to take the GRE and achieve the best possible performance in order to ensure a competitive application for scholarship awards.

***Receipt of any scholarship reduces tuition*** from the out-of-state rate to the in-state rate.

The HSPM department offers financial support in the form of the Arnold doctoral fellowship for the first year for up to six meritorious applicants who are not sponsored by external entities. The number of applicants offered is subject to availability of scholarship funds from the Arnold doctoral fellowship endowment. This financial package consists of a scholarship amount (\$10,000 to \$12,500 per year, depending on funds available) and a work stipend, the latter requiring 20-hours a week of graduate assistantship work under the mentorship of a departmental faculty member. The assistantship work could be teaching assistantship (serving as a teaching assistant in undergraduate or master's courses) or a research assistantship, working on a department faculty member's research projects, or a combination of the two. For those who possess specific research skills and/or academic preparation that meet the research project needs of HSPM's funded research centers or faculty grants, an applicant may be offered up to two years of financial support and tuition supplement instead of the fixed scholarship amount. This is subject to the faculty member identifying a good fit between the applicant's skillset/training/research record and their center/funded grant.

All scholarships are contingent upon full-time academic enrolment in the fall and spring semesters as a resident scholar, not working full-time elsewhere, and working with a faculty member on campus. Scholarship continuation in subsequent semesters is contingent on maintaining good academic standing, a GPA of 3.4 or better each semester, and satisfactory performance of graduate assistantship work as determined by the supervising faculty member.

Although the commitment of financial support with the Arnold fellowship is for one year, students who perform at an excellent level of competence, both academically and in the graduate assistantship role, are mostly able to procure financial support from research grant-funded faculty in subsequent years. Further, subject to funds availability in the Arnold endowment, the department may offer the scholarship amount for a second year to particularly meritorious students subject to faculty consensus about exceptional academic and assistantship performance. In particular, renewal of the Arnold scholarship for a second year in the case of students originally offered one-year scholarship, will be contingent on maintaining excellent academic performance with full-time enrollment, strong performance on their graduate assistantship roles, and successfully completing the Qualifying exam if they were eligible to take the qualifying exam.



In addition to departmental opportunities for financial support, applicants with very high GRE scores, other meritorious accomplishments, and/or other qualifying criteria may be eligible to be nominated for university-level scholarships. For these scholarships qualifying applicants are nominated by the Department. These include the university's Presidential fellowship and the Grace McFadden fellowship.

### ***Recommended course load for part-time students***

Students who are working full-time are highly encouraged to enroll as part-time students (e.g., 6 credit hours per regular semester and if desired, 3 credit hours per summer session) to maximize learning and acquisition of competencies. While full-time employment does not automatically bar the student from carrying a full course load per regular semester, poor academic performance (GPA below 3.0 or one course with a grade of C) will limit the student's subsequent enrollment to six credit hours or less per fall/spring semester.

### ***Full-time/part-time student status***

Full-time status is required to be eligible for award of fellowships or graduate assistantships, which may be teaching or research assistantships. To be considered a full-time student, they should be enrolled for a minimum of 9 hours for credit in the semester unless they have a graduate assistantship (10-20 hours per week). Students with graduate assistantship will be considered full-time if enrolled for a minimum of 6 credit hours. However, students with scholarship funding coverage for one or two years are highly recommended to enroll for 10-12 credits per semester in the first year to optimize their academic progress in relation to the scholarship coverage period. International students are required to maintain full-time status throughout their program and remain in good academic standing throughout to retain valid student visa status. A student may enroll for fewer than full-time credits during later semesters and be considered full-time if they have completed all the required credit hours of coursework. For this the student should acquire Z status as outlined later.

### ***PhD Curriculum***

The PhD in Health Services Policy and Management requires completion of 60 hours of post-baccalaureate course work, including 12 hours of dissertation preparation (maximum allowed, 30 hours). However, no more than 12 hours of dissertation preparation will count toward the required 60 hours of post-baccalaureate course work. With the exception of MPH core courses (EPID 700, BIOS 700, HPEB 700, ENHS 660, HSPM 700 or their equivalents), up to 18 hours of other courses relevant to the student's doctoral plan of study may be transferred from previous graduate coursework. Transfer credits must be approved by the student's advisor and the Program Director. Thus HSPM doctoral students must complete a minimum of 42 semester credit hours at UofSC (including the 12 dissertation research hours). To receive transfer credits from a prior program, a student will have to submit the Doctoral Program of Study (DPOS) form listing all courses the student plans to take at UofSC during the doctoral program, including 12 hours of dissertation preparation. The form can be found at <http://gradschool.sc.edu/forms/> and click on Doctoral Program of Study form. The student must also submit course syllabi of the proposed courses for transfer, transcripts showing a B (3.0) or better grade on a 4-point scale, any other related documentation of the courses, and submit a signed memo to the doctoral program director listing the courses for transfer.

For full admission to the doctoral program without conditions, an admitted doctoral student must be proficient in the use of one or more of the statistical software packages used in HSPM courses (e.g., STATA, SAS, R). Proficiency must be documented, B or better grade in a statistics course involving use of the package. Another type of documentation is a transcript showing that a course on the statistical software package was successfully completed. Another means of documenting proficiency is demonstration of the ability to perform basic data analyses to answer a specific research question. A work history of job positions involving use of statistical software packages is another way of documenting proficiency. In the absence of such documentation, the student must attend and successfully complete such a course during the

first semester of matriculation (e.g. BIOS 709) unless the student is taking BIOS 700 in Fall Year 1 due to graduate level statistics course deficiency. Credit hours associated with BIOS 709 can be counted toward the required elective credit hours.

Full-time students must complete the departmental core courses as well as courses in a concentration area within the first 2 years of study unless they are undertaking other courses to make up coursework deficits as indicated below. Completing four of the five departmental core courses with a B or better grade (see below) is required to take the Qualifying examination. Completion of the HSPM 800 seminars and the three courses of the concentration area together with successful completion of the Qualifying examination is required to be eligible to take the Comprehensive examination. A grade of B or better in each core course is required to qualify as having passed a course, failing which the student has to retake the course the next time it is offered and pass the course. Not receiving a grade of B or better in a core course on the second attempt will lead to termination from the program. Enrollment in all courses require the approval of the students' academic advisor, documented in the Advisement Form completed prior to each semester.

Students are recommended for admission for doctoral candidacy (by the Graduate School) once they have been fully admitted to the HSPM doctoral program and have passed the qualifying and comprehensive examinations. This involves submitting to the Graduate School the student's approved doctoral program of study along with a written recommendation from the PhD Program Director verifying successful completion of the qualifying and comprehensive examinations. The Graduate School will notify the student and the Program Director when the student is admitted to candidacy.

Upon attaining doctoral candidacy status, students may take doctoral dissertation research credit hours (HSPM 899). HSPM 899 must be taken under the supervision of a faculty member, typically the Chair of the Dissertation Committee who becomes the student's academic advisor. On occasion, when the Chair of the Dissertation Committee has not yet been determined, HSPM 899 may be taken under a faculty member who has expertise in the dissertation topic being explored, and this person becomes the academic advisor until a dissertation committee Chair is identified. Any change of academic advisor must be communicated by the student to the former advisor and to the PhD program director.

If completion of the qualifying and comprehensive examinations is delayed, students may have to complete more than the required credit hours to maintain active student status. Only 12 credit hours of HSPM 899 count toward the required 60 credit hours of the degree. Therefore, it is important that the student adequately progresses in conceptualizing the dissertation project, forming the Dissertation Committee, and completing the research, including write-up of the dissertation per Graduate School guidelines. Adequate progression is determined by the faculty member under whom HSPM 899 is taken, typically the Chair of the Dissertation Committee. When the student is making adequate progress, the continuation grade "T" is received. As general guidance, at the end of the first semester registered for HSPM 899, the student should have identified a dissertation research area or topic, prepared an approved concept paper of the research idea along with a list of references and potential sources of data (if relevant). Subsequently, based on the concept paper, the student should form his or her Dissertation Committee. These benchmarks are recommended to be met by the end of the second semester of HSPM 899. By the end of the third semester, the student should have prepared sections of the proposed dissertation research, and ideally have a working draft of the first three chapters: research overview and specific aims, literature review and methods that is approved by the supervisor. Thereafter, a student signing up for HSPM 899 must show consistent and substantial progress towards the completion of proposal and proposal defense, and then towards the final dissertation. If a student fails to demonstrate substantial progress in her/his doctoral research, the faculty member in charge of the HSPM 899 section may assign a grade of unsatisfactory (U). Receiving a grade of "U" in a third semester of HSPM 899 credits will lead to automatic termination from the doctoral program.

When taking HSPM 899, students may elect to become enrolled as "Z-status" students if all other coursework requirements have been completed. A student in Z-status is considered a full-time student working on dissertation research irrespective of credit hours taken in the semester. A student can remain in Z- status for no more than eight academic semesters during the program of study. After eight semesters, the

student should document in writing their scholarly accomplishments and progress achieved as well as a timeline to complete the dissertation, signed by their dissertation advisor and provide it to the Graduate Director in order for the Program Director to prepare a justification of request for z-status extension. Students have to apply to the Graduate School for Z status with appropriate documentation and approval of their advisor. Z status documentation is required for the following : a) students seeking graduate assistantship with less than full-time enrollment, b) applying for financial aid, c) having a scholarship for which full enrollment is required, d) receiving a tuition supplement from faculty grants or other university source, e) international students.

**The required Ph.D. curriculum is:**

<b>Public Health Core: 6 hours</b> (not required for MPH graduates, required for other students)	
Perspectives in Public Health (PUBH 700)	3 hours
Concepts and methods in Epidemiology or equivalent (EPID 700/701)	3 hours
<b>Biostatistics core for incoming students with no or inadequate statistics training</b>	
BIOS 700 (for students without an introductory graduate biostatistics course Or equivalent with a B or better grade)	3 hours
BIOS 757 (for students without an intermediate level graduate statistics course that used SAS with a B or better grade)	3 hours

To seek exemption from BIOS 700, the master's transcript should show completion of a statistics/biostatistics course with a B or better grade. Equivalence with BIOS 757 will be determined by syllabus review.

The public health core and BIOS 700 do not count towards the required doctoral credit hours. BIOS 757 can be counted towards electives. For students with adequate math/statistics preparation but without working knowledge of statistical software a basic course in SAS will be required in Fall Year 1 (e.g. 1-credit BIOS 709) which will count towards elective credits.

**Total required doctoral program credit hours = 60**

**Departmental Core: 19 hours**

Advanced Topics in Health Policy & Management I & II (HSPM 845 & 846)	6 hours
Introductory Econometrics for Policy Analysis (HSPM 717)	3 hours
Introduction to Health Services Research (HSPM 719)	3 hours
Advanced Data Structures and Analytic Methods for Health Services Research (HSPM 830)	3 hours
Doctoral Seminar (HSPM 800, one credit hour each)	4 hours

**Concentration (designed by student):** 9 hours

**Approved electives related to HSPM studies** 20 hours

**Dissertation:** 12 hours

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**Total credit hours** 60 hours

Depending on student interests and planned research/career path, students may undertake additional credit hours to strengthen their competencies and knowledge base.

**Doctoral Seminar (HSPM 800 courses)**

Doctoral seminars are offered in a sequence of four seminars and students must complete these credits with a satisfactory grade (S) to be eligible to take the Comprehensive examination.

- Seminar 1, Faculty presentations (Fall, year 1) – Each week, one faculty member presents a research topic of interest and/or on an area of expertise. The presentation provides an

- introductory overview of the research and also details one (or more) research projects for which the faculty member will present the specific aims, conceptual model and research strategy of the project. Students submit a reflective summary after each session. 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, and ii) to model research concepts and familiarize students with research steps which will be covered in upcoming seminars. Ideally, the faculty presentations will have all or some of the required sections of a good research proposal/study as appropriate: (a) Introduction, (b) specific aims, (c) research strategy (significance and methodology/approach), (d) empirical analysis conducted and (e) results/policy implications/conclusions. Following this exposure, students will use the winter break to identify a potential research topic area of interest based on a literature review and knowledge gaps.
- Seminar 2, Developing the Specific Aims section of a National Institutes of Health research proposal (First half of spring, Year 1) – 1) Students will be introduced to the principles and guidelines for preparing the specific aims section of an original research proposal for the National Institutes of Health. 2) Students will concurrently work on crafting the specific aims section for a health services research proposal on their chosen topic. This seminar provides an opportunity for students to begin to formalize their research interests into achievable and concrete research aims. Fellow students and the instructor will serve as reviewers of their drafts to provide constructive feedback. The final product by the end of the seminar is a 1-page specific aims section of an NIH-R03 proposal, with 2-3 well- developed specific aims of a research study.
  - Seminar 3, Significance and Conceptual Framework section of the Research Strategy section of a R03 proposal (Second half of spring, Year 1) – 1) Students will be introduced to the principles and guidelines for preparing the Project significance and conceptual framework of a NIH proposal. 2) Students will concurrently develop drafts of the study background, significance and theoretical/ conceptual frameworks section of the R03 proposal. The seminar will also focus on how to use/develop a theoretical or conceptual framework to inform their research, as well as graphically communicate their proposed research at a glance. Several different theoretical frameworks will be reviewed throughout the course of the seminar. During this seminar students will continue to refine their specific aims as they develop a supporting conceptual framework and their significance section.
  - Seminar 4, Research Strategy – Approach section (Fall Year 2) – The final seminar covers development of the methods section of the research strategy. Students in this final seminar will explore and develop the data and variables section, analytical approach and statistical/qualitative research methods to address their specific aims.

The seminars are graded as satisfactory (S) or unsatisfactory (U). For satisfactory grade, the student must complete the requirements specified by the instructor and additionally, must have attended at least one each of a proposal defense and dissertation defense (or two of either type of presentation). Attendance at a proposal or dissertation doctoral student research seminar may be excused if justifiable and should be obtained by making a written request to their academic advisor or the doctoral program director. Students should provide documentation of excused absences to the HSPM 800 instructors to qualify for a grade of S in HSPM 800.

The Doctoral Program Director, in consultation with the respective academic advisors maintains general oversight over the academic performance of doctoral students/candidates. At matriculation, the Doctoral Program Director ensures that each incoming doctoral student has a designated faculty academic advisor/mentor based on research interests and with the concurrence of the faculty member. The academic advisor serves as the student's primary mentor and advisor until completion of the comprehensive examination. Following successful completion of the comprehensive examination, a



Dissertation Committee Chair is to be selected by the student in consultation with their advisor or Doctoral Program Director followed by the student notifying the Program Director of the selected Dissertation Committee Chair by a memo.

All graduate students must maintain a cumulative GPA of 3.0 or better during the entire duration of graduate studies as well as receive a grade of B or better in all graded courses or face academic probation and/or termination from the program. Other than HSPM 899 (dissertation credits), a grade of U in a graduate course is counted as an F in the cumulative grade point average. (Note that an S grade, however, does not count towards GPA.) Students will be placed under academic probation if their cumulative GPA falls below 3.0 in any semester and will remain on probation until a cumulative GPA of 3.0 or better is achieved. A student will also be placed on academic probation at the time he or she receives a U in a third graduate course after two C grades (other than the doctoral core courses), or after a combination of one C and one U grade (other than HSPM 899). Across all coursework taken since matriculation in the doctoral program, a fourth C (or lower grade) or U (any combination of Cs or Us) will result in termination from the program. Students facing academic difficulties are strongly advised to proactively consult with their course instructor and academic advisor, and undertake remedial work before they receive grades at or below C level or U. If necessary, students may withdraw from a course before the WF deadline, when a W (Withdrawal) reflects as a WF grade (Fail grade) in transcripts and accounted for in the GPA). If personal circumstances justify leave of absence for the rest of the semester, students should take leave of absence (with documentation) for one or two semesters before taking additional courses. During the dissertation phase, a second U grade for dissertation credits (HSPM 899) will result in academic probation status (regardless of credit hours registered), and a third U will result in termination from the program. Grades below C, grade of WF, and U disqualify the course/credit for being counted towards required credits for graduation.

Absence for an academic semester (i.e. non-enrollment for credit in fall or spring) requires completion of appropriate Graduate School paperwork to obtain the leave of absence in advance. Absence of such documentation results in loss of active student status and requires approval by the department and the Graduate School to resume coursework/dissertation. Non-enrollment for two successive academic semesters will require readmission to the program following a reapplication process, per Graduate School regulations. In such cases, the academic rules, standards, and degree requirements that are in effect at the time of readmission (per the prevailing PhD program handbook) will supersede those in effect at the time of initial admission.

### ***Required courses for doctoral students matriculating without pre-requisite coursework***

***Public Health Core: 6 hours*** (not required for MPH graduates and MHA graduates who have taken these courses)

	Credits	Sem./Year
Perspectives in Public Health (PUBH 700)	3	
Concepts and methods of Epidemiology or equivalent (EPID 700/701)	3	

### ***Biostatistics core for incoming students with inadequate or no statistics coursework***

BIOS 700 (if not completed an introductory graduate statistics course)	3	Fall Year 1*
BIOS 757 (if not completed intermediate level graduate statistics course)	3	Fall Year 1*

The public health core and BIOS 700 do not count towards the doctoral credits. BIOS 757 is counted for doctoral credit. Students coming in with statistics major, math major or epidemiology major in their master's program can be waived BIOS 757 requirement. Note that students admitted with coursework deficits may not be able to complete the required HSPM core courses in time to take the qualifying examination at the end of Year 1.

***Coursework for students who seek to take their qualifying exam after Year 1*** (Completion of HSPM 845, 846, 717 and 719 is required to be eligible to take the qualifying exam; The course load below is required for students receiving scholarship support, unless they are taking BIOS 700 in place of BIOS 757 in the first semester. In such case BIOS 757 must be taken in the second semester)

**Fall year 1**

Advanced Topics in Health Policy & Management II (HSPM 846)	3
Health Services Research Methods II (HSPM 719)	3
Intermediate Biometrics (BIOS 757; Pre-req: BIOS 700/equivalent, SAS knowledge)	3
Doctoral Seminar (HSPM 800, one credit hour each)	1
Potential elective/Concentration area course	3
Fall Year 1 total	10-13 credits

**Spring Year 1**

Advanced Topics in Health Policy & Management I (HSPM 845)	3
Health Services Research Methods I (HSPM 717) (Pre-req. BIOS 700/equivalent)	3
Doctoral Seminars (HSPM 800, 2 sections of 1-credit hour each)	2
Advanced Data Structures and Analytic Methods (HSPM 830)	3 (Spr. Year 1 or 2)
Potential elective/Concentration area course	3
Spring Year 1 total	11-14 credits

**Qualifying exam, Summer Year 1****Fall Year 2**

Doctoral Seminar (HSPM 800, one credit hour)	1
Concentration/Elective courses	6-9
Fall Year 2 total	10-13 credits

**Spring Year 2:**

Advanced Data Structures and Analytic Methods (HSPM 830)	3 (Spr. Year 1 or 2)
HSPM 730 Treatment Effect Estimation with Observational Data (Elective)	3
HSPM 791 Applied methods for HS research and policy evaluation (Elective)	3
Other concentration/Elective courses	3
Spring Year 2 total	6-12 credits

*(HSPM 800 seminars and concentration courses must be completed to be eligible for the Comprehensive exam.)*

**Comprehensive exam – Spring Year 2 or Fall Year 3**

**Student is admitted to doctoral candidacy upon successful completion of Comprehensive examination.**

Teaching competency-related activities	0 credits
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**Fall Year 3**

HSPM 899 (dissertation credits)	3-6
Remaining electives	3-9
Fall Year 3 total	6-12 credits
Teaching competency-related activities as required	0 credits

**Spring Year 3:**

Remaining electives	3-9
HSPM 899	3-6
Spring Year 3 total	6-12 credits

**After Year 3:**

Remaining elective credits

HSPM 899 (as required to maintain active doctoral student status until dissertation defense completion)

(Students who are awarded 2-year fellowships should plan coursework such that they can complete the qualifying exam at the end of Year 1 and the comprehensive exam in Spring Year 2, aiming for admission to doctoral candidacy in Fall Year 3.)

Note:

*Electives without credit transfer*

20

*Electives with credit transfer*

20 minus credits transferred

### ***Teaching requirements of the HSPM 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 without compensation. The requirements must be completed between the time of matriculation and the dissertation proposal defense. The requirements can be fulfilled by completing the following requirements:

- Complete GRAD 701 (0 credits), and the Teaching Assistant workshop,
- At least 3 workshops focused on improving teaching and classroom effectiveness skills (1-2 hour sessions each, no extra cost) offered round the academic year by the Center for Teaching Excellence CTE. Students should obtain documentation of attendance **OR** complete the CTE's "Preparing Future Faculty" certification program (at no extra cost), see [https://sc.edu/about/offices\\_and\\_divisions/cte/graduate\\_teaching\\_assistants/preparing\\_future\\_faculty/index.php](https://sc.edu/about/offices_and_divisions/cte/graduate_teaching_assistants/preparing_future_faculty/index.php) ).
- Present at least once in the doctoral student research seminar series arranged by the department.
- Teach at least one class session in a structured course, supervised by the faculty of record **OR** Serve as a project 2<sup>nd</sup> reader for at least one MHA or MPH residency project

These requirements related to teaching must be satisfied before the student can request a date for the dissertation proposal defense. The student must submit a letter with documentation to the Graduate Director of the department indicating that the requirements have been completed.

### ***Research experience requirement***

All doctoral students in the PhD program are required to participate in research activities of the department. Unless a student is hired by a faculty member on a funded research project, students are expected to complete the following research-related requirements without compensation. The requirements must be completed between the time of matriculation and the dissertation defense. The requirements can be fulfilled by completing the following:

- Completing CITI (research ethics) training approved by their advisor, at the minimum, the Social and Behavioral Responsible Conduct of Research certification, and,
- One of the following:
  - Presenting at least one poster or oral presentation at a state, regional, national or international conference based on mentored or independently completed research, OR
  - Publishing an article in a reputable peer-reviewed journal as a first or significant contributing author.

These requirements related to research must be satisfied before the student can request a date for the dissertation defense. The student must submit a letter with documentation to the Graduate Director of the department indicating that the requirements have been completed.



### ***Community courses requirement***

University of South Carolina presents a set of online education courses in accordance with federal mandates and as part of our commitment to fostering a safe and healthy community.

All doctoral students are required to take the following three courses:

- ***Sexual Assault Prevention*** presents realistic and interactive skill-building scenarios related to interpersonal violence.
- ***Diversity, Inclusion & Belonging for Students*** helps students better understand and celebrate the diverse U of SC campus community.
- ***Mental Well-being*** educates students on critical topics on social and emotional well-being that they may face on campus and provides strategies on how to manage them.

Part 1 of each course will be available beginning **July 18** and should be completed no later than **September 18**.

After completing Part 1 of each course, students will be notified via email to take Part 2. The deadline for completing Part 2 will be **November 18**.

To access the courses, students will use [Self Service Carolina](#) after matriculation and advisement. Information regarding these trainings will be sent directly to new and incoming students and posted on the [Community Education Page](#) located on the Graduate School's website under [New Students](#).

For technical assistance, students should contact tech support using "Help" within the course or by visiting [support.everfi.com](http://support.everfi.com). Questions about the requirements can be directed to the Substance Abuse Prevention and Education Office at [sape@sc.edu](mailto:sape@sc.edu).

### **C. Degree Requirements (academic)**

Students in the PhD program must complete 60 graduate credit hours. With approval of the Graduate Director, up to eighteen (18) hours of previous graduate credit may be used to address this requirement, for a net of 42 program hours, subject to the restrictions listed on page 5. To be acceptable as transfer credit, the previous graduate coursework must be recent, i.e., within 10 years of anticipated date of doctoral graduation, relevant to the student's doctoral plan of study/research, not show significant overlap with other courses counted towards doctoral credit, and show a grade of B or better on a 4-point scale. The five Master of Public Health core courses as defined by the Council for Accreditation in Public Health (CEPH) or equivalent courses cannot be counted towards doctoral credit hours. Relevance is determined by syllabus review by the advisor and doctoral program director. Syllabi of courses must be submitted by the student as applied in the semester that they took those courses, along with the transcripts and a memo specifying the courses to be transferred.

Students should complete four out of the five HSPM doctoral core courses (HSPM 845, 846, 717 and 719) within the first year of study except for justified delays, to be documented by the Academic Advisor in the student file (justified delays include: student with a bachelor's degree admitted to the program and taking pre-requisite coursework in the first semester, students who came with several missing pre-requisites, students with medical/other documented reasons). The HSPM core courses are essential to take the qualifying examination. Registration for all courses requires the approval of the Academic Advisor of the student or Program Director in the absence of the advisor. All students must pass the four departmental core courses (grade of B or better) before proceeding to the qualifying exam. Students who do not receive a B or better in any core course may repeat the course once and must pass the second

time with a B or better.

Every student, with the advice and counsel of their faculty advisor, must identify an area of concentration. This is a set of 3 courses (for a total of 9 credit hours) in a specific topic area in which the student seeks to develop in-depth competency for their doctoral research and post-doctoral research career. The concentration can be in any area of health services, management, health policy, allied field, or health services research methodology (including qualitative research). As general guidance, the concentration courses should be relevant to the topic area in which the student seeks to develop their dissertation or research career. No more than 3 credit hours of independent study or special topic course can be used towards the concentration area credit hours. No more than 6 credits hours of independent study can be counted towards the total doctoral coursework credits. The student must successfully complete the qualifying exam, the four HSPM 800 seminars, and at least some of the concentration courses to qualify for the Comprehensive exam. Please see Annexure D used for tracking student progress to graduation.

#### **D. Time Limits**

Doctoral students must complete their studies and dissertation defense within 10 years of matriculation, or they will have to repeat course work to get courses revalidated by the respective instructors. Transferred credits/prior coursework at U of SC must have been completed within the 10-year period preceding the doctoral graduation date. Transferred credits cannot be revalidated if the 10-year limit is crossed as of graduation date. Lapsed transfer credits must be replaced by new coursework at U of SC as approved by the advisor to complete the required number of doctoral credits. The semester of successful completion of the comprehensive examination can be no more than 5 years prior to the graduation date. If lapsed, the student will have to retake the comprehensive examination. Students who do not plan to enroll for at least one course/credit for consecutive academic semesters (summer not included) must take an approved leave of absence for each semester up to the Graduate School-prescribed limit of such approved absences. In the absence of approved absence, students will be required to apply for readmission to the Graduate School when they resume studies. In cases of non-enrollment for 2 or more consecutive academic semesters, the academic rules, standards and degree requirements effective at the time of readmission will supersede those in effect at the time of initial admission. International students must remain enrolled in full-time status (or approved Z-status) as described earlier without break, unless specifically approved to take a leave of absence; the latter requires documentation and the concurrence of the International Students Services.

#### **E. Qualifying Examination**

The qualifying examination must be taken following the completion of four required core courses (HSPM 845, 846, 717 and 719). The qualifying examination is a cumulative exam that tests students on the content areas of four departmental core courses relating to health services organization, delivery and policy, and research methods including data analysis. The examination is administered as two separate sections: (i) Research methods and data analysis (two sub-sections) and (ii) Health services policy and management (two subsections). The qualifying examination is offered twice per academic year, in late summer (August) and early spring (January). The student must be enrolled in the semester in which the exam is taken. Specific dates within these periods will be selected each year and the students will be notified at least 30 days prior to the actual dates. The qualifying examination is taken within the Department of Health Services Policy and Management and is closed book, unless indicated otherwise for a specific section. The examination must be completed on a school or departmental computer in Word, but one or both sections may require the use of statistical software for the analyses of data. Each section of the qualifying examination is graded by the faculty member who is the writer of the examination question/instructor of record for the course of the department independently. If a student receives a failing

grade from the primary faculty member, the student will be sent to second grader. If the second grader's assessment is a "pass" a third grader will be requested to independently grade the exam, and this grade will be considered the final grade. Students will be notified of their grades in writing within three weeks of taking the examination. Examination results will be reported as Pass or Fail.

A student who fails the examination may request re-evaluation of their grades in any or both sections of the qualifying examination in writing to the Graduate Director of the department within two weeks after the reporting of the grades. Once the re-evaluation request is received, the examination section(s) being contested will be sent to a new examiner and if the grade assigned by the new examiner matches (i.e., Fail) the grade assigned in the examination before evaluation, the original grade will be considered final. If the grades assigned by the new examiner is different from the original grade, the final grade will be the grade assigned based on the grades of the majority of all examiners evaluating the specific section of the examination. The Graduate Director of the department will notify the student(s) in writing of the final grade for each of the sections after the re-evaluation. The re-evaluation will be completed within two weeks of receipt of the formal request for re-evaluation.

If a student fails one or more sub-sections of the qualifying examination, the examinations must be retaken the very next time they are offered. The student must retake only the section(s) the student failed on the first attempt. Students cannot delay re-taking the qualifying examinations. It must be retaken in the next offering. Failure to do so, without documentation of any extenuating circumstances, will be assigned a grade of "Fail" on all qualifying sections the student was supposed to retake. A grade of "Fail" in any one section of the qualifying examination in the second attempt will result in automatic termination from the program.

## **F. Comprehensive Examination**

The comprehensive examination (related to the concentration area) is organized in consultation with the major professor of the concentration area, the Doctoral Program Director and the Graduate Director of the department. To qualify for taking the comprehensive examination, students must pass the qualifying examination, complete all four doctoral seminars (HSPM 800) with a grade of S, and at least 2 of the three courses in their chosen concentration area. The student must be enrolled in the semester in which the comprehensive exam is taken. The comprehensive examination has two components: the written component and the oral presentation component. The written component of the comprehensive examination is a take-home examination in which the student is required to write an NIH R03-format proposal on a pre-determined research topic (see instructions in Annex A). Students should choose two faculty members from the department based on the student's concentration area. This committee will specify the general topic area/research question for the comprehensive examination. In most cases the faculty members will develop the research topic/question in consultation with the student to align the topic to the student's research interests. Students taking the examination must submit the research proposal based on the question(s) within 10 business days after receiving the assignment. The faculty members writing the question(s) will grade the student's work independently and will assign a grade of pass or fail or "revise and resubmit" (see grading rubric in Annex B). If both graders agree on the grade, the student will receive that grade as the final grade on the examination. If at least one of the faculty members assign a grade of "revise and resubmit", the student must revise the research proposal based on the comments received. If one of the graders assigns a grade of "pass" and the other grader assigns a grade of "fail", the Program Director will arrange a meeting between the two graders to come up with a consensus grade (pass, fail, or revise and resubmit). If the student is asked to revise and resubmit the proposal, the revised version must be submitted no later than 10 working days after the receipt of the grade and the comments. A student can only be assigned a grade of pass or fail on the revised research proposal. The revised research proposal must be completed and graded within the same semester in which the initial proposal was written.

The students receiving a passing grade on the written part of the exam (i.e., the R03 proposal)

will be asked to present the proposal at a doctoral student research seminar in the department. The oral presentation will be open to all HSPM students and faculty members. The oral presentation must be evaluated by at least two faculty members of the department and the student will be assigned a grade of “pass” or “fail” on the oral part of the examination. If a student receives a failing grade in the oral presentation part of the comprehensive examination, the student will be required to retake the oral part of the examination in the semester within the first month of the following semester.

In case of failure in either the written and/or oral sections of the comprehensive examination, the student will be allowed to retake a new examination in the following semester (after the semester of the first attempt). Failure to pass the examination on the second try will lead to termination from the doctoral program.

After completion of the comprehensive examination, students must submit to the Program Director, the comprehensive examination completion form (Annexure C of this handbook) signed by the faculty members conducting the examination. On receiving the completion form the Program Director will submit the required Graduate School form to document completion with the Graduate School (see <http://gradschool.sc.edu/forms/> for Doctoral Comprehensive Exam Verification form). The form signed by the academic advisor must be submitted to the department to be placed in the student’s academic file. This document is required to admit the student to doctoral candidacy and to be eligible to register for dissertation credits.

## G. Dissertation Proposal and Defense

Steps in this process include development of a dissertation concept paper, appointment of a doctoral Dissertation Committee, submission of the dissertation proposal, and defense of the dissertation proposal. Details on the requirements for a doctoral dissertation in the Department of Health Services Policy and Management are provided in section V. Information on Doctoral Dissertation below.

After completing the comprehensive examination, students should identify a Chair of their Dissertation Committee who will direct their dissertation research in consultation with the concerned faculty member. If necessary, the Doctoral Program Director will consult with the student about the student’s dissertation topic and assist in the selection of a faculty member to be contacted by the student to chair the Dissertation Committee. The student must prepare a short concept paper outlining his or her intended research project. The concept paper is then submitted to a faculty member within the Department of Health Services Policy and Management, with the request that the faculty member serve as the Dissertation Committee Chair. The Dissertation Committee Chair, who must be a current tenured or tenure-track faculty member of the University affiliated with the Department of Health Services Policy and Management, will guide the student in selecting the additional Committee members. The Committee must consist of at least four members, of whom 50% or more must be from the Department of Health Services Policy and Management and at least one member from another academic department of the University but having expertise in the research area of the student’s dissertation topic. Selection of the external committee member (s) must be consistent with the Graduate School policy on academic qualifications for Committee membership.

It is the student’s responsibility to consult with the Dissertation Committee Chair in selecting the remaining Committee members and requesting them to serve on the Dissertation Committee. Once the members have informally agreed to serve, the student must complete a Dissertation Committee appointment form and submit it to the Graduate Director through the Chair of the Dissertation Committee. Policies related to the formation of the Committee and the form to request appointment of the Committee can be found in <http://gradschool.sc.edu/forms/> under “Doctoral Committee Appointment Request”.

If the Dissertation Committee Chair subsequently becomes unaffiliated with the Department of Health Services Policy and Management, and the proposal defense is completed, he or she may continue to serve as the Chair until the dissertation is completed. However, unless the dissertation writing is close

to completion, the student should select a Co-Chair who meets the eligibility requirement to be a Dissertation Committee Chair and who remains affiliated with the Department.

Thirty days prior to the scheduled proposal defense, the dissertation proposal, focused on an original research question(s) must be given to each member of the Committee. The dissertation proposal has three chapters: an introduction and overview, which briefly outlines the importance of the topic and the questions to be examined (chapter 1) a detailed literature review (chapter 2), a detailed specification of the research objectives/aims and methods to be used in fulfilling the aims (chapter 3), and bibliography. 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 up to 2-hours to complete.

The Chair of the Dissertation Committee will notify the Graduate Director 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 notice boards and/or on 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 (pass/fail) and to recommend revisions to the dissertation proposal.

The student will be notified of the outcome of the 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 as a doctoral candidate; 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 exam, he or she must start the proposal defense process over. The Dissertation Chair, Doctoral Program Director, and other Committee members will determine if a new Committee must be formed and whether a new dissertation topic must be selected or if the current topic is acceptable but needs major revision. A student may only be allowed a proposal defense twice. Failure in the proposal defense on the second attempt will result in automatic termination from the program.

## H. Dissertation Defense

Doctoral candidates are required to prepare and successfully defend a dissertation based on original research. When the research and dissertation writing are 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. 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. The 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 the revised version of dissertation and the Committee decides whether to accept the revised version with or without another defense. The student will be automatically terminated from the program after failing the dissertation defense twice. The Chair of the Committee will notify the student and the Graduate School in writing of the outcome of the dissertation defense. To graduate in the semester of dissertation defense, the dissertation defense must be successfully completed within the specified date for the semester and also within 5 years of receiving a pass grade on the Comprehensive exam. The student must also submit the satisfactorily formatted dissertation to the Graduate School by the date specified for each semester. In the event the student does



not meet deadlines, the student will be required to register at least for one credit in the semester of graduation even if all required credit hours are completed.

## **I. Doctoral Residency Requirement**

The granting of a doctoral degree by the University of South Carolina requires a minimum of three full-time years of graduate study or equivalent. At least one year of full-time study (or the equivalent) must be spent in residence at the University of South Carolina in Columbia as described in the next paragraph.

The doctoral residence requirement may be satisfied only after matriculation in a doctoral degree program. The year of residence on the Columbia campus can be fulfilled by successful completion of two consecutive semesters of 9 or more graduate credit hours per semester, or three consecutive semesters of six or more graduate credit hours per semester. Enrollment in a summer term (both sessions) may be counted as equivalent to a semester, but enrollment in summer is not required to maintain continuity. Dissertation preparation (HSPM 899), independent study, or directed readings may not be used to satisfy the doctoral residence requirement.

The intent of the residency requirement is to ensure that doctoral students benefit from and contribute to the complete spectrum of educational and professional opportunities provided on the campus of a comprehensive university. When establishing residency, the student must interact with faculty and peers by regularly attending courses, conferences, and seminars, and may benefit from utilizing the library, Center for Teaching Excellence, the Writing Center, and laboratory facilities provided for graduate education.

## **IV. Student Responsibilities and Code of Ethics**

Students enrolled in any educational program within the Department of Health Services Policy and Management, including the PhD program, are required to demonstrate the highest ethical standards. These requirements pertain to both academic and professional behavior.

### **A. Academic standing in the doctoral program**

The Department sets a high standard of performance for students in all of the master and doctoral programs. Students earning a grade of C or lower in one or more courses in any given semester will be asked to reduce their graduate assistantship hours, if any, to increase their focus on coursework during the following semester. In the doctoral program, students must earn a minimum cumulative GPA of 3.0 (or B average) in the core courses to be eligible to appear in the qualifying examination and to continue in the doctoral program. If a student receives a grade of C or lower in any of the core PhD courses, the course(s) must be repeated. For all graduate students in the department, a minimum cumulative GPA of 3.0 is required for graduation. Any student who earns a grade of U or C (or lower grade in coursework) in three graduate courses/dissertation credits or two semesters of U grades against HSPM 899 credits will be placed on departmental academic probation. This requires development of a written remediation plan by the student which should be approved by the faculty academic advisor and the Graduate Director. The plan should document the roadmap to overcome the academic challenges and restoration of good academic standing going forward. Students who receive their third and fourth course grade of U or C or lower concurrently in the same semester will be automatically terminated without the remedial plan given the temporal impossibility to address the issue after the third U or C.

### **B. Academic termination**

A student enrolled in the HSPM doctoral program will be terminated from the program if any of the following occur:

- Student receives four course grades of C or lower or any combination of four grades of U and C or lower in graduate courses other than HSPM 899.
- Student receives a grade of C or lower in a core course twice.
- Student fails twice any part of the qualifying examination, the comprehensive examination, proposal defense, or final dissertation defense.
- Student receives a grade of U in three semesters of dissertation research HSPM 899, irrespective of the credit hours taken in each semester.

### C. Academic Integrity

Students are expected to adhere to all requirements of the Carolinian Creed ([www.sa.sc.edu/creed/](http://www.sa.sc.edu/creed/)). Please especially note that the student is held accountable to this Creed even if violated inadvertently. Any episode of dishonesty, cheating, or plagiarism in any form is cause for failure of an assignment, an examination, or a course. In addition, the department is required to report the case to the Office of Academic Integrity of the University. Students may wish to refresh their understanding of the appropriate use of citations when drafting papers and other assignments to prevent inadvertent plagiarism stemming from lack of information. A second episode of violation of academic honesty is grounds for dismissal from the program.

### D. Professional Responsibility

Graduate assistantships and residencies are intended to serve as an extension of the teaching and mission of the Department of Health Services Policy and Management, by giving students work experience in the public health, health services, or research environments in which they will eventually pursue careers. While serving in on- or off-campus graduate assistantships, students are representatives of the Department. As such, they must comport themselves with total professionalism at all times.

Students participating in extramural assistantships will follow the dress code of their worksite. All students will comply with the work hours associated with their assistantship site. While at work, all students will ensure that their level of effort, conduct, and contribution to the work environment meets and, preferably, exceeds sponsor expectations. All students are expected to follow the professional code of conduct at all times, in or outside the classroom.

All U of SC students are bound by and held accountable to the code of academic integrity, available at <http://www.sc.edu/policies/ppm/staf625.pdf> and are required to commit to observe the Carolinian Creed at all times,

[https://sc.edu/about/offices\\_and\\_divisions/student\\_affairs/our\\_initiatives/involvement\\_and\\_leadership/carolinian\\_creed/index.php](https://sc.edu/about/offices_and_divisions/student_affairs/our_initiatives/involvement_and_leadership/carolinian_creed/index.php)



## V. INFORMATION ON DOCTORAL DISSERTATION

### *Definition of a HSPM Doctoral Dissertation*

As the culminating experience in a doctoral program, a successful dissertation is the report of an *original* and *significant contribution* to health services research and/or public health practice as initially judged by the candidate's doctoral Dissertation Committee. Clarification of these terms are provided below as they apply to HSPM PhD students:

- "Original" means that, although the candidate will have made use of the contributions of others' research, the research question addressed, body of work undertaken, and intellectual contribution made are clearly the candidate's own and new to the field. Thus, candidates may not employ other individuals to create any part of the dissertation, regardless of whether the candidate supervises the work.
- "Significant contribution" means that the outcomes of the research advance our knowledge of a demonstrably important aspect of health services research or public health practice as judged by peer scholars. The contribution may stem from new primary data, new analysis of secondary data, or evaluation of a new policy or public health program. One criterion of worthiness is that the research and its results are deemed by the Committee to have sufficient merit, warranting serious consideration for publication in one or more peer-reviewed journals.
- It is expected that doctoral candidates will demonstrate competent application of research methods and statistical tools relevant to the research undertaken. As noted, the services of others may not be hired for this purpose.
- Dissertation proposals will be approved if the Committee members judge the proposed research to be original, clearly capable of being a significant contribution to scientific knowledge or public health, and feasible to conduct.
- All dissertation proposals, questionnaires, and related documents must comply with ethics review guidelines current at the time of review. With the advice of the Dissertation Committee Chair, each student is responsible for submitting all required documentation in the manner requested. If the research involves human subjects, the dissertation proposal must present clear evidence of formal approval from an Institutional Review Board BEFORE any research is undertaken.

### *Concept Paper development*

To expedite effective proposal development and review, candidates are advised to use the following structured guide when developing the concept paper for their proposals:

- Importance of Proposed Research: Explain how the proposed research meets the requirements for originality in producing what is expected to be a significant contribution to health services research.
- Objective(s): Describe the general nature of expected or possible outcomes in measurable terms.
- Setting/Participants: Describe site(s) of research with all relevant detail. Then identify the subjects and other participants who are the object of the research, likely to be affected by its outcome, or connected with it. Alternatively, describe the data source and validity of data source to answer your research questions.
- Research Design, Statistical Applications, & Main Outcome Measures: Explain the relevance of the research design and statistical applications and packages to the conduct of the research. Then identify the proposed outcome measure with an appropriate rationale.

- Ethical Procedures Approval, Institutional Review Board (IRB): While IRB clearance is sought only after final approval of the research proposal by the dissertation committee, students should demonstrate knowledge of ethical issues that may affect their planned research (subject protection, data protection, etc.) at the concept stage.

### ***Dissertation Formats***

HSPM dissertations may take one of two formats, the traditional dissertation monograph or a series of related publication-ready manuscripts. The format is to be decided in advance by the student and his or her Dissertation Committee chair. All students must prepare the first three chapters in the outline below; this content forms the basis for the oral proposal defense. Following the completion of the proposed research, the format could be either completion of the remainder of the monograph or preparing the agreed-upon manuscripts.

#### Dissertation monograph:

The dissertation monograph submitted by HSPM students has a five-chapter format:

Chapter One: Introduction. A brief statement of the topic to be examined and its importance.

Chapter Two: Literature Review. A thorough review of all literature pertinent to the topic in question. The literature should be focused on developing the specific hypotheses to be tested through the student's research, and the chapter should end by stating those hypotheses in testable form.

Chapter Three: Methods. A complete outline of all methods to be used in carrying out the proposed research including study design and data sources. At a minimum, variables must be defined, and analytic techniques specified for each hypothesis.

Chapter Four: Results. A presentation of the results of the research. Ideally, this presentation is organized by hypothesis.

OR Manuscript 1 if the agreed format)

Chapter Five: Conclusions and Recommendations. A summary of the implications of the research, and recommendations for continuation of the research by future investigators.

OR Manuscript 2 (and 3 if agreed prior as a 3 manuscripts format)

#### Manuscripts for publication format:

Ph.D. students are highly encouraged to choose the manuscripts format, with the concurrence of their Dissertation Committee chair. As noted, students choosing this format will be required to complete the first three chapters of the dissertation, as part of the research presentation for defending their dissertation proposal. If the manuscripts format is agreed upon in writing at the time of proposal defense, the student will follow this format in preparing the final dissertation draft. When submitting the final draft, the usual concluding chapters ("Results" and "Conclusions and Recommendations") will be replaced by two or more manuscripts. Per Graduate School guidelines for a manuscript format dissertation, a final chapter (Chapter Six) will be added that integrates the findings and implications of the two papers. Manuscript topics will have been agreed upon as part of the proposal defense. All materials must be reviewed and approved by the student's Dissertation Committee and the Dissertation Committee Chair, as with a formally structured dissertation.

## **Annex A: R03 Proposal Preparation Instructions for Comprehensive Examination (detailed guidelines will be provided along with the topic assignment)**

- **Title of proposal:** Limited to 81 characters (includes spaces and punctuation marks).
- **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).
- **Project Narrative:**
  - No more than 2 or 3 sentences.
  - Describe the relevance to public health.
  - Be succinct and use plain language appropriate for a lay audience.
- **Specific Aims:** 1-page limit, single spaced, Arial 11-point font, narrow margins (1/2 inch) allowed). The Specific Aims page does 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 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.).
- **Research Strategy:** Prepare a 6-page document excluding the bibliography (same font and other formatting guidelines as above). This section includes the following new headings: Significance, Innovation, and 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



# WRITTEN REVIEW TEMPLATE FOR STUDENTS RESPONDING TO

## Qualifying II (R03 Format Guidance)

Principal Investigator(s):

Reviewer Name:

PRELIMINARY OVERALL IMPACT SCORE (From 1 to 9): \_\_\_\_\_

### Overall Impact

*Reviewers will provide an overall impact score to reflect their assessment of the likelihood for the project to exert a sustained, powerful influence on the research field(s) involved, in consideration of the following review criteria and additional review criteria (as applicable for the project proposed). - See more at:*

#### Strengths

•

#### Weaknesses

•

### INDIVIDUAL CRITERION SCORE: (Score from 1 to 9)

*Reviewers will consider each of the review criteria below in the determination of scientific merit, and give a separate score for each. An application does not need to be strong in all categories to be judged likely to have major scientific impact. For example, a project that by its nature is not innovative may be essential to advance a field. -*

Significance: \_\_\_\_\_

Innovation: \_\_\_\_\_

Approach: \_\_\_\_\_

#### 1. Significance:

- *Does this study address an important scientific area or critical barrier to progress in the field of health services research? If the aims of the application are achieved, how will scientific knowledge or clinical practice be advanced?*
- *What will be the effect of this study on the concepts, methods, technologies, treatments, services, or preventative interventions that drive health services research?*
- *Is there a strong scientific premise for the project?*

#### Strengths

•

#### Weaknesses

•

#### 2. Innovation:

- *Is the project original and innovative? For example: Does the project challenge current research and seek to shift existing research or clinical practice paradigms; address an innovative hypothesis or critical barrier to progress in the field of health services research?*
- *Does the project develop or employ novel concepts, approaches, methodologies, interventions, tools, or technologies for the proposed area of study?*

#### Strengths

- 

## **Weaknesses**

- 

### **3. Approach:**

- *Are the overall strategy, methodology, and analyses well-reasoned and appropriate to accomplish the specific aims of the project?*
- *Are potential problems, alternative strategies, and benchmarks for success presented? If the project is in the early stages of development, will the strategy establish feasibility and will any particularly risky aspects be managed?*
- *Have the investigators presented strategies to ensure a robust and unbiased approach, as appropriate for the work proposed?*
- *Have the investigators presented adequate plans to address relevant biological variables, such as sex, for studies in human subjects*

## **Strengths**

- 

## **Weaknesses**

-

**Annex C: Comprehensive Examination for PhD Students  
Department of Health Services Policy and Management  
University of South Carolina, Columbia, SC.**

Name of student:

Date of written exam:

Names of faculty members  
grading written exam:

Oral exam completion date:

	First grader	Second grader	Third grader
Written exam grade (Pass=P, Fail=F)			

Exam question (summarize if needed)

Title of the written document submitted by the student

Oral presentation grade (Pass=P, Fail=F)

First grader	Second grader	Third grader
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Date of oral exam

Signature of faculty members: Signature of faculty member 1: \_\_\_\_\_

Signature of faculty member 2: \_\_\_\_\_



**Annexure D. Doctoral Student Progression Tracking form (Fall 2021 onwards)**

Name of Student: \_\_\_\_\_

Course number	Course title	Semester / Year	Professor	Credit hrs	Grade/ waived
<b>PH Core courses</b>					
PUBH 700				3	
EPID 701	Introduct. to Epidemiology			3	
BIOS 700	Introduct. To Biostatistics				
<b>Doctoral core courses</b>					
HSPM 845	Advanced topics in HSPM I			3	
HSPM 846	Advanced topics in HSPM II			3	
HSPM 717	Introductory methods for Econometric analysis			3	
HSPM 719	HS Research Methods II			3	
HSPM 830	Advanced data structures and analytic methods			3	
BIOS 757	Intermediate Biometrics			3	
HSPM 800	Doctoral Seminar			1	
HSPM 800	Doctoral Seminar			1	
HSPM 800	Doctoral Seminar			1	
HSPM 800	Doctoral Seminar			1	
<b>Concentration area courses (3 courses for PhD)</b>					
				3	
<b>Electives (includes electives transferred from other institutions or courses within U if SC)</b>					
<b>Qualifying exam (first attempt) date:</b>			<b>Qualifying exam (second attempt) date:</b>		
Hlth policy+M	Research methods		Hlth policy+M	Research methods	
Pass/Fail	Pass/Fail		Pass/Fail	Pass/Fail	
<b>Comprehensive exam</b>					
Attempt 1 date		Pass/Fail	Attempt 2 date:		Pass/Fail
<b>Other courses not counted towards doctoral program</b>					
<b>Dissertation</b>	<b>Semester, Year</b>	<b>Semester, Year</b>	<b>Semester, Year</b>	<b>Semester, Year</b>	<b>Semester, Year</b>
HSPM 899					
<b>Teaching and Research requirements (For PhD program only)</b>				Completed?	Semester
Teaching requirements. Record Yes if completed and Semester and year in which complete		(a) TA training (mandatory)			
		(b) Future faculty training OR 3 CTE seminars			
		(c) Teaching 1 session, mentored			
		(d) Presented doc. student seminar			
Research requirement		(a) Research involvement			

**Final defense date:** \_\_\_\_\_, **Graduated:** Semester \_\_\_\_\_, Year \_\_\_\_\_

**(PH core courses are not required with prior MPH or MHA degree). PH core and BIOS 700 are not counted towards doctoral program credits**