

2023-2024

**DEPARTMENT OF  
HEALTH SERVICES POLICY AND  
MANAGEMENT**

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

Approved \_\_\_2023



**UNIVERSITY OF  
SOUTH CAROLINA**

---

**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

## **Resources for students**

### **Logistics and administrative**

#### **Housing (on- & off-campus)**

[https://sc.edu/study/international\\_accelerator/prepare\\_for\\_your\\_program/forms/housing\\_pg/index.php](https://sc.edu/study/international_accelerator/prepare_for_your_program/forms/housing_pg/index.php)

[https://sc.edu/about/offices\\_and\\_divisions/off\\_campus\\_living\\_and\\_neighborhood\\_relations/index.php](https://sc.edu/about/offices_and_divisions/off_campus_living_and_neighborhood_relations/index.php)

#### **Key dates: USC academic calendar**

[https://sc.edu/about/offices\\_and\\_divisions/registrar/academic\\_calendars/index.php](https://sc.edu/about/offices_and_divisions/registrar/academic_calendars/index.php)

#### **Tuition and fees**

[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)

#### **Graduate School forms for students**

<http://gradschool.sc.edu/forms/>

#### **HSPM PhD program handbook on the web**

[https://www.sc.edu/study/colleges\\_schools/public\\_health/documents/hspm\\_phd\\_handbook.pdf](https://www.sc.edu/study/colleges_schools/public_health/documents/hspm_phd_handbook.pdf)

### **Scholarship & Professional development**

#### **University of South Carolina Community Education** (required for all students)

[https://www.sc.edu/study/colleges\\_schools/graduate\\_school/new\\_students/community\\_education\\_courses/index.php](https://www.sc.edu/study/colleges_schools/graduate_school/new_students/community_education_courses/index.php)

#### **Graduate School Resources for all graduate students**

Purpose: to facilitate an integrated educational and campus-life experience, professional development, and networking opportunities:

[https://sc.edu/study/colleges\\_schools/graduate\\_school/opportunities\\_support/the\\_grad\\_hub/index.php](https://sc.edu/study/colleges_schools/graduate_school/opportunities_support/the_grad_hub/index.php)

#### **Improve your pedagogical skills – Center for Teaching Excellence**

[https://sc.edu/about/offices\\_and\\_divisions/cte/](https://sc.edu/about/offices_and_divisions/cte/)

[https://sc.edu/about/offices\\_and\\_divisions/cte/events\\_calendar/index.php](https://sc.edu/about/offices_and_divisions/cte/events_calendar/index.php)

### **Campus life and Miscellaneous**

#### **Student organizations**

<https://www.sc.edu/search/?cx=013416120310277204335%3Awk85hzl5qdq&q=student+organizations#gsc.tab=0&gsc.q=student%20organizations&gsc.page=1>

#### **Campus recreation**

[https://sc.edu/about/offices\\_and\\_divisions/campus\\_recreation/](https://sc.edu/about/offices_and_divisions/campus_recreation/)

#### **Recreational events**

<https://garnetgate.sa.sc.edu/events>

#### **Mental health, crisis counselling, allied health resources**

[https://sc.edu/about/offices\\_and\\_divisions/health\\_services/mental-health/get-help.php](https://sc.edu/about/offices_and_divisions/health_services/mental-health/get-help.php)



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

## Contents

I.	About the Department of Health Services Policy and Management.....	2
	<i>A. Mission, Vision, Goals, and Objectives.....</i>	2
II.	The Doctoral Program – Overview of program goals.....	3
	Admission Criteria and Application Requirements.....	4
	Financial support .....	5
	Course load for part-time students.....	5
	PhD Curriculum.....	5
	Teaching requirements of the HSPM PhD program.....	11
	Research engagement requirement.....	12
	<i>A. Other information about academic credits, grades .....</i>	13
	<i>B. Time Limits .....</i>	13
	<i>C. Qualifying Examination .....</i>	14
	<i>D. Comprehensive Examination .....</i>	14
	<i>E. Dissertation Defense .....</i>	16
	<i>F. Doctoral Residency Requirement.....</i>	17
III.	Student Responsibilities and Code of Ethics.....	17
	<i>A. Academic standing in the doctoral program.....</i>	18
	<i>B. Academic termination.....</i>	18
	<i>C. Academic Integrity.....</i>	18
	<i>D. Professional responsibility in graduate assistantship and internship roles ..</i>	18
IV.	THE DOCTORAL DISSERTATION.....	19
	Definition of a HSPM Doctoral Dissertation .....	19
	Concept Paper development .....	19
	Dissertation Formats .....	20
	Annex A: Comprehensive examination: R03 Proposal Preparation Instructions ...	22
	Annex B: R03 Proposal Grading Rubric .....	23
	WRITTEN REVIEW TEMPLATE TO RESPOND TO R03 PROPOSAL SUBMITTED BY THE STUDENTS.....	24
	Annex C: Comprehensive Examination Grade for PhD Students Department of Health Services Policy and Management University of South Carolina, Columbia, SC.....	26
	Annex D. Doctoral Student Progression Tracking form .....	27
	Appendix: About the Arnold School of Public Health.....	28

## **I. About 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 (HSPM) 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 HSPM Department seeks to excel in graduate education and research in health services and policy 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 educational programs that are continually improved to respond to the changing needs of the dynamic health services and policy 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.

## II. The Doctoral Program – Overview of program goals

Our Doctor of Philosophy (PhD) program seeks to equip doctoral students with the vision, knowledge and skills required to make a substantive impact on health services, health policy and healthcare management through teaching, research and policy leadership roles.

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 recognize the strengths and limitations of 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 be able to develop conceptual frameworks to understand and inform health care improvement, 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)
- Effective instruction on health services, health policy and health services research at the graduate and/or undergraduate level. (Teaching practicum).

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

- Master's degree in Health Administration, Business Administration, Public Health, Economics or discipline relevant to public health, health services policy, or healthcare management. Students without previous graduate work in public health or in statistics/biostatistics will be required to complete make-up coursework that does not count towards doctoral program credits..
- An academically exceptional student can be admitted with a bachelor's degree, provided they satisfy at least the academic and standardized test score standards prescribed for applicants with a graduate degree, and if admission is approved by the doctoral committee. Applicants should contact the PhD program director or their mentor of choice based on faculty CVs to receive guidance about suitability to apply before applying to the program. seeking to considered.
- Prior graduate coursework with at least a 3.25 grade point average (based on 4.0 scale).
- Graduate Record Examination, GRE scores at or higher than the 50<sup>th</sup> percentile in verbal and quantitative reasoning are expected. GMAT scores may be submitted in lieu of GRE scores. The GRE/GMAT requirement can be waived for applicants with health-related terminal degrees from United States institutions (e.g. MD, JD, DDS, DMD) on a case-by-case basis, upon contacting the program director before submitting an application. Lower GRE scores will be weighed against the candidate's total portfolio, specifically, GPA in prior coursework relevant to research/analysis skills, personal statement of career and research goals, previous research accomplishments and engagement in research including data analysis, and performance in the interview.
- For international applicants whose native language is not English, scores from the Test of English as a Foreign Language (TOEFL), IELTS, Intl. Academic Course Type 2 exam, PTE Academic, or Duolingo are required. The minimum acceptable TOEFL score is 80 (Internet-based test), 570 (paper-based), IELTS Intl. Academic Course Type 2, 6.5, PTE Academic, 53, and 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) A completed degree program in the US or other, native English-speaking countries (e.g., U.K., N.Z., Australia) will qualify for a waiver of English proficiency test scores.
- Three letters of recommendation from professional supervisors or academic instructors/advisors/mentors who can assess the applicant's academic and professional performance and abilities.
  - A reflective career goal statement with a focus on their research interests, past work or life experiences that have prepared or motivated them for a research career, if applicable, reflections on completed or in-process research or professional projects (including graduate research or practicum projects), and how they see the HSPM department and/or faculty's research being aligned with their career goal and research interests. In preparing the career statement, applicants are encouraged to review the PhD program curriculum and the curriculum vitae (CV) of HSPM faculty members to 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.
- A current curriculum vita should be submitted.
- Optional: Copies of peer-reviewed publications in which the applicant played a substantive role, if any

### **Selection procedure**

- Based on review of applications, the PhD Committee short-lists applicants for interview by a department faculty member identified by the student as a potential mentor based on allied research interests (and on occasion by multiple faculty with interests allied to those of the student). The faculty member submits an interview report to the PhD Committee, which is used together with the applicant's total portfolio to make the admission decision.

### ***Financial support***

HSPM offers a competitive financial support package for full-time PhD students in residence in Columbia who are not sponsored by governments or other agencies. Students are provided a stipend (currently \$18,000 per academic year), plus full coverage of tuition, fees, and health insurance for the first two academic years. During this period, most of the required doctoral coursework can be completed. The total amount of the award at the 2022-23 tuition and fee rate is \$36,519 per year. Continuation of funding support in Year 2 is subject to satisfactory academic performance (GPA of 3.4 or better) and graduate assistant performance. The Department also covers HSPM's one-time matriculation fee of \$1,000 in the first year. Students can earn additional amounts by working as a research assistant during the summer (amounts subject to grant funds) that could increase the stipend to \$21,000 a year or more. Applicants with exceptional credentials are also named as Arnold Fellows. Only a select number of doctoral students conferred this honor.

Financially supported students should enroll as full-time students in-residence in Columbia for 10 – 13 credit hours per semester in fall and spring. They will also work 20 hours per week as a graduate assistant (research or teaching) with their assigned advisor during the fall and spring semesters. Financially supported students cannot undertake significant outside employment unless approved in advance by the program director. While funding beyond the first two years is not guaranteed at admission, most students find research assistantship positions with faculty on grant-funded research projects to support themselves during the remainder of their time in the program (including tuition support if the grant includes such assistance).

In addition to departmental opportunities for financial support, applicants with very high GRE scores, scholarly and other meritorious accomplishments, and/or other qualifying criteria may be nominated by the Department for competitive university-level scholarships, such as the Presidential fellowship and the Grace McFadden fellowship.

### ***Course load for part-time students***

Students who are working full-time can enroll as part-time students (6-7 credit hours in fall and spring). Financial support is not offered for part-time students.

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

International students are required to maintain full-time status (minimum 9 credits each fall and spring) throughout their program and remain in good academic standing (GPA >3.0) to retain valid student visa status. A full-time student may enroll for fewer than full-time credits during later semesters if all required course work is completed and the student acquires "Z" status (described 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 permitted is 30 hours). 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 prior graduate coursework may be transferred. Transfer credits must be approved by the student's advisor and Program Director during their first year, based on relevance to the HSPM doctoral program or the student's planned focus area or dissertation work. The minimum credits to be completed at USC is 42 hours, including 12 dissertation hours. To receive transfer credits, students should submit the Doctoral Program of Study (DPOS) listing all courses and timeline of coursework and dissertation planned to be completed at USC. The form can be found at <http://gradschool.sc.edu/forms/> and select [Doctoral Program of Study form](#). In addition, course syllabi of the proposed transfer credits, transcript showing a B or



better grade on these courses, and a signed memo to the doctoral program director requesting the transfer must be submitted.

For full admission to the doctoral program of study without pre-requisite statistics courses, the applicant should show documentation of proficiency in one or more statistical analysis software used in our required courses (e.g., STATA, SAS, R). It could be a grade of B or better in a statistics course that used the software, or certification of course completion on the statistical software. Other ways to demonstrate proficiency is to perform data analyses as assigned by the faculty advisor, or show job history involving use of statistical software packages. If not documented, the student will be advised into 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 absence of prior graduate coursework in statistics or biostatistics.

Full-time students must complete the departmental core courses as well as courses in a concentration area within the first two years of study unless they came in with pre-requisite courses to be completed. Completing four of the five departmental core courses with a B or better grade (see below) is a pre-requisite for taking the Qualifying examination. Completion of the HSPM 800 seminars and 9 credits of concentration area courses, and passing the Qualifying examination are required to be eligible to take the Comprehensive examination. A grade of B or better in each core course is required, failing which the course must be retaken the next time it is offered, earning a B or better grade. If a B or better grade is not earned on the second attempt, the student cannot continue in the PhD program. Enrollment in courses requires approval of the student's academic advisor and is documented in the Advisement Form that is completed prior to the start of the semester. Students are responsible to schedule advisement meetings with their advisor well in advance of the semester end-date to ensure timely advisement, enrollment and tuition coverage for the upcoming semester.

### **Doctoral dissertation phase**

Students are admitted to doctoral candidacy by the Graduate School after passing the qualifying and comprehensive examinations. At this point, students can register for dissertation credit hours (HSPM 899) under the supervision of a faculty member, typically the Chair of the Dissertation Committee who becomes the student's academic advisor. The Dissertation Committee Chair may be different from the academic advisor first assigned at admission into the program. On occasion, if the Chair is not yet determined, HSPM 899 may be taken under a faculty member with expertise in the dissertation topic area, who then serves as the academic advisor until a dissertation committee Chair is identified. Students must communicate any planned change of academic advisor to their current advisor and the PhD program director.

If qualifying and comprehensive examinations are delayed, the student 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. It is important for the student to make steady progress in conceptualizing the dissertation project, forming the Dissertation Committee, completing the research, and writing the dissertation per Graduate School guidelines. Satisfactory progression (grade of T) is determined by the advisor if the student is judged to have made adequate progress, else a grade of "U" (unsatisfactory) is assigned. As general guidance, at the end of the first semester registered for 3 credits of HSPM 899, the student should have identified a dissertation research topic and prepared a concept paper along with the bibliography and potential data sources (if applicable). Once the concept paper is approved by the advisor, over the next semester, the student should form the Dissertation Committee in consultation with the advisor and obtain approval from committee members. 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 in principle, by the committee chair. Thereafter, students registered for HSPM 899 must show consistent and substantive progress towards the proposal draft completion, proposal defense, data analysis, write-up, and final dissertation defense. If a candidate fails to demonstrate satisfactory progress, the advisor/committee chair may assign a grade of unsatisfactory (U). Receiving a grade of "U" in a third semester of HSPM 899 credits will lead to termination from the doctoral program.

When taking HSPM 899, the student is eligible to request for “Z-status” enrollment (1-5 credits, less than full-time enrollment) if all other coursework is completed. Z-status students are considered full-time students irrespective of the number of HSPM 899 credits enrolled. Students have to apply to the Graduate School for Z status with appropriate documentation and approval of their advisor. Z status approval is required for the following purposes: a) seeking graduate assistantship with less than full-time enrollment, b) applying for financial aid, c) receiving a scholarship that requires full enrollment, d) receiving a tuition supplement from faculty grants or other university source, e) international students. Students who do not fall within the above groups do not need to apply for Z status.

No more than eight academic semesters of Z-status enrollment are approved. If requesting Z-status beyond 8 semesters, the student is required to submit documentation of their scholarly accomplishments while in the program, the progress achieved towards dissertation completion, and the dissertation completion timeline, signed by their dissertation advisor and provide it to the Program Director, who will prepare a written justification of the request for z-status extension.

**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 inadequate statistics training</b>	
BIOS 700 (students without an introductory graduate biostatistics course or equivalent with a B or better grade)	3 hours
BIOS 757 (students without 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 of intermediate biostatistics courses 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 (HSPM 845) (Health system designs, financing, performance, and outcomes)	3 hours
Advanced Topics in Health Policy & Management II (HSPM 846) (Health care content, theories, design and delivery)	3 hours
Health Services Research Methods I (HSPM 717) (Introductory econometrics for policy analysis)	3 hours
Health Services Research Methods II (HSPM 719) (Introduction to health services research)	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

<b><i>Dissertation:</i></b>	12 hours
<b><i>Total credit hours</i></b>	<b><i>60 hours</i></b>

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

### ***Transfer credits***

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 (based on syllabus review). If the master's work was completed in HSPM at USC (HSPM MPH or MHA degree), only 9 credits from those 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 five MPH core 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. No more than 12 credits can be shared between two degree programs of USC, regardless of discipline. The maximum credits usable from prior graduate work is 18 credits from all sources. In such case it would reduce the doctoral coursework requirement to 30 credits excluding 12 dissertation credits. The Department will determine eligibility for course transfer based on the syllabus. More details are available in a later section on Academic requirements of the program.

### ***Doctoral Seminar (HSPM 800 credits)***

Four doctoral seminars of 1 credit each are to be completed in sequence, with a grade of

“satisfactory” (S), to be eligible for the Comprehensive examination.

- HSPM 800 (Section 001): Faculty research presentations (Fall, Year 1) – Each session, one faculty member presents their completed or ongoing research, providing an overview of the research area and details of one (or more) research projects. Following the presentation, students submit a reflective summary to the instructor. Seminar 1 (HSPM 800 Section 001) has two goals: i) to introduce students to faculty research early in the program, generate connections for planning students' own research and seek specialty-specific mentorship, and ii) to present a model of how research works and to familiarize students with the steps of research, which will be elaborated in subsequent sections of HSPM 800. Ideally, the faculty presentations will have all or some of the required elements of a typical 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 to the research process, students will use the winter break to identify a potential research topic area of interest based on a literature review and identifying specific knowledge gaps to prepare for Section 002.
- HSPM 800 (Section 002): Preparing the Specific Aims section of an original research proposal to the National Institutes of Health (First half of spring, Year 1) – The seminar goal is to enable students to translate their research interests into a tangible research project with specific aims. It covers: 1) Introduction to NIH mission and goals, and how to craft the specific aims section. 2) Hands-on preparation of successive drafts to finalize each student's specific aims section for a health services research proposal on their chosen topic. 3) Providing and receiving constructive critiques in the spirit of peer review. Fellow students and the instructor serve as reviewers of drafts to provide constructive comments. 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, preparing the student for HSPM 800, Section 3.
- HSPM 800 (Section 003): Study Significance and Conceptual Framework section of the Research Strategy section of a R03 proposal (Second half of spring, Year 1) – This section

- covers: 1) Principles and guidelines for preparing an impactful “Project background, significance and conceptual framework” section of an R03 proposal. 2) Hands-on development of drafts of the above sections, 3) Using/developing a theoretical or conceptual framework as applicable to inform their research, and graphically communicating the planned study at a glance. Several theoretical frameworks commonly used in HSR will be reviewed as it applies to students’ planned research projects. During this seminar students will continue to refine their specific aims as they develop a supporting conceptual framework and the study significance for public health and health services improvement.
- HSPM 800 (Section 004) Approach section of the Research Strategy (Fall Year 2) – This seminar covers guidelines for developing the methods section, including developing drafts covering data sources, variables, analytical approach, and statistical/qualitative research methods to address the specific aims.

The seminar courses are graded as satisfactory (S) or unsatisfactory (U). For satisfactory grade, the student must complete the requirements specified by the instructor and must have attended the monthly doctoral research seminars of the semester (not for credit). Attendance at a doctoral 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.

***Academic performance, maintaining academic standing, academic probation.***

The doctoral Program Director, in consultation with the respective academic advisors maintains general oversight of the academic performance of doctoral students/candidates. At matriculation, the 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.

To maintain good academic standing, all doctoral 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. If not maintained, the student enters academic probation, which may end in termination from the program if not remediated as outlined below. Other than HSPM 899 (dissertation credits), a grade of U in a graduate course (doctoral seminar, HSPM 800) 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, which is lifted after their GPA is restored to 3.0 or higher. Academic probation is also instituted upon receiving a U in HSPM 800 or HSPM 899 or other graduate course after having received two C grades on graduate courses other than the doctoral core courses. Across all coursework taken since entering 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 highly encouraged to proactively engage with their course instructor and undertake remedial work before they receive the final course grade at or below C or U. Students should also consult with their academic advisor when facing academic difficulties to receive counsel on remedial measures, such as withdrawing from a course, making adjustments to graduate assistantship obligations, or other measures. If necessary, students may withdraw from a course before the WF deadline, the date when a W (Withdrawal) translates into a WF grade (Fail grade) in the transcript and the GPA. If personal circumstances justify leave of absence for the remaining part of the semester, students may take an approved leave of absence (with documentation) for one or two semesters. During the dissertation phase, a second U grade for dissertation credits (HSPM 899) will result in academic

probation (regardless of credit hours registered), and a third U will result in termination from the program. Courses/credits with grades below C, and grades of WF or U will not be counted towards the required credits for graduation.

Absence for an academic semester (i.e. not enrolling 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 effective in the semester of readmission (per the prevailing year PhD program handbook) will supersede those in effect at the time of initial admission.

### **Required courses, Sequence of coursework**

#### **a) Additional courses for doctoral students entering the program 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 courses and BIOS 700 do not count towards doctoral program 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 the BIOS 757 requirement. Note that pre-requisite courses may require the student to defer taking the qualifying examination after the usual timing (end of Year 1) if the schedule of required HSPM core courses is affected.

#### **b) Plan of Study for full-time students (for a planned qualifying exam at the end of Year 1):**

*Completion of HSPM 845, 846, 717 and 719 is required 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**

	Credits
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 skills)	3
Doctoral Seminar (HSPM 800 Section 001)	1
Potential elective/Concentration area course	3
Complete CITI (Research ethics) training	0
Fall Year 1 total	10-13

#### **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, Sections 002, 003) 1-credit hour each	2
Advanced Data Structures and Analytic Methods (HSPM 830)	3 (Spr. Year 1 or 2)
Potential elective/Concentration area course (if not taking HSPM 830)	3
Spring Year 1 total	11-14 credits

**Qualifying exam, usually taken at end of Summer Year 1****Fall Year 2**

Doctoral Seminar (HSPM 800 Section 004, one credit hour)	1
Concentration courses and Elective courses	9-12
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 720 Health Services Research Methods III (Elective) (Treatment effect estimation using observational data)	3
HSPM 791 Applied methods for health services research and policy evaluation (Elective)	3
Other concentration/Elective courses	3
Spring Year 2 total	12 credits

*(All 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
--	-----------

**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:**

Other electives as desired  
HSPM 899 (required to maintain active doctoral student status until dissertation defense)

(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, and aim to achieve doctoral candidacy status in Fall Year 3.)

Note:

<i>Electives without credit transfer</i>	<b>20</b>
<i>Electives with credit transfer</i>	<b>20 minus transfer credits</b>

***Teaching requirements of the HSPM PhD program***

All doctoral students are required to participate in the required teaching activities without compensation. The requirements must be completed between matriculation and dissertation proposal defense, as follows:

- Complete GRAD 701 (0 credits), and the Teaching Assistant workshop,

- Complete at least 3 workshops on improving teaching and classroom effectiveness skills (1-2 hour sessions each, no extra cost) offered in academic semesters by the Center for Teaching Excellence CTE. Students should obtain documentation of attendance
- In lieu of 3 teaching excellence workshops, students may 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 HSPM doctoral student research seminar series
- 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

The teaching requirements must be completed before requesting the date for dissertation proposal defense. The student must submit a letter with documentation of completion to the Program Director to be cleared for graduation.

### ***Research engagement requirement***

All doctoral students are required to participate in departmental research activities. A student may work on funded/other research projects with their advisor or other faculty for compensation and in addition, 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:

- CITI training in research ethics (Fall Year 1), at the minimum, the Social and Behavioral Responsible Conduct of Research certification, and,
- One of the following:
  - Present at least one poster or oral presentation at a state, regional, national or international conference based on mentored research, OR
  - Publish an article in a reputable peer-reviewed journal as a first or significant contributing author.

These requirements must be satisfied before the student can request a date for the dissertation defense. The student must submit a letter with documentation of completion to the Program Director.

### ***University of South Carolina Community courses***

The University of South Carolina offers 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 complete 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 **mid-July** and should be completed no later than **mid-September**.

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 **in mid-November**.

To access the courses, students will use the online platform of [Self Service Carolina](#) after advisement and

registration for coursework of the first fall semester. Log-in information will be sent directly to incoming students and links to information will be 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).

## A. Other information about academic credits, grades

Students must complete 60 graduate credit hours. With approval of the Program 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 regarding degree type and institution listed under the section, Transfer credits. Graduate coursework requested for credit transfer must be recent (within a 10-year period preceding the anticipated date of doctoral graduation), relevant to the student's doctoral plan of study or research topic, 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 MPH core courses (per Council for Accreditation in Public Health, CEPH) or equivalent courses cannot be counted towards doctoral credits. Relevance and rigor for credit transfer is determined by syllabus review by the academic advisor and doctoral program director. Course syllabi followed in the semester that they took those courses must be submitted, together with transcripts and a memo itemizing the courses to be transferred.

Students should complete the four required HSPM doctoral core courses required for the qualifying examination with a B or better grade (HSPM 845, 846, 717 and 719) within the first year of study, except for justified delays, to be documented by the academic advisor/program director 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 in with missing pre-requisite courses, students with medical or other documented reasons.

Registration for all courses requires the approval of the academic advisor or Program Director in the absence of the advisor. Students who do not receive a B or better in any core course may repeat the course once, and receive a B or better grade. If the second attempt is not successful, the student cannot continue in the doctoral program.

Every student, with the advice and counsel of their faculty advisor, must identify an area of concentration. This is a set of 3 courses (minimum 9 credit hours) in a specific topic area and/or allied methodological courses chosen by the student as their research focus area for 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).

Independent study: No more than 3 credit hours of independent study (HSPM 890) and 3 credits of special topics course (HSPM 791) can be used towards the concentration area credit hours. No more than 6 credits 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.

## B. Time Limits

Doctoral students must complete their studies and dissertation defense within 10 years of matriculation, failing which they will need to repeat course work in order to revalidate courses. Transfer credits or 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 approved by the advisor to complete the required number of doctoral credits.



Graduation with award of the PhD degree must occur within 5 years of the semester of completing the comprehensive examination, failing which the student has to retake the comprehensive examination. Students who plan not to enroll for at least one credit for 2 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 to the Graduate School for readmission when they want to resume studies. If not enrolled for 2 or more consecutive academic semesters, the new academic rules, standards and degree requirements effective at readmission will supersede the requirements in effect at initial admission.

International students must be enrolled in full-time status without break except for summer, (or should be in approved Z-status), unless pre-approved for leave of absence based on specific documentation and approval by the USC International Student Services administration.

### **C. Qualifying Examination**

The qualifying examination must be taken after taking the required four core courses for this exam (HSPM 845, 846, 717 and 719). It is a cumulative exam that tests students on the content areas of these courses relating to health systems and services (financing, 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 for credits in the semester in which the exam is taken. Specific dates will be selected each year and the students will be notified at least 30 days prior to the actual dates. The qualifying examination is administered in-person, on the premises of the Department of Health Services Policy and Management. It is closed book, unless indicated otherwise for a specific section. The examination must be completed on an ASPH computer in Word, but one or both sections may require the use of statistical software for data analysis. Each section is graded by the faculty member who was the writer of the examination question or instructor of record for the course. Graders are blinded to the student names. If a student receives a failing grade from the primary grader, the submitted work will be submitted to a 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 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 work in writing to the Program Director within two weeks of receiving the grades. Upon receiving a re-evaluation request, the examination section(s) being contested will be sent to a new examiner. If the grade assigned by the new examiner is also "Fail", the original grade will be considered final. If the grade assigned by the new examiner is "Pass", the final grade will be the grade assigned by the majority of all examiners who evaluated that section. The Program Director will notify the student(s) in writing of the final grade for each of the sections. 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 concerned examination(s) must be retaken the very next time they are offered. Students cannot delay re-taking the qualifying examinations, unless they provide documentation of extenuating circumstances. If no such documentation is provided, failure to retake the exam timely will result in a default grade of "Fail" on the sections that were to be retaken. Failing any section of the qualifying examination in the second attempt will result in termination from the program.

### **D. Comprehensive Examination**

The comprehensive examination is organized primarily by the major professor of the concentration area/academic advisor in consultation with a second committee member identified by the academic advisor, and reviewed by the doctoral Program Director. The student must have passed the qualifying examination, completed all four doctoral seminars (HSPM 800) with a grade of S, and at least 2 of three courses in their chosen concentration area to be eligible to take the exam. The student must be enrolled in the semester in which the exam is taken. The examination has two components, the written exam and oral presentation. The written component is a take-home examination in which the student is required to write an NIH R03-format proposal on a research topic determined by the committee (see instructions in Annex A). In most cases the committee members will assign the research topic in consultation with the student to ensure alignment with the student's research interests. The students must submit the research proposal within 10 business days of being assigned the topic. The committee members will grade the student's work independently and assign a grade of "pass", "fail", or "revise and resubmit" (see grading rubric in Annex B). If both graders agree on "pass" or "fail", the grade is final. If one member assigns a grade of "revise and resubmit", the student must revise the proposal based on the comments received. If one member assigns a grade of "pass" and the other "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 resubmit the proposal, the revised version must be submitted no later than 10 working days after the receipt of the grade and the comments. The revised proposal can be graded only as pass or fail. The revised proposal must be completed and graded within the semester in which the initial proposal was submitted.

Following receipt of a passing grade on the research proposal, the student will either make an oral presentation to the committee members or present their proposal at the doctoral student research seminar. The oral presentation will be open to all HSPM students and faculty members. The oral presentation must be graded by the committee members who will assign a grade of "pass" or "fail". If the grade is "fail", the student will retake the oral presentation within the first month of the following semester.

If the student fails the written or oral components, the student can retake a new examination with a new topic in the following semester. Failure to pass the examination on the second attempt will lead to termination from the doctoral program.

After passing 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 who conducted the examination, which is communicated to the Graduate School using the relevant form (<http://gradschool.sc.edu/forms/> for Doctoral Comprehensive Exam Verification form). These documents are used by the Program Director to request the Graduate School to admit the student to doctoral candidacy which enables the student to register for dissertation credits.

### ***Steps of the dissertation proposal phase, committee formation, and proposal 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 passing the comprehensive examination, students should identify a potential Chair of their Dissertation Committee. If needed, the Doctoral Program Director can aid the process of selecting the chair of the Dissertation Committee. The student must prepare a short concept paper outlining the essential components of the planned research project and submit it to the potential Chair and secure their agreement to serve as Committee Chair. The Dissertation Committee Chair must be a current tenured or tenure-track faculty member of the University and a member of the HSPM Department. The committee Chair will work with the student to identify the remaining three Committee members. Of four Committee

members, at least 2 must be from the HSPM Department and at least one member must be from another academic department of the University, with expertise in the student's selected research area. Selection of the external committee member (s) must be consistent with the Graduate School policy on academic qualifications for Doctoral Committee membership.

It is the student's responsibility to consult with the Dissertation Committee Chair in selecting the remaining Committee members and securing their agreement to serve on the Dissertation Committee, upon which the student completes a Dissertation Committee appointment form and submits it to their Committee Chair for onward processing. Policies on Committee formation and the form can be found in <http://gradschool.sc.edu/forms/> under "Doctoral Committee Appointment Request".

If the Dissertation Committee Chair leaves the Department after the proposal defense, he or she may continue to serve as the Chair until the dissertation is completed with the help of a co-Chair selected by the student, unless the dissertation write-up is close to completion. The Co-Chair must meet the eligibility criteria for the Dissertation Committee Chair and must be a tenured/tenure track faculty member of the Department.

At least 30 days prior to proposal defense, the dissertation proposal, approved in principle by the committee chair must be sent to each member of the Committee. The dissertation proposal, focused on an original research question(s), has three chapters: Introduction and overview, which briefly outlines the importance of the topic and the questions to be examined (Chapter 1), Literature review documenting the current literature related to the research topic and study objectives, knowledge gaps and significance of addressing the knowledge gap to be addressed by the dissertation study (Chapter 2), Study objectives and methods in detail (Chapter 3), and Bibliography. After the Dissertation Committee (or Chair) has reviewed and determined that the proposal is ready for defense, the proposal defense may proceed. The student provides a 30-45-minute presentation of the proposal to the Committee and Department faculty and students who choose to attend. Proposal defense generally takes up to 2-hours to complete.

The Chair of the Dissertation Committee will notify the Program Director of the date and time of defense at least 10 working days in advance. The proposal defense announcement will then be posted on the bulletin boards and information emailed to all faculty and students of HSPM. and/or on departmental website. However, 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; a "qualified pass" if the student is asked to complete additional remedial work supervised by the Committee Chair; or "fail". If the student fails the proposal defense, he or she must repeat the defense after completing remedial work on the draft proposal. 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. A determination of "Fail" in the second attempt will result in termination from the program.

## **E. Dissertation Defense**

Doctoral candidates must successfully defend a dissertation based on original research. After the research and dissertation writing are completed, the student defends the dissertation at an oral presentation to the Committee. The written dissertation and its defense must be approved by a majority (> 50%; i.e. 3 of 4 of a 4-member Committee) of Committee members. Dissertation defense is organized and conducted similar to proposal defense. 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 and the committee evaluates 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 required (c) Dissertation to be accepted with major changes required (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 second defense session must terminate in a Pass outcome failing which the student will be terminated from the program. The Committee Chair will notify the student and the Graduate School in writing of the outcome of the dissertation defense. In order to graduate in the semester of dissertation defense, the dissertation defense must be successfully completed within the specified date for the semester, and within 5 years of passing the Comprehensive exam, and further, the Committee-approved and satisfactorily formatted dissertation must be submitted to the Graduate School by the specified date. If the deadlines are not met, graduation is delayed to the subsequent semester during which the student must register for at least for one credit even if the required dissertation credits are completed.

### **F. 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 year of residence can be fulfilled by successful completion of two consecutive semesters of 9 or more graduate credit hours per semester on campus, or three consecutive semesters of six or more graduate credit hours per semester. For students provided financial support by the Department, residency at USC Columbia is required for at least two years.

The doctoral residency period starts after matriculation in the PhD program. Enrollment in a summer term (Summer I and II) may be counted as equivalent to a semester. However, 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 scholarly activities on campus, including the educational and professional development opportunities offered on the campus of a comprehensive university. During the resident period, the student must interact with faculty and peers by regularly attending courses, local conferences, student organization activities, seminars, scholarly talks by guest speakers, and utilizing the library and other resources such as the Graduate Hub hosted by the Graduate School, Center for Teaching Excellence, and the Writing Center.

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

All USC students and in particular students enrolled in HSPM programs are required to demonstrate the highest ethical standards, both academic and professional. 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)

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

Students with a graduate assistantship who earn a grade of C or lower in any course will be asked to reduce their graduate assistantship hours during the following semester to increase their focus on coursework. Doctoral students must maintain minimum cumulative GPA of 3.0 (or B average) to continue in the doctoral program and to graduate from the program. If a student receives a grade of C or lower in any of the core doctoral courses, the course(s) must be repeated. Any student who earns a grade of U or C (or lower grade in coursework) in three graduate courses or earns U grades in two semesters of HSPM 899 credits will be placed on academic probation. This requires development of a written remediation plan by the student which should be approved by the faculty academic advisor and the Program Director. The plan should document the roadmap to overcome the academic challenges and to restore good academic standing going forward. Students who receive their third and fourth course grade of U or C or lower concurrently in a 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**

Academic termination from the HSPM doctoral program occurs in the event of any of the following:

- 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.
- Student violates academic integrity

### **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 will result in a grade of fail for the assignment, course, qualifying exam, comprehensive examination, or dissertation. A second episode of violation of academic honesty is grounds for dismissal from the program. In addition to specified items qualifying as violation of integrity in the Carolinian Creed, within HSPM, sharing of or receiving information on course examination questions or answers or qualifying examination questions or answers with other students is a serious violation that will result in a failing grade and termination from the program. All academic integrity violations are required to be reported by departments to the USC Office of Academic Integrity. Students should be aware that violation of academic integrity leading to a fail grade may result in the violation appearing on their transcripts which may jeopardize their future academic and professional prospects at any other university or organization. Students are encouraged to refresh their understanding of the appropriate use of citations when drafting papers and course assignments to avoid inadvertent plagiarism.

### **D. Professional responsibility in graduate assistantship and internship roles**

Graduate assistantships and internships are intended to serve as an extension of the teaching and research mission of the HSPM Department, by facilitating students to gain work experience in public health, health services, or research environments for future career roles. In all on- or off-campus graduate assistantships, students represent the Department, and as such, must comport themselves with total

professionalism and integrity at all times.

Students participating in extramural assistantships will follow the dress code of their worksite, comply with the assigned work hours, and 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.

## IV. THE DOCTORAL DISSERTATION

### *Definition of a HSPM Doctoral Dissertation*

As the culminating requirement of the doctoral program, a successful dissertation is to be submitted. The dissertation is a report of an *original research project*, and *significant contribution* to health services research, approved by the candidate's doctoral Dissertation Committee. Clarification of these terms are provided below as they apply to HSPM PhD students:

- **Original research:** Although research builds on prior research, the doctoral candidate will develop an original research question to address an existing knowledge gap. The body of work and intellectual contribution should clearly be the candidate's own work and make a new contribution to the field. Candidates may not employ or otherwise utilize other individuals for the original aspects or content of the dissertation, regardless of whether the candidate supervises the work.
- **Significant contribution:** The outcomes of the research must advance the current state of 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 rigorous evaluation of a new policy or public health program. One criterion to judge significance is that the research and its results are deemed by the Dissertation Committee to have sufficient merit to warrant serious consideration for publication by 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. 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, with clear potential to make a significant contribution to science and/or public health policy or practice, and feasible to conduct.
- All dissertation proposals, questionnaires, and related documents must comply with the ethical conduct of research guidelines that are current at the time of review. All candidates must have a valid CITI training certification in the responsible conduct of research that is current at the time of starting and time of completing the dissertation defense. With the advice of the Dissertation Committee Chair, each student is responsible for submitting all required documentation as requested. If the research involves human subjects, the proposal must document clear evidence of formal approval from an Institutional Review Board BEFORE any research is undertaken.

### *Concept Paper development*

For efficient proposal development, candidates are advised to use the following structured guide in developing the concept paper:

- **Importance of Proposed Research:** Explain how the proposed research meets the criteria of original work and significant contribution to health services research.
- **Objective(s):** Describe the research questions, hypothesis and expected outcomes in substantive terms.

- Setting/Participants: Describe the site(s) of research or data sources with all relevant detail, identify the research subjects/participants and the target population likely to be impacted by the study outcome. For secondary data sources describe the validity of the data source to answer the research questions.
- Research Design, Statistical or Other Analytical Methods, & Main Outcome Measures: Explain the relevance of the research design and statistical/other methodologies proposed to conduct the research. Then identify the proposed outcome measures with an appropriate rationale.
- Ethical Conduct of Research, Approval, Institutional Review Board (IRB): While IRB clearance is sought after final approval of the proposal by the Dissertation Committee, students should demonstrate knowledge of ethical issues that may affect their planned research (subject privacy and confidentiality, data protection, etc.) in the concept paper.

### ***Dissertation Formats***

HSPM dissertations may take one of two formats, decided in advance of starting work on the proposal by the student and Dissertation Committee chair. The format could be the traditional dissertation monograph or a series of 2-3 publication-ready manuscripts based on the dissertation research. All students regardless of dissertation format must prepare the proposal with the first three chapters as outlined below, which culminates in 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. An overview statement of the topic to be examined, its importance and research gap to be addressed.

Chapter Two: Literature Review. A thorough review of all literature pertinent to the topic, organized to lay the ground for, and making the case for the hypotheses to be tested through the research, and ending with a statement of the 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, data sources, variables to be studied, data collection/processing, analytic methods to answer the research questions and test each hypothesis.

Chapter Four: Results. A presentation of the results of the research, ideally, organized by research question and hypothesis.

OR Manuscript 1 if it was the agreed format)

Chapter Five: Discussion of findings, Conclusions and Recommendations. A discussion of study findings in relation to the hypotheses and findings of documented research studies, conclusions, implications of the research, study limitations, and recommendations for future research.

OR Manuscript 2 (and if agreed, Manuscript 3)

#### Manuscripts for publication format:

Doctoral students are highly encouraged to choose the manuscripts format, with the concurrence of their Dissertation Committee chair. If this format is agreed upon at the time of starting the proposal writing, or latest at the time of proposal defense, the student will adhere to this format in preparing the final dissertation. 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, there will be an additional brief final chapter (Chapter Six) that integrates the findings and implications of the manuscripts. Manuscript topics will be finalized 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 to earn a pass grade on dissertation defense and for the Graduate School to accept the dissertation as part of the requirements to be conferred the PhD degree.



## Annex A: Comprehensive examination: R03 Proposal Preparation Instructions

(detailed guidelines will be provided along with the topic)

- **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 (font and other formatting 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

## Annex B: R03 Proposal Grading Rubric

(Comprehensive examination), Points for each criterion are shown.

The proposal will be graded on the extent to which it satisfies each element of the section. The sum of all scores will be the grade for the exam. Points >70% is required for a “pass” grade.

<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> No longer than 30 lines of text. (-1 point if not in compliance) Summarize the proposed activity suitable for dissemination to the public. (0-1) Briefly state the specific aims and research design. (0-1) Provide info on the significance (literature gap study and the public health significance).(0-2)	4
<b>Project Narrative:</b> No more than 2 or 3 sentences. (minus 2 if not in compliance) Describe the relevance to public health. (0-2) Write succinctly and use plain language appropriate for a lay audience. (0-2)	4
<b>Biographical Sketch-</b> (NOT REQUIRED)	-
<b>Specific Aims:</b> 1 page (Do not exceed 1 page; -2 if not in compliance with page limit) Concisely state the larger purpose that the proposed research will serve. (0-4) Summarize the expected outcomes including impact of research on fields involved (0-4) Succinctly list the specific aims/objectives of the proposed research (0-4)	12
<b>Research Strategy:</b> 6 pages. (Do not exceed 6 pages; minus10 points if not in compliance)	
<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 (i.e. addresses innovative hypothesis or critical barriers).</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>Cover letter or Institutional Capability Statements:</b> (NOT REQUIRED)	-
<b>Total Score</b>	100

# WRITTEN REVIEW TEMPLATE TO RESPOND TO R03 PROPOSAL SUBMITTED BY THE STUDENTS

## Comprehensive examination (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 Grade for  
PhD Students Department of Health Services Policy  
and Management University of South Carolina,  
Columbia, SC**

**Consolidated grading sheet (all graders)**

Name of student:

Date of written exam was assigned: \_\_\_\_\_ Date of submission of the written exam: \_\_\_\_\_

Names of faculty members  
grading written exam:

Oral exam completion date: \_\_\_\_\_ (if breaking the tie)

	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 (if needed to break tie): \_\_\_\_\_

Date of oral exam

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

Faculty member 2: \_\_\_\_\_

## Annex 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

## *Appendix: About 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.