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# Doctoral Student Handbook

Health Promotion & Disease Prevention Research

Department of Health Promotion

College of Public Health

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University of Nebraska Medical Center

2019-2020

# Doctor of Philosophy (PhD) Degree

The PhD in Health Promotion and Disease Prevention Research is offered through the Department of Health Promotion (HPRO) in the College of Public Health. The mission of the PhD program is to provide students with the training necessary to become skilled research scientists who will have a significant impact on the health of the population by thinking critically about complex public health problems and applying scientific rigor to the design and evaluation of health promotion and disease prevention research and programs.

The PhD in Health Promotion and Disease Prevention Research requires 60 hours of coursework (90 hours if admitted prior to Fall 2018), successful completion of a comprehensive exam, and successful completion of a dissertation comprised of independent research. At UNMC, students usually require four to six years to complete the work for the doctorate. The maximum time allowed is seven years. The [Doctoral Degree Timeline](#) provides an overview of the timing of doctoral degree requirements. **Please note that students must be in compliance with these requirements in order to be eligible to register for courses and receive a graduate assistantship each semester.**

## Advisor and Supervisory Committee

### Advisor

The HPRO department requires that all applicants to the PhD program secure an agreement with a faculty member to be the student's Advisor, should the student's application be successful. The identity of the proposed Advisor is to be included in the application, and the Advisor is expected to provide funding for a successful applicant for at least one year. The Advisor serves as the student's Supervisory Committee Chair. This process helps the student to arrive at campus with a focused content area and academic mentor to increase the likelihood of completing the program with a high level of productivity and distinction.

The education of the student as a scientist is the major responsibility of the Advisor. This role includes ensuring the student acquires the problem-solving skills, research techniques, and analytical abilities expected in the field. The Advisor also expected to instill in the student an understanding of scientific methods, the ability to develop and test a hypothesis, and the ability to identify and resolve ethical issues in scientific research. The Advisor should guide the student's development of written and verbal communication skills and, where appropriate, fundamental teaching skills.

Full-time students must complete the Advisor/Supervisor Selection form in [Seguidor](#) within 12 months after matriculation (18 months for part-time students). For instructions on this process and all other Seguidor processes, student should review the document [Seguidor: Guide for UNMC Graduate Students](#). Faculty should review the document [Seguidor: Guide for UNMC](#)

[Faculty](#). After the student completes the form, the proposed Advisor and the HPRO Graduate Program Director must approve the form on Seguidor.

After Advisors have been formally approved on Seguidor, students may request to change their Advisor by sending an email to the Graduate Study Office (unmcgraduatestudies@unmc.edu) stating the name of their current Advisor and the name of the Graduate Faculty Member selected as their new Advisor. However, changing Advisors can result in less efficient progress towards completion of the degree. If a change of Advisor is initiated, please copy both the original and new Advisor and the Graduate Program Director on the email request. All other committee membership changes can be completed in Seguidor.

### **The Supervisory Committee**

Full-time doctoral students are expected to form a Supervisory Committee within 12 months of matriculation (18 months for part-time students). Members of the Supervisory Committee should be selected in consultation with the Advisor. The student's Advisor should contact each potential committee member to determine availability to serve on the supervisory committee.

- The Supervisory Committee must consist of at least four members (including the student's Advisor) who are University of Nebraska Graduate Faculty Members.
  - Please note that in some cases, University of Nebraska faculty members do not automatically *Graduate Faculty* members. Students can use this [link](#) to determine if the faculty members they would like to have on their committee are UNMC Graduate Faculty members.
  - Potential members without Graduate Faculty Status can submit an application and CV to the department Graduate Program Director. The application for Graduate Faculty status can take several months. More information about requirements and the process are described [here](#).
- One member of the Supervisory Committee should be from a department other than HPRO.
- Additional committee members from the private sector or other academic institutions may be appointed to the Supervisory Committee.

Once members have been selected and agree to serve, the student should complete the Advisor/Supervisory Committee Member Selection form in Seguidor. **A student cannot complete this form until both the Advisor and HPRO Graduate Program Director have approved the Advisor/Supervisor Selection form on Seguidor.**

After the Advisor/Supervisory Committee Member Selection form has been completed by the student on Seguidor, the Advisor, HPRO Graduate Program Director, and Dean of Graduate Studies must approve it on Seguidor. **Approval of Supervisory Committee composition by the Dean for Graduate Study must occur before the initial committee meeting.**

Once the Supervisory Committee has been formally approved on Seguidor, students may request to change the composition of their Supervisory Committee by updating the

Advisor/Supervisory Committee Member Selection form on Seguidor. The Advisor, HPRO Graduate Program Director, and Dean of Graduate Studies must approve these changes on Seguidor.

### **Supervisory Committee and Student Responsibilities**

The Supervisory Committee is required to meet with the student **every 6 months until the completion of degree** to review the progress of the student in the program and to provide assistance. In addition to holding regular meetings, the Supervisory Committee also administers the student's comprehensive exam and approves the student's dissertation proposal and dissertation (see below for descriptions).

#### ***Supervisory Committee Meetings***

- The purpose of the first Supervisory Committee meeting is to offer feedback on the Program of Study (discussed in more detail in the Degree Requirements section) and the student's research direction. For full-time students, this meeting should occur within 13 months of matriculation (within 19 months of matriculation for part-time students).
- The student should schedule Supervisory Committee meetings using the Meetings/IDP/Report section in Seguidor.
- The student is responsible for securing a meeting room using the CPH [room request form](#).
- The student should take minutes during the meeting, and share a copy of the minutes with his/her Advisor using the template available on Seguidor and in the HPRO PhD Students OneDrive folder. After the minutes have been approved by the Advisor, the student should upload the minutes into Seguidor by selecting the appropriate meeting in the Meetings/IDP/Annual Report section in Seguidor.

## **Individual Development Plan (IDP)**

NIH has strongly urged all institutions to implement a policy requiring an Individual Development Plan (IDP) for every graduate student and postdoctoral researcher supported by NIH. The UNMC Graduate Council voted in September 2013 to require all students to complete an IDP within 12 months of matriculation. The IDP should be developed in consultation with the Advisor using [myIDP](#) and discussed with the Supervisory Committee.

The IDP should be considered a living, evolving document. It should be revisited annually in order to update the information, evaluate progress toward career goals, and establish new goals for the coming year.

**Reporting Procedures:**

**Students:** Each student must upload the IDP Certificate of Completion in Seguidor. (In myIDP, an IDP Summary can be generated in PDF format as the last step of completing the online process.)

**NIH grantees:** Investigators receiving NIH support (regardless of funding mechanism) should report the use of IDPs in the Research Performance Progress Report (RPPR) Section B. Accomplishments, Question B.4 for all graduate students and/or postdoctoral researchers reported in Section D. Participants or on a Statement of Appointment Form (PHS2271). The report should outline current practices documenting that IDPs are used to help manage the training for those individuals. Investigators are not required to submit the actual IDPs in progress reports to NIH.

## Coursework

### Residency Requirements

At least 50% of the coursework for the doctoral degree must be completed at the University of Nebraska. Students should be enrolled continuously for at least 18 months during their course work, and should be enrolled continuously as a PhD candidate.

### Program of Study

This Program of Study includes the student's completed coursework (including transferred courses) and planned coursework needed to fulfill degree requirements. **Courses not listed in the Program of Study will not qualify for tuition remission.**

Full-time students must (1) meet with their Supervisory Committees to discuss their proposed Program of Study and (2) submit their Supervisory Committee approved Program of Study on Seguidor within 13 months of matriculation (within 19 months of matriculation for part-time students). Once the Program of Study is entered in Seguidor, the Graduate Program Director will review the Program of Study on Seguidor and approve it if all requirements are met.

In order to facilitate completion of the Program of Study, students should review the "Suggested PhD Plan of Study" Excel file (available in the HPRO PhD Students OneDrive folder; please note that there are multiple tabs in this file). The file includes information about enrollment requirements, course requirements, and suggested course progression. After reviewing the Excel file, students should identify when they expect to take each required course and discuss this plan with their Advisor prior to the Supervisory Committee meeting.

**Once a Program of Study is established in Seguidor, any subsequent changes to the Program of Study must be approved by the Supervisory Committee and submitted in Seguidor.** In the past, students submitted a paper "Program of Studies" form rather than entering the

information in Seguidor. The process of changing the Program of Study is different for students with a paper Program of Study. After receiving approval from the Supervisory Committee, students who have a paper Program of Study should ask their Advisor to email Graduate Studies with any approved changes. Graduate Studies will verify when the changes have been made.

### **Transfer Credit**

No more than 50% of coursework for the PhD program can be transferred from another institution. No graduate credit will be accepted for transfer unless earned at an institution fully accredited to offer graduate work. Credit for undergraduate courses will not be approved.

### ***Transferring Credits for Required Courses***

To apply for credit for required courses a student must present the following documentation to the Health Promotion Graduate Program Director before the end of the first semester:

- A copy of syllabi from graduate courses completed at a fully-accredited institution that correspond to required courses at the UNMC College of Public Health.
- A copy of the student's transcript from the other graduate program.
- Transfer of Credit for Required Courses Form (available in the OneDrive folder).

It is up to the instructors of each of the required UNMC courses in question to determine if credit will be granted/denied. Once the course instructor has made the determination, the Health Promotion Graduate Program Director will notify the student and Advisor.

### ***Transferring Credits for Elective Courses***

The Supervisory Committee is charged with deciding whether or not credit from other graduate institutions can count as electives in a student's Program of Study. All approved transferred electives and required courses should be entered in the Program of Study submitted in Seguidor.

### **Course Requirements**

The PhD curriculum in Health Promotion and Disease Prevention Research was revised Summer 2018. All students entering Fall 2018 or later will follow the new curriculum, described in this section. Students who entered prior to Fall 2018 have the choice to switch to the new curriculum, or continue with the original curriculum (described in Appendix A). Students should consult with their Supervisory Committee in order to make this decision. If the student decides to switch to the new curriculum, the Program of Study must be updated in Seguidor.

Students entering the PhD program with a Master's degree will complete 60 credit hours. The course HPRO 830 Foundations of Public Health is required, based on accreditation criteria, for a PhD student who does not have an MPH or has not previously taken an equivalent course from a CEPH-accredited school or program of public health. It is not included in the count of 60 total credit hours. Additionally, students who have not taken a course equivalent to Biostatistics I will

need to take it prior to enrolling in Biostatistics II. The need for other introductory public health courses should be determined in consultation with the Supervisory Committee.

Students are expected to complete the required courses or an equivalent. These courses are subject to change and other courses can be substituted at the discretion of the Supervisory Committee.

## PhD Curriculum in Health Promotion and Disease Prevention Research

Course Name			Credit Hours
<b>College of Public Health Required Course*</b>			
CPH 500	HPRO 830	Foundations of Public Health	3
<b>PhD Health Promotion Concentration Core Courses</b>			<b>27</b>
	HPRO 901	Advanced Theories in Health Promotion and Disease Prevention	3
	HPRO 902	Complex Systems Thinking in Health Promotion and Disease Prevention	3
	HPRO 914	Applications of the Community-Based Participatory Research Approach	3
	HPRO 916	Implementation Science Models and Methods	3
	HPRO 917	Advanced Research Methods in Health Promotion Disease Prevention Study Design	3
	HPRO 996	Directed Readings and Research	3
	HPRO 970	Health Promotion Disease Prevention Research Doctoral Seminar	3
	HPRO 925	Scientific Writing for Public Health Research	3
	BIOS 808	Biostatistics II	3
<b>Selectives –Minimum 6 credit hours</b>			<b>6</b>
	HPRO 910	Humanistic Traditions of Qualitative Research	3
	HPRO 903	Mixed Methods Research	3
CPH 517	BIOS 835	Design of Medical Health Studies	3
CPH 637	EPI 837	Social Epidemiology	3
<b>Electives – Students must choose 15 credit hours</b>			<b>15</b>
(≥9 of these credit hours at 900 level; HPRO 996 can be taken up to an additional 6 credit hours)			
<b>Dissertation</b>			<b>12</b>
<b>Ethics - Included in <a href="#">Responsible Conduct in Research Program</a></b>			<b>0</b>
<b>TOTAL CREDITS</b>			<b>60</b>

\*Required for students who have not completed an MPH or taken a foundational course at a CEPH-accredited institution.

Courses in red must be completed prior to taking the comprehensive exam, including at least 6 hours of selectives.

Students entering the PhD program without a Master's degree must complete an additional 27 credit hours (87 credit hours total). Courses in red must be completed prior to taking the comprehensive exam.

Course Name			Credit Hours	
CPH 500	HPRO 830	Foundations of Public Health	3	
CPH 504	EPI 820	Epidemiology in Public Health	3	
CPH 506	BIOS 806	Biostatistics I	3	
CPH 539	HPRO 895	Leadership and Advocacy	3	
CPH 514	HPRO 814	Planning and Evaluation	3	
CPH 534	HPRO 827	Interventions in Health Promotion	3	
CPH 501	HPRO 860	Health Behavior	3	
CPH 505	HPRO 805	Applied Research Methods	3	
CPH 545	HPRO 809	Health Disparities and Health Equity	3	
<b>TOTAL CREDITS</b>			<b>27</b>	

Students entering the MD/PhD program must complete an additional 12 credit hours (72 credit hours total). Courses in red must be completed prior to taking the comprehensive exam.

Course Name			Credit Hours	
CPH 500	HPRO 830	Foundations of Public Health	3	
CPH 504	EPI 820	Epidemiology in Public Health	3	
CPH 506	BIOS 806	Biostatistics I	3	
CPH 501	HPRO 860	Health Behavior	3	
<b>TOTAL CREDITS</b>			<b>12</b>	

### ***Directed Readings and Research***

The intent of this course is to allow students to acquire new research skills, expand their exposure to new research and increase publication opportunities. Each course involves hands-on research working closely with a faculty member and developing a publishable scholarly product (e.g., something that can be documented on a CV such as manuscript for peer-reviewed publication, national conference presentation, book chapter, policy brief, community report, technical report, or program manual).

Under the supervision of the course instructor, the student is expected to develop and submit to the HPRO Graduate Program Director the *Directed Research Course Agreement* form (available in the HPRO PhD Students OneDrive folder), which includes a course outline, timeline (including timeline for production of a scholarly product which may occur outside of the semester in which the credits are taken) and expected outcome(s) for each directed research course **at least one week** before the start of the semester.

The instructor of the directed research course(s) does not have to be the student's Advisor. The instructor should email grades for Directed Research courses to the departmental administrative assistant, who will submit them in MyRecords.



### ***Doctoral Seminar***

A 1-credit doctoral seminar is offered every Fall and Spring semester. Each student will need to take the course at least three times in order to fulfill the PhD requirements. This course provides an opportunity for faculty, students, and community partners to present and engage in discussion about their research.

### ***Dissertation Credits***

A student may register for dissertation credits before completion of the comprehensive exam if (a) he/she has a permanent Advisor and (b) he/she has begun training/research related to the dissertation topic. After successfully completing the comprehensive exam and becoming a doctoral candidate, students must register for at least one dissertation credit each semester and summer session until completion of the degree.

### **Enrollment**

Students must use the [MyRecords](#) system to enroll in courses. For courses that require a permission number, please contact the HPRO Administrative Assistant to request a permission number.

### **Intercampus Enrollment**

Students can take elective courses from any University of Nebraska campus. Students who receive tuition remission also will receive tuition remission for courses taken at other University of Nebraska campuses, as long as the courses are included in the Program of Study prior to enrollment. Fees for courses taken at other campuses are the responsibility of the student.

Prior to registering for courses on other campuses, an [intercampus registration form](#) must be completed. The form can be found at the bottom of the linked webpage. After the form is processed, students will be contacted by the host campus with information about access and registration.

### **Grades**

To receive credit in didactic and seminar-type graduate level courses, it is expected that students will perform at the level of B or above in any course that is offered for graduate credit. A minimum grade of C may be acceptable for graduate level courses, but receipt of two grades of C may be cause for dismissal. Any grade below C is not acceptable for graduate credit and may be cause for dismissal.

A student failing to receive a minimum acceptable grade in a course for graduate credit may not continue his/her Program of Study without permission of the Supervisory Committee. The committee's decision, along with an appropriate explanation and justification, must be filed in the Graduate Studies Office.

A student who fails to maintain a cumulative GPA of at least 3.0 in any given semester will automatically be on academic probation and may not continue his/her Program of Study without special permission of the Dean for Graduate Studies acting on the recommendation of

the appropriate Graduate Committee or Advisory/Supervisory Committee. The recommendation must include a review of the student's status and a program of remediation. To continue in the Graduate Studies program, the student must remove the probationary status (i.e., return to an overall 3.0 GPA) within the next twelve (12) months.

Because research activities comprise a major part of the endeavors of graduate students, excellence in research is expected of all students. Therefore, a failing grade (F) in any research or non-research activity or non-didactic course (non-thesis research, Master's Thesis, Doctoral Dissertation, or Practicum) may be grounds for dismissal. The above minimum scholarship requirements apply to ALL students enrolled in ANY course for graduate credit.

## Teaching Requirement

All students completing the PhD program will gain teaching experience through one of the following supervised activities:

- Secure a Graduate Teaching Assistantship through the University of Nebraska
- Arrange directly with a professor to assist in teaching a course
- Complete a directed readings course focusing on shared instruction of an MPH or HRPO MPH concentration core course.
- Secure a position as a part-time instructor at a college or university

The Supervisory Committee can choose to waive the teaching requirement. This should be documented in semi-annual committee meeting notes.

## PhD Competencies in Health Promotion

The curriculum is designed to ensure students leave the program with the following competencies:

- HPROPHD1     Conceptualize quantitative and qualitative research that is ethical, rigorous, and innovative and is based on an advanced knowledge of health promotion theories and disease prevention.
- HPROPHD2     Conduct rigorous quantitative and qualitative research based on methodologically sound principles and analytical techniques.
- HPROPHD3     Conduct needs assessment related to quality of life, health outcomes, and health behaviors in communities or priority population groups.

- HPROPHD4 Develop measurable objectives and evidence-based interventions in response to needs assessment to promote health and prevent disease among targeted populations.
- HPROPHD5 Implement evidence-based and high-impact health promotion and disease prevention interventions that effectively target policy, environmental, community, or individual health behavior change.
- HPROPHD6 Evaluate the reach, effectiveness, cost, and impact of evidence-based health promotion and disease prevention interventions and programs using scientifically sound study design, indicators, and analytical techniques.
- HPROPHD7 Disseminate and communicate results of research to a broad audience through such avenues as scientific conferences, community forums, and peer-reviewed journals.

## Comprehensive Exam

All PhD students must successfully complete a comprehensive exam. The comprehensive exam is not a repetition of course examinations, but is an investigation of the student's breadth of understanding in the student's field of study. The comprehensive exam includes a take-home written exam and an oral exam taken after required course work has been completed.

The UNMC Graduate Studies Comprehensive Exam policy, which applies to students who entered the program Fall 2018 and later, is as follows:

### 1) Deadline for comprehensive examination.

**Full-time** PhD students must attempt the before the end of their **third year** of study. **Part-time** students must attempt the exam before the end of their **fourth year** of study. The comprehensive exam must be successfully completed a minimum of seven months prior to the final oral exam.

### 2) Consequences of not completing the comprehensive exam by the established deadline.

- Students not attempting the comprehensive exam by their program's established deadline will be considered to have failed the initial attempt. Note that only two attempts are allowed and that students must wait at least 3 months before retaking the exam (2nd attempt).
- Students who fail the initial attempt as a result of missing the deadline must take the exam (2nd attempt) a minimum of 3 months and no more than 6 months after the established deadline. Failure to do so will result in dismissal from the program.

### 3) Comprehensive examination evaluation form.

The PhD program utilizes a comprehensive exam evaluation form with an associated scoring rubric that provides written feedback about learning outcomes and competencies. This includes an assessment of Graduate Studies learning outcomes and competencies, as well as program-specific competencies.

#### 4) Exceptions & Extensions.

Under extraordinary circumstances, the Dean of Graduate Studies may grant exceptions or extensions to items 2 or 3 (above) on a student-by-student basis. Requests for an exception must be submitted in writing by the Graduate Program Director (on behalf of the Program Graduate Committee). Any request to extend a deadline must be made no later than one month prior to the deadline for which the extension is requested.

The dates of the written and oral Comprehensive Exam should be selected in consultation with the Supervisory Committee. **At least two weeks before the date of the Comprehensive Exam**, the student should notify Graduate Studies of the exam date by completing the **Exam Committee/Schedule** section in Seguidor. Graduate Studies strictly enforces the two week requirement. The student should only enter one exam date in Seguidor – the **oral exam** date.

The format of the written exam is determined by the Supervisory Committee in consultation with the student. Generally, there are two options for the written exam: (1) responding to questions and (2) writing a grant proposal. The students' Supervisory Committee will choose the format of the exam.

Students who respond to questions will receive approximately 3-5 questions related to the student's course of study and dissertation topic. Students have five days to complete the written exam. The exam time period begins from the time the Advisor emails the exam to the student and ends five full 24-hour periods later. The written comprehensive exam is generally meant to take the entire five days to complete, so it is recommended to make arrangements in your work and class schedules to allow for time to be devoted for this purpose. Once the exam is completed, the student must email the answers to his/her Supervisory Committee.

Students who write a grant proposal should write a proposal that responds to an existing funding opportunity announcement/request for proposal. The specific funding announcement and timeline for grant writing and submission must be approved by the Supervisory Committee prior to the exam. Students will be allowed to get committee feedback on the aims and outline of the grant proposal, but should write the proposal independently. The proposal should include a budget, biosketch, and all other supplemental materials required by the funder. After the oral exam but prior to submission to the funding agency students will have the opportunity to revise the written proposal to address committee feedback. Prior grant submissions cannot be used for the comprehensive exam.

For both options, in the oral exam the student will be questioned by the Supervisory Committee about his/her written exam responses. Prior to the oral exam, Supervisory Committee members should read the written exam and prioritize questions to ask the student during the oral exam. The Supervisory Committee will evaluate the student's written and oral components and determine whether or not the student passed the exam. If more than one member of the Supervisory/Exam Committee recommends failure of the written or oral exam, the student will receive a failing grade for the exam.

If the student fails the written and/or oral exam, the Supervisory Committee will recommend to the Dean of Graduate Studies whether or not the student should be allowed to retake the written and oral exam. A student who is given the option of retaking the exam should be given a remediation plan that is entered in Seguidor with the exam grade. The second attempt should occur at least 3 months after the original exam. As noted above, the comprehensive exam may only be taken twice.

Please note the student **cannot** revise the original comprehensive exam answers if he/she fails the oral or written exam. The two options are to (1) retake the exam or (2) leave the PhD program.

The Oral Examination Report form must be submitted via the Exam Grade Page in Seguidor within 7 days of the oral exam. The Advisor should enter grades for all Supervisory Committee members.

A student who passes the Comprehensive Exam will receive a letter from Graduate Studies noting a change in status to PhD candidate

## Doctoral Dissertation

All PhD students and Advisors are responsible for familiarizing themselves with the [Dissertation & Graduation Instruction for PhD Candidates](#) document, which provides detailed information about dissertation timelines and processes at UNMC. Supplementary information is provided below.

### **Purpose**

The purpose of the dissertation at UNMC is to provide written documentation of the research achievements of the student that supports the awarding of the PhD degree by the University of Nebraska.

The dissertation represents original research on a defined problem. This research is the culmination of a training process designed to ready the student to do independent research. The dissertation presents proof that the student is ready to be independent, i.e., that the student has the ability to ask questions relevant to some field of inquiry, that the student has developed an appropriate, detailed approach to addressing these questions, and that the student can gather data and interpret them in relation to the current status of the field. The research must therefore be the student's work, not collective research of several people, even if others have contributed in a minor way.

The dissertation must be an original, substantial and significant contribution to the body of knowledge in the student's field.

Original indicates that the exact data or the interpretation of these data do not already exist in the knowledge base of the discipline. Unpublished work should be presented in one or more

chapters that address well-focused questions or hypotheses. These chapters should include only work performed by the student. If some or all of the student's work has been published, the findings may be rewritten in the form of chapters. Reprints of published material will NOT be permitted in the dissertation. These rewritten/reformatted chapters of previously published materials must meet three conditions:

1. the student must have been FIRST author of the publication(s)
2. the majority of the work described in the chapter(s) must have been done by the student
3. work performed by others in the publications is cited in the Acknowledgement section of the dissertation

Substantial reflects the idea that the research presented is important to the field of study, not tangential nor of little relevance. The use of substantial to define a dissertation also reflects that the research presented examines a question in depth.

Significant indicates that the research presented by the student provides information that is useful to other scholars in the field. In the ideal situation, the use of significant indicates that the work presented by the student is of such importance that it will alter the thinking or perspective in the student's field of study.

### **Dissertation Proposal**

Within one year of successfully completing the comprehensive exam, the student should write a dissertation proposal to be reviewed by the Supervisory Committee. Although the content and format of the written proposal is determined by the Supervisory Committee, dissertation proposals generally provide (1) a review of the literature that supports the need for the dissertation topic, (2) the research questions to be addressed by the dissertation, and (3) methods to be used to study the research questions.

The student must orally defend his/her proposal to the Supervisory Committee. The written proposal should be approved by the Advisor prior to sending it to the Supervisory Committee. The student should send the Advisor approved written proposal to the Supervisory Committee at least two weeks prior to the oral defense.

In the oral proposal defense meeting the student usually is asked to briefly summarize his/her proposed dissertation research. The Supervisory Committee asks clarifying questions and provides suggestions. Upon successful defense of the proposal, the Advisory Committee will grant the student approval to begin his/her proposed research. In some cases, the Supervisory Committee will require the written proposal to be revised prior to approving the proposal.

### **Structure of the Dissertation**

The student's Supervisory Committee will determine the structure of the dissertation. There are two common options: the traditional dissertation and the 3-manuscript dissertation.

### *1. Traditional Dissertation*

A traditional dissertation generally has the following sections:

- An Abstract that contains no more than 350 words, including the title.
- A general Introduction that presents a comprehensive and integrated discussion of the literature for the overall dissertation topic. In addition, the Introduction should frame the questions addressed in the dissertation.
- A Methods section that describes the study methods in sufficient detail to indicate that the student has a thorough understanding of the techniques used to answer the question and to permit others to replicate the work.
- A Results section that presents the research findings of the student in a logical and clear fashion.
- A Discussion section that addresses the key the results, their place in our current knowledge, the conclusions drawn from them, and the future directions or implications suggested by them. The Discussion should tie together the various chapters indicating the relationship of one to another, and their overall contributions to the field of study.
- A bibliographic section that documents the literature cited in the dissertation.

### *2. Three Manuscript Dissertation*

A 3-manuscript dissertation generally has the following sections:

- An Abstract that contains no more than 350 words, including the title.
- A general Introduction that presents a comprehensive and integrated discussion of the literature for the overall dissertation topic. In addition, the Introduction should frame the questions addressed in the dissertation.
- Three complete manuscripts focused on different but related research questions.
- A Discussion section that addresses the importance of the results, their place in our current knowledge, the conclusions drawn from them, and the future directions or implications suggested by them. The Discussion should tie together the three manuscripts indicating the relationship of one to another, and their overall contributions to the field of study.
- Bibliographic section that documents the literature cited in the dissertation.

## **Formatting the Dissertation**

Please refer to the [Dissertation & Graduation Instruction for PhD Candidates](#) for detailed guidelines for formatting the dissertation.

## **Oral Defense of the Dissertation**

Each program at the University of Nebraska Medical Center requires a Final Oral Exam (oral defense) of the dissertation and waiver of this requirement is rare. The defense is a public, formal presentation of the research required to obtain the PhD degree. This defense serves two purposes. It demonstrates to experts in the field, the Advisory Committee as well as others, that the student comprehends the material presented in the dissertation and related research

areas in such detail that the student can defend the work. The second purpose of the defense is to provide opportunity for a public, formal presentation of the work.

Please refer to the [Dissertation & Graduation Instruction for PhD Candidates](#) for detailed information about oral defense timelines and processes.

### **Graduation Requirements**

Please refer to the [Dissertation & Graduation Instruction for PhD Candidates](#) for detailed information about graduation requirements.

## **UNMC Student Policies**

Advisors and students should familiarize themselves with the policies listed on the UNMC [Student Policies](#) Wiki. Highlights are included below:

[Academic and Grade Appeals](#) (link to updated policy the UNMC Catalog)

[Graduate Student Grievance Resolution Procedure](#) (link to updated policy in UNMC Catalog)

[Guidelines for Graduate Assistant Work and Study](#) (link to updated policy in UNMC Catalog)

[Guidelines for Termination of Graduate Students](#) (link to updated policy in UNMC Catalog)

[Leave of Absence](#)

## **Additional Resources**

### **COPH Website**

Information for current COPH students, including academic calendars and course schedules, is available on the COPH [Current Students webpage](#).

### **Mental, Physical, and Financial Health**

Information about local resources intended to support mental, physical, and financial health is summarized [here](#).



# Appendix A – Required Courses for Students Entering the PhD Program Prior to Fall 2018

## **Public Health Core Courses (3 credits)**

HPRO 830: Foundations of Public Health

## **Health Promotion PhD Core Courses (15 credits)**

HPRO 860: Health Behavior

HPRO 827: Interventions in Health Education

HPRO 901: Advanced Theories in Public Health

HPRO 840: Health Promotion Program Planning

HPRO 902: Complex Systems Thinking in Health Promotion and Disease Prevention

## **Research (24 credits)**

BIOS 806: Biostatistics I

BIOS 808: Biostatistics II

BIOS 810: Introduction to SAS

EPI 820: Epidemiology Theory and Practice

EPI 821: Fundamentals of Epidemiology

HPRO 805: Applied Research in Public Health

HPRO 910: Humanistic Traditions of Qualitative Research

HPRO 875: Public Health Program Evaluation

## **Writing (4 credits)**

HPRO 998: Grant Proposal Writing

HPRO 925: Scientific Writing

## **Ethics (3 credits)**

## **Directed Research (6 credits)**

## **Electives (23 credits)**

## **Dissertation (12 credits)**