Graduate Student Handbook
Ph.D. Program

Revised May 2020

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.
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I. The Arnold School of Public Health

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

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

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

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

A. Mission, Vision, Goals, and Objectives

Mission

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

Revised and approved, November 2009

Vision

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

Revised and approved November, 2009

Goals and Objectives

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

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

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

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

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

- Describe the major theories in health services delivery and health services research, including their application in problem-solving current major issues in this arena; (Objective 1)
- Describe the characteristics of the major methodological approaches to health services research (survey research, qualitative research, experimental design research), including strengths and weaknesses in various problem-solving applications; (Objective 2)
- Identify statistical approaches to analyze quantitative and qualitative data, and describe possible inferences that can be drawn from the findings; (Objective 2)
- Conduct original research. (Objective 3)
- Deliver lectures on health service research and health services delivery at the graduate and/or undergraduate level. (Objective 3)

Measurable indicators for each of the objectives/competencies

Objective 1: Understand health care policy development and implementation and its relationship to the management of health care organizations. Curriculum: HSPM 845 – advanced topics I, HSPM 846 – advanced topics II

- A pass rate of 70% among students attempting the qualifying examination in these topic areas on the first attempt.
- 80% or more of students obtain a grade of B or better on technical papers in HSPM 845 and/or HSPM 846 that critique or evaluate health system components.

Objective 2: Demonstrate skills in analysis and interpretation of health services research data. Curriculum: Required courses: HSPM 717 - research methods I, HSPM 719 – research methods II. Optional courses at the discretion of student and advisor, consistent with the student's educational plan.

- A pass rate of 70% among students attempting the qualifying examination in these topic areas on the first attempt.
- 80% of students will have a grade of B or better on papers for HSPM 717 and/or HSPM 719 that use data from secondary data sources and apply regression or other modeling techniques.

Objective 3: Demonstrate ability to conduct health services research and communicate the findings through professional written communications and oral presentations. Curriculum: All courses

- Comprehensive Examination. A pass rate of 80% or better on the comprehensive examination (oral and written portions). No more than one student per academic year will fail the comprehensive exam on the first attempt.
- Dissertation Proposal and Dissertation Defenses. A pass rate of 80% or better on proposal defense and dissertation defense. No more than one student per academic year will fail to successfully defend their proposal on the first attempt.
• Student presentations in venues beyond the School: At least half of the doctoral students who have successfully completed their qualifying examination will present their research at professional conferences either as poster or oral presentations.

• Student papers: Annually, there will be at least two papers in print or in press in peer-reviewed journals authored or co-authored by doctoral students.

B. Program-Related Information: Doctor of Philosophy

Admission Criteria and Application Requirements

• Students should have a Master's degree in Health Administration, Business Administration, Public Health, Public Administration or a discipline relevant to health services policy or management. Previous graduate-level course work should include public health courses, including introduction to biostatistics/ statistics, and epidemiology. Up to 18 credit hours earned in previous course work may be transferred, reducing the required number of credit hours in the program to 42 credit hours. However, students with deficiencies may not be able to waive all the 18 credit hours in the PhD program that may be replaced by transferred credit hours. Applicants without a health-related master’s degree will be required to complete the Public Health core (see page 6) of the doctoral program. Courses taken to make up deficiencies do not count towards the doctoral program course requirements. An academically exceptional student may be admitted with only a Bachelor's degree, upon the recommendation of the doctoral admissions committee with the criteria for admission determined on a case-by-case basis but cannot be lower than for a student with a graduate degree.

• An applicant must have earned at least a 3.0 grade point average (based on a 4.0 scale) in previous graduate course work.

• Graduate Record Examination (GRE) scores must be submitted (GMAT scores may be substituted for GRE). The GRE/GMAT requirement may be waived for applicants with health-related professional degrees (e.g. DDS, DMD, JD, MD, or MBBS) on a case-by-case basis. The department, however, uses GRE/GMAT scores in allocating the limited amount of financial assistance available and if an applicant wishes to be considered for financial assistance, GRE/GMAT scores must be submitted. It is expected that applicants should have a minimum combined verbal and quantitative GRE scores of at least 295 (or the equivalent GMAT score).

• Foreign applicants whose native language is not English must submit the results of the Test of English as a Foreign Language (TOEFL) scores or other equivalent English language test. Applicants must submit a satisfactory score on TOEFL, IELTS Intl. Academic Course Type 2 exam, or the PTE Academic. The minimum TOEFL is 80 Internet-based, or 570 paper-based. The minimum acceptable overall band score on the IELTS Intl. Academic Course Type 2 exam is 6.5. The minimum acceptable score on PTE Academic is 53. If prior academic experience in the U.S., or in other, English-speaking nations (e.g., U.K., N.Z., Australia), illustrates that the student is proficient in English, this requirement may be waived, with the concurrence of the Graduate School.

• Three letters of recommendation must be submitted from persons who can reflect upon the applicant's prior academic and professional performance.

• The applicant must provide a career goal statement with a focus on the applicant’s research interests and how the HSPM program melds with these interests; and a current curriculum vita with the application.

• All short-listed applicants are interviewed by a departmental faculty member as part of the admission process. Interview reports are used in admission decisions by the committee.
• The applicant may submit copies of her/his peer-reviewed publications, if any.

Advice to Students

Students who are working full-time are highly encouraged to enroll as part-time students (e.g., 6 credit hours per regular semester and if desired, 3 credit hours per summer session) to maximize learning and acquisition of competencies. While full-time employment does not automatically bar the student from carrying a full course load per regular semester, poor academic performance (one or more grade of less than B) will require the student to enroll for no more than six credit hours per regular semester.

PhD Curriculum

The PhD in Health Services Policy and Management requires completion of 60 hours of post-baccalaureate course work, including 12 hours (and up to 30 hours) of dissertation preparation. 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 courses relevant to the student’s doctoral plan of study may be transferred from previous graduate coursework, with the approval of the student’s advisor and the Graduate Director. Therefore, students in the PhD program must complete a minimum of 42 semester credit hours at UofSC (including the dissertation research hours). To formalize transfer credits from a prior program, a student will have to submit the Doctoral Program of Study (DPOS) form listing all courses the student plans to take at UofSC during the doctoral program, including 12 hours of dissertation preparation. The form can be found at http://gradschool.sc.edu/forms/ and click on Doctoral Program of Study form. The student must also submit a memo to the doctoral program director listing the relevant graduate courses taken elsewhere being used to reduce the credit hour requirement from 60 hours.

Each doctoral student admitted to the program must be proficient in the use of one or more of the statistical software packages used in HSPM courses (e.g., STATA or SAS). Proficiency must be documented; one type of documentation is a transcript showing that an appropriate statistical software package course was taken and successfully completed. Another means of documenting proficiency is demonstration of the ability to analyze data to answer a specific aim. A work history of positions involving use of statistical software packages is yet a third means of documenting proficiency. If the student cannot document proficiency in a statistical software package used in the program, the student must attend and successfully complete such a course during the first semester of matriculation. Any credit hours associated with the course can be counted toward the required 14 credit hours for Approved Electives.

Students must complete the departmental core courses as well as the courses in a concentration area within the first two years of study. The departmental core requirements are essential for passing the qualifying and comprehensive examinations. Students must receive a grade of B or better in each core course to be considered to have passed it. Students may repeat a core doctoral course of the department only once. Not receiving a grade of B or better in a doctoral core course on the second attempt will lead to automatic termination from the program. Enrollment in all courses require the approval of the academic advisor of the student.

Students are nominated for admission for doctoral candidacy once they have been fully admitted to the HSPM doctoral program and have passed the qualifying and comprehensive examinations. This involves submitting to the Graduate school the student’s approved doctoral program of study along with a written nomination from the HSPM Graduate Director. After these conditions have been met, the Graduate School admits the student to candidacy status. The Graduate School will notify the student and the HSPM Graduate Director when the student has been admitted to candidacy.

Students may take doctoral dissertation research credit hours (HSPM 899) after successful completion of the qualifying examination and comprehensive examination. HSPM 899 must be taken under the supervision of a faculty member, typically the Chair of the Dissertation Committee. Atypically, when the Chair of the Dissertation Committee has not yet been determined, HSPM 899 may be taken under a faculty member who has
expertise in the dissertation topic being explored. If completion of the qualifying and comprehensive examinations is delayed, students may have to complete more than the required minimum credit hours of course-work in the PhD program. Only 12 credit hours of HSPM 899 count toward the required 60 credit hours of the degree. Therefore, it is important that the student adequately progresses in conceptualizing the dissertation project, forming the Dissertation Committee, and completing the research, including write-up of the dissertation per Graduate School guidelines. Adequate progression is determined by the faculty member under whom HSPM 899 is taken, typically the Chair of the Dissertation Committee. When the student is making adequate progress, the continuation grade “T” is received. As general guidance, at the end of the first semester with HSPM 899, the student should have identified a dissertation research area or topic, prepared an approved concept paper of the research idea along with a list of references and potential sources of data (if relevant). Additionally, based on the concept paper, the student should have formed his or her Dissertation Committee. These benchmarks must occur by the end of the second semester of HSPM 899. By the end of the third semester, the student must have prepared at least chapter 1 of the proposed dissertation research, and ideally have a working draft of the first three chapters: specific aims, literature review and methods that is approved by the supervisor. Thereafter, a student signing up for HSPM 899 must show consistent and substantial progress towards the completion of proposal and proposal defense, and then towards the final dissertation. If a student fails to demonstrate substantial progress in her/his doctoral research, the faculty member in charge of the HSPM 899 section may assign a grade of unsatisfactory (U). Receiving a grade of “U” in more than two semesters in HSPM 899 will lead to automatic termination from the doctoral program.

When taking HSPM 899, students may elect to become enrolled as “Z-status” students if all other course requirements have already been completed. A Z-status student is considered to be a full-time student working on dissertation research irrespective of credit hours taken in the semester(s). A student can remain in Z-status no more than six semesters during the program of study.

The required Ph.D. curriculum is:

**Public Health Core:** 6 hours (students with an MPH are not required to complete the public health core courses)

- Perspectives in Public Health (PUBH 700) 3 hours
- Concepts and methods of Epidemiology or equivalent (EPID 700/701) 3 hours

**Departmental Core:** 19 hours

- Advanced Topics in Health Policy & Management I & II (HSPM 845 & 846) 6 hours
- Health Services Research Methods I (HSPM 717) 3 hours
- Health Services Research Methods II (HSPM 719) 3 hours
- Data management (HSPM 791) 3 hours
- Doctoral Seminar (HSPM 800, one credit hour each) 4 hours

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

**Health Services Policy and Management related electives:** 14 hours

**Dissertation:** 12 hours

**Total credit hours:** 60 hours

**Doctoral Seminar (HSPM 800 sessions)**

Doctoral seminar sessions are offered in a sequence of four seminars and students must take these offerings sequentially.

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

- Seminar 2, Specific Aims (Second half of fall, year 1) – Students will spend half of the semester working on how to craft specific aims. This seminar provides an opportunity for students to begin to formalize their research interests and fellow students will serve as reviewers of their work. The final product by the end of the seminar is 2-3 well-developed specific aims.

- Seminar 3, Conceptual Framework (spring, year 1) – Students will focus on developing study background, significance and conceptual frameworks; and how to use a conceptual framework to underpin their research. Several different frameworks will be reviewed throughout the course of the seminar and students will continue to develop their aims by selecting a supporting conceptual framework.

- Seminar 4, Research Strategy (first part of fall, year 2) – The final seminar covers concepts related to the research strategy. Students in this final seminar will explore the analytical approach and methods that could be used to address their specific aims.

The Doctoral Program Director, in consultation with the Graduate Director, of the department has general oversight over the academic aspects of all doctoral candidates. At matriculation, the Doctoral Program Director assigns each incoming doctoral student to a faculty academic advisor/mentor based on research interests and with the concurrence of the assigned faculty member and Graduate Director. Following the successful completion of the comprehensive examination, a Dissertation Committee Chair is to be selected by the student and both the Doctoral Program Director and Graduate Director of the department are notified about the selection of the Dissertation Committee Chair by a memo from the student to the Graduate Director of the department.

All graduate students must maintain a cumulative GPA of 3.0 or better during the entire duration of graduate studies as well as receive a grade of B or better in all graded courses or face academic probation and/or termination from the program. With the exception of HSPM 899, a grade of U in a graduate course is calculated as an F in the cumulative grade point average. Students will be placed under academic probation if their cumulative overall GPA becomes less than 3.0 in any semester and will remain on probation until a cumulative GPA of 3.0 or better is achieved. A student will also be placed on academic probation at the time he or she receives a U or less than B in a third graduate course (other than HSPM 899). A fourth grade of U or less than B will result in automatic termination from the program. Students facing academic difficulties are strongly advised to discuss their issues with their academic advisor. If necessary, students may take a leave of absence for one or two semesters before taking additional courses.

**Teaching requirements for PhD program**

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

- Teaching Assistant training course offered by Center for Teaching Excellence (CTE) and
• Presenting at least once in the doctoral student seminar series arranged by the department.

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

**Research experience requirement**

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

- Completing CITI training and
- Presenting at least one poster or oral presentation at a state, regional, national or international conference, or
- Publishing an article in a reputable peer-reviewed journal.

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

**C. Degree Requirements**

Students in the PhD program must complete 60 graduate credit hours. With approval of the Graduate Director, eighteen (18) hours of previous graduate credit may be used to address this requirement, for a net of 42 program hours, subject to the restrictions listed above on page 5. To be acceptable as transfer credit, the previous graduate work must be recent, i.e., within 10 years of anticipated date of doctoral graduation, relevant to the student’s doctoral plan of study, and have a grade of B or better. MPH core courses and their equivalents cannot be used to waive credit hours.

Students should complete the core courses (exclusive of the doctoral seminars) within the first year of study. These courses are essential for passing the qualifying examination. Registration for all courses requires the approval of the Academic Advisor of the student and/or Graduate Director of the Department. All students must pass the five departmental core courses before proceeding to the qualifying exam. Students who do not receive a B or better in any core course may repeat the course once and must pass the second time with a B or better. Receiving two grades less than a B in the core courses will result in automatic termination from the program.

Every student, with the advice and counsel of their faculty advisor, must identify an area of concentration. This is a set of courses (for a total of 9 credit hours) in a specific topic area for which the student seeks to develop greater competency. The concentration can be in any area of health management, health policy or health services research. As general guidance, the concentration will be in the topic area where the student seeks to develop their research career. No more than 3 credit hours of independent study or special topic course, and no more than 3 credit hours of course-work outside the department, can be used towards the concentration area credit hour requirement.

**D. Time Limits**

Doctoral students must complete their studies within 10 years of matriculation or must repeat course work. Transferred credits must be within the 10-year period as well. Students who do not enroll in at least one course for consecutive academic semesters (summer not included) must apply for readmission to the Graduate School. If a student is accepted after applying for readmission, the academic rules and standards in effect at the time of readmission will supersede those in effect at the time of initial admission.
E. Qualifying Examination

The qualifying examination must be taken following the completion of core course requirements (excluding doctoral seminars). This qualifying examination is a cumulative exam that tests students on the content areas of the five departmental core courses relating to health policy, health management, research methods, and data analysis. The examination is given as two separate sections: (i) Research method and data and (ii) Health policy and management. The qualifying examination is offered twice per academic year, in late summer (August) and early spring (January). The student must be enrolled in the semester in which the exam is taken. Specific dates within these periods will be selected each year and the students will be notified at least 30 days prior to the actual dates. The qualifying examination is taken within the Department of Health Services Policy and Management and is closed book, unless indicated otherwise for a specific section. The examination must be completed on a school or departmental computer in Word, but one or both sections may require the use of statistical software for the analyses of data. Each section of the qualifying examination is graded by two faculty members (one of which is the writer of the examination question/instructor of record for the course) of the department independently. To receive a passing grade in the section, both faculty members grading concurrently must assign a grade of “pass”. If a student receives a failing grade from both faculty members grading the exam, the student will receive a failing grade in the examination. In case of non-concurrence among the faculty graders, the student’s examination will be sent to third grader and the third grader’s grade will be considered the final grade. Students will be notified of their grades in writing within three weeks of taking the examination. Examination results will be reported as Pass or Fail.

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

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

F. Comprehensive Examination

The comprehensive examination (concentration area) is arranged in consultation with the major professor of the concentration area, Doctoral Program Director and the Graduate Director of the department. Students must pass the qualifying examination and complete the four sections of the doctoral seminar course prior to taking the comprehensive examination. The student must be enrolled in the semester in which the exam is taken. The comprehensive examination has two components: the written component and the oral presentation component. The written component of the comprehensive examination is a take-home examination in which the student is required to write an NIH R03 type proposal on a specific research topic (see instructions in Annex A). Students should choose two faculty
members from the department based on the student’s concentration area to write the comprehensive examination question(s). Students taking the examination must submit the research proposal based on the question(s) within 10 working days after receiving the question(s). The faculty members writing the question(s) will grade the student’s work independently and will assign a grade of pass or fail or “revise and resubmit” (see grading rubric in Annex B). If both graders agree on the grade, the student will receive that grade as the final grade on the examination. If at least one of the faculty members assign a grade of “revise and resubmit”, the student must revise the research proposal based on the comments received. If one of the graders assigns a grade of “pass” and the other grader assigns a grade of “fail”, the Graduate Director of the department will arrange a meeting between the two graders to come up with a consensus grade (pass, fail or revise and resubmit). If the student is asked to revise and resubmit the proposal, the revised version must be submitted no later than 10 working days after the receipt of the grade and the comments. A student can only be assigned a grade of pass or fail on the revised research proposal. The revised research proposal must be completed and graded within the same semester in which the initial proposal was written.

The students receiving a passing grade on the written part of the exam (i.e., the R03 proposal) will be asked to present the proposal orally in the department. The oral presentation will be open to all students and faculty members of the School. The oral presentation must be completed in the same semester in which the written examination was taken. Faculty members conducting the comprehensive written examination will arrange an oral presentation in consultation with the departmental administrative personnel. The oral presentation must be evaluated by at least two faculty members of the department and the student will be assigned a grade of “pass” or “fail” on the oral part. If a student receives a failing grade in the oral presentation part of the comprehensive examination, the student will be required to retake the oral part of the examination in the semester immediately after the semester of the first attempt.

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

After completion of the comprehensive examination, students must submit a comprehensive examination completion form that is signed by the faculty members conducting the examination (see http://gradschool.sc.edu/forms/ for graduate school Doctoral Comprehensive Exam Verification form). The signed copy must be submitted to the department to place in the student’s academic file.
G. Dissertation Proposal and Defense

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

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

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

If the Dissertation Committee Chair subsequently becomes unaffiliated with the Department of Health Services Policy and Management, he or she may continue to serve as the Chair until the dissertation is completed. However, selection of a Co-Chair who meets the eligibility requirement to be a Dissertation Committee Chair and who remains affiliated with the Department is strongly recommended.

Thirty days prior to the scheduled proposal defense, the dissertation proposal must be given to each member of the Committee. The dissertation proposal has three chapters: an introduction, which briefly outlines the importance of the topic and the questions to be examined (chapter 1) a detailed literature review (chapter 2), and a detailed specification of the methods to be used in testing the research hypotheses (chapter 3). After the Dissertation Committee (or Chair) has reviewed the proposal and determined that the proposal is ready to be presented, the proposal defense may proceed. The student should be prepared to give a 30-45 minutes presentation of the proposal to the Committee. The proposal defense generally takes up to 2-hours to complete.

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

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

H. Dissertation Defense

Doctoral candidates are required to prepare and successfully defend a dissertation based on original research. When the research is completed, the student and Committee members meet, and the dissertation is defended. The dissertation and its defense must be approved by a majority (> 50%; i.e. 3 of 4 of a 4-member Committee) of Committee members. The process of arranging the dissertation defense is similar to the process of organizing the proposal defense. The dissertation defense is also open to all
students, faculty and community members. After the oral presentation of the dissertation, there will be a question and answer session. Committee members will ask questions first and then the floor will be open to others in the audience. At the end of the Q&A session, the Chair of the Dissertation Committee will excuse others to meet as a committee and evaluate the student’s performance. At this stage, the Committee can choose one of the following four options: (a) Dissertation accepted as drafted without any changes (b) Dissertation accepted with minor changes (c) Dissertation to be accepted with major changes (d) Dissertation not accepted as submitted. If the dissertation is accepted with major changes, all Committee members should be provided the revised version of dissertation and the Committee decides whether to accept the revised version with or without another defense. The student will be automatically terminated from the program after failing the dissertation defense twice. The Chair of the Committee will notify the student and the Graduate School in writing of the outcome of the dissertation defense. The dissertation defense must be completed at least 30 days prior to graduation.

I. Doctoral Residency Requirement

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

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

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

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

A. Academic Progression

The Department sets a high standard of performance for students in all of the master and doctoral programs. Students earning a grade less than “B” in one or more courses in any given semester will be asked to reduce their graduate assistantship hours, if any, to increase their focus on coursework during the following semester. In the doctoral program, students must earn a minimum cumulative GPA of 3.0 (or B average) in the core courses to be eligible to appear in the qualifying examination and to continue in the doctoral program. If a student receives a grade of less than B in any of the core PhD courses, the course(s) must be repeated. For all graduate students in the department, a minimum cumulative GPA of 3.0 is required for graduation. Any student who earns a grade of U or less than “B” in three graduate courses (other than HSPM 899) will be under departmental academic probation requiring development of a written plan by the student, faculty academic advisor and the Graduate Director to overcome the academic challenges and improve the GPA. Students who receive their third and fourth course grade of U or less than B concurrently in the same semester will be automatically terminated without the remedial plan given the temporal impossibility to address the issue after the third U or less than B.

B. Academic termination

Any student enrolled in the HSPM doctoral program faces academic termination if any of the following academic standards is not met:

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

C. Academic Integrity

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

D. Professional Responsibility

Graduate assistantships and residencies are intended to serve as an extension of the teaching mission of the Department of Health Services Policy and Management, by giving students work experience in the public health, health services, or research environments in which they will eventually pursue careers. While serving in on- or off-campus graduate assistantships, students are representatives of the Department. As such, they must comport themselves with total professionalism at all times.
Students participating in assistantships will follow the dress standards of their work environment. All students will comply with the work hours associated with their assistantship. While at work, all students will ensure that their level of effort, deportment, 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.
V. INFORMATION ON DOCTORAL DISSERTATION

Definition of a HSPM Doctoral Dissertation

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

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

Concept Paper development

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

- Importance of Proposed Research: Explain how the proposed research meets the requirements for originality in producing what is expected to be a significant contribution to health services research.
- Objective(s): Describe the general nature of expected or possible outcomes in measurable terms.
- Setting/Participants: Describe site(s) of research with all relevant detail. Then identify the subjects and other participants who are the object of the research, likely to be affected by its outcome, or connected with it.
- Research Design, Statistical Applications, & Main Outcome Measures: Explain the relevance of the research design and statistical applications and packages to the conduct of the research. Then identify the proposed outcome measure with an appropriate rationale.
- Ethical Procedures Approval, Institutional Review Board (IRB): While IRB clearance must be obtained only after final approval of the research proposal, students should indicate
knowledge of ethical issues that may affect their planned research (subject protection, data protection, etc.) at the concept stage.

**Dissertation Formats**

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

**Dissertation monograph:**

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

- **Chapter One:** Introduction. A brief statement of the topic to be examined and its importance.
- **Chapter Two:** Literature Review. A thorough review of all literature pertinent to the topic in question. The literature should be focused on developing the specific hypotheses to be tested through the student’s research, and the chapter should end by stating those hypotheses in testable form.
- **Chapter Three:** Methods. A complete outline of all methods to be used in carrying out the proposed research including study design and data sources. At a minimum, variables must be defined, and analytic techniques specified for each hypothesis.
- **Chapter Four:** Results. A presentation of the results of the research. Ideally, this presentation is organized by hypothesis.
- **Chapter Five:** Conclusions and Recommendations. A summary of the implications of the research, and recommendations for continuation of the research by future investigators.

**Publication option:**

Ph.D. students are encouraged, with the concurrence of their Dissertation Committee chair, to choose the publication option. As noted, students choosing this option will be required to complete the first three chapters of the dissertation, as part of the research presentation for defending their dissertation proposal. When submitting the final draft, the usual concluding chapters (“Results” and “Conclusions and Recommendations”) will be replaced by two or more manuscripts. Following Graduate School guidelines for a manuscript format dissertation, a final chapter (Chapter Six) will be added that ties together the findings and implications of the two papers. Manuscript topics will have been agreed upon as part of the proposal defense. All materials must be reviewed and approved by the student’s Dissertation Committee and the Dissertation Committee Chair, as with a formally structured dissertation.
Annex A: R03 Proposal Instructions for Comprehensive Examination

- **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. The Specific Aims do NOT count toward your Research Strategy, which has a 6-page limit. Concisely state the goals of the proposed research. Summarize the expected outcomes, including 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:** Cannot exceed 6 pages (for R03s). 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 Instructions for Qualifying Examination (points in parentheses)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Section</th>
<th>Points</th>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Title of proposal</strong>: Limited to 81 characters including spaces and punctuation marks (-1 point if not in compliance)</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Project Summary (Abstract)</strong>:</td>
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<td>No longer than 30 lines of text. (-1 point if not in compliance)</td>
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<td>Summarize the proposed activity suitable for dissemination to the public. (0-1)</td>
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<td>Briefly state the specific aims and research design. (0-1)</td>
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<td>Provide info on the significance (literature gap study and the public health significance). (0-2)</td>
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<td><strong>Project Narrative</strong>:</td>
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<td>No more than 2 or 3 sentences. (minus 2 if not in compliance)</td>
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<td>Describe the relevance to public health. (0-2)</td>
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<td>Write succinctly and use plain language appropriate for a lay audience. (0-2)</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Biographical Sketch- (NOT NEEDED FOR QUALIFYING EXAM)</strong></td>
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<td><strong>Specific Aims</strong>:</td>
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<td>1 page (Do not exceed 1 page; -2 if not in compliance with page limit)</td>
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<td>Concisely state the larger purpose that the proposed research will serve. (0-4)</td>
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<td>Summarize the expected outcomes including impact of research on fields involved (0-4)</td>
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<td>Succinctly list the specific aims/objectives of the proposed research (0-4)</td>
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<td><strong>Research Strategy</strong>: 6 pages. (Do not exceed 6 pages; -10 if not in compliance with page limit)</td>
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<td><strong>Significance</strong>:</td>
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<td>• Explain the importance of the problem or critical barrier to progress in the field that the proposed project addresses, (0-10)</td>
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<td>• Explain how the proposed project will improve scientific knowledge, technical capability, and/or clinical practice in one or more broad fields, (0-10)</td>
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<td>• 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)</td>
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<td><strong>Innovation</strong>: At least one of the 3 items addressed in the innovation section. (0-10):</td>
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<td>• Explain how the application challenges and seeks to shift current research or clinical practice paradigms (i.e. addresses innovative hypothesis or critical barriers).</td>
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<td>• 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).</td>
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<td>• Explain any refinements, improvements, or new applications of theoretical concepts, approaches or methodologies, instrumentation or interventions.</td>
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<td><strong>Approach</strong>:</td>
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<td>• Describe the overall strategy (0-10)</td>
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<td>• Detail proposed methodology including data source, collection method and variables (0-10)</td>
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<td>• Propose analyses to be used to accomplish the specific aims of the project and interpretation (0-10)</td>
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<td>• Identify potential problems, alternative strategies, and benchmarks for success anticipated to achieve the aims (0-10)</td>
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<td><strong>Cover letter or Institutional Capability Statements</strong>: (NOT NEEDED FOR QUALIFYING EXAM)</td>
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<td><strong>Total Score</strong></td>
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*Please note that each proposal will be graded based on the extent to which it satisfies each element specified under each section in the guidelines. The sum of all scores will be the grade for the exam. Grade >70% is considered a pass.*
WRITTEN REVIEW TEMPLATE FOR STUDENTS RESPONDING TO
Qualifying II (R03 Format Guidance)

Principal Investigator(s):
Reviewer Name:
PRELIMINARY OVERALL IMPACT SCORE (From 1 to 9): ___ ____________

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

Strengths

Weaknesses

INDIVIDUAL CRITERION SCORE: (Score from 1 to 9)
Reviewers will consider each of the review criteria below in the determination of scientific merit, and give a separate score for each. An application does not need to be strong in all categories to be judged likely to have major scientific impact. For example, a project that by its nature is not innovative may be essential to advance a field. -

Significance: ____________
Innovation: ____________
Approach: ____________

1. Significance:

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

Strengths

Weaknesses

2. Innovation:

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

Strengths
3. Approach:

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

Strengths

- 

Weaknesses
## Annex C: Comprehensive Examination for PhD Students

**Department of Health Services Policy and Management**  
**University of South Carolina, Columbia, SC.**

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name of student:</th>
<th>Date of written exam:</th>
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<th>Names of faculty members grading written exam:</th>
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