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

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

Revised and approved November 2009

Goals and Objectives

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

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

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

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

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

- 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 data and analytic methods for qualitative data analysis, and describe possible inferences from findings; (Objective 2)
- Conduct original research. (Objective 3)
- Deliver lectures on health services 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 services policy, its 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 791 – Data management, 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 20% of students taking it in an academic year will fail the comprehensive exam on the first attempt.
- Dissertation Proposal defense and Dissertation Defense. A pass rate of 80% or better on proposal defense and dissertation defense. No more than 20% of students presenting their proposal in an academic year will fail to successfully defend it in the first attempt.
• Student presentations in venues beyond the School: At least half of the doctoral students who have successfully completed their qualifying examinations will present their research at professional conferences either as poster or oral presentations.

• Student papers: Annually, at least two papers will be published by the department in print or in press in peer-reviewed journals with a HSPM doctoral student as lead or co-author.

B. Program-Related Information: Doctor of Philosophy

Admission Criteria and Application Requirements

• Applicants to the doctoral program should have a master's degree in Health Administration, Business Administration, Public Health, Public Administration or a discipline relevant to public health, health services policy or management. To be eligible for full admission without conditions, previous graduate-level course work should have included public health courses, including introduction to biostatistics/statistics, the US healthcare system, and epidemiology. A 6 credit-hour package of 2 courses covering the above content is offered at UofSC and will have to be completed during Year 1 of the program by those without prior public health core course work (see Public Health core courses under PhD curriculum). Applicants without a public health-related master’s degree or public health core coursework will be admitted with conditions, that they will complete the Public Health core courses (see page 6). Applicants without a graduate-level statistics course completed with a B or better grade will be required to complete the introductory graduate level biostatistics course after matriculation in the first semester. Courses taken to make up deficiencies do not count towards the required doctoral program credit hours.

• Up to 18 credit hours earned in previous graduate course work (excluding the five public health core courses of the MPH program) may be transferred based on relevance to health services and policy research (determined by syllabus review). This will reduce the required number of credit hours in the program, to 42 credit hours. However, students with courses that do not qualify may qualify for waiver of fewer credit-hours through transferred credits.

• 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 the academic/test score requirements 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 will have a combined verbal and quantitative GRE scores of at least 295 (or the equivalent GMAT score) with the quantitative section score approximating or exceeding the 50th percentile. Lower-than-desirable GRE scores will be evaluated in light of the candidate’s total portfolio including personal statement on their career and research goals, previous involvement in research, and the interview.

• Foreign applicants whose native language is not English must submit the results of the Test of English as a Foreign Language (TOEFL) scores or other equivalent English language test. Applicants must submit a satisfactory score on TOEFL, IELTS Intl. Academic Course Type 2 exam, 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. The minimum acceptable Duolingo score is 115 in lieu of IELTS scores. For more information please visit: https://sc.edu/study/colleges_schools/graduate_school/apply/international_applicants/index.php If prior academic experience in the U.S., or in other, English-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 reflective career goal statement with a focus on the applicant’s research interests, describing, if applicable, completed or in-process research or professional projects (such as graduate research or practicum projects), and how the HSPM program aligns with their research interests. Applicants should also submit a current curriculum vita with the application.
- Applicants should review the PhD program curriculum. Applicants should also review of curriculum vitae of HSPM faculty members and identify potential mentors whose research areas/interests/background align with their own and with whom they would like to work. A faculty member should accept mentoring responsibility for the applicant to be admitted to the program.
- Based on review of the applicant’s portfolio, the PhD admissions committee short-lists applicants for interview. These applicants are interviewed by a departmental faculty member(s) with allied research interests as part of the admission process. Interview reports are used in admission decisions by the committee.
- The applicant may submit copies of her/his peer-reviewed publications, if any.

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

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

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

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

**PhD Curriculum**

The PhD in Health Services Policy and Management requires completion of 60 hours of post-baccalaureate course work, including 12 hours (and up to 30 hours) of dissertation preparation. However, no more than 12 hours of dissertation preparation will count toward the required 60 hours of post-baccalaureate course work. With the exception of MPH core courses (EPID 700, BIOS 700, HPEB 700, ENHS 660, HSPM 700 or their equivalents), up to 18 hours of other courses relevant to the student’s doctoral plan of study.
may be transferred from previous graduate coursework, 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 12 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/](http://gradschool.sc.edu/forms/) and click on Doctoral Program of Study form. The student must also submit syllabi and/or related documentation of the relevant graduate courses taken elsewhere that are requested to be transferred and submit a signed memo to the doctoral program director listing the courses for transfer.

For full admission without conditions, an admitted doctoral student must be proficient in the use of one or more of the statistical software packages used in HSPM courses (e.g., STATA or SAS or R). 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 perform basic data analyses to answer a specific research question. A work history of job positions involving use of statistical software packages is yet a third means of documenting proficiency. In the absence of such documentation, the student must attend and successfully complete such a course during the first semester of matriculation (e.g. BIOS 709) unless taking BIOS 700 or 757 in Fall Year 1 due to course deficiencies. Credit hours associated with BIOS 709 can be counted toward the required elective credit hours.

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

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

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

When taking HSPM 899, students may elect to become enrolled as “Z-status” students if all other coursework requirements have been completed. A Z-status student is considered to be a full-time student working on dissertation research irrespective of credit hours taken in the semester. A student can remain in Z-status no more than six academic semesters during the program of study. After six semesters, the student should document in writing their scholarly accomplishments and progress achieved as well as a timeline to complete the dissertation, signed by their dissertation advisor and provide it to the Graduate Director. Students have to apply to the Graduate School for Z status with appropriate documentation and approval of their advisor. Z status documentation is required for students seeking graduate assistantship with less than full-time enrollment.

The required Ph.D. curriculum is:

Public Health Core: 6 hours (not required for MPH graduates, required for other students)
- Perspectives in Public Health (PUBH 700) 3 hours
- Concepts and methods in Epidemiology or equivalent (EPID 700/701) 3 hours

Biostatistics core for incoming students with no or inadequate statistics training
- BIOS 700 (for students without an introductory graduate biostatistics course) 3 hours
- Or equivalent with a B or better grade
- BIOS 757 (for students without an intermediate level graduate statistics course that used SAS with a B or better grade) 3 hours

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

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

Total required doctoral program credit hours = 60

Departmental Core: 19 hours
- Advanced Topics in Health Policy & Management I & II (HSPM 845 & 846) 6 hours
- Health Services Research Methods I (HSPM 717) 3 hours
- Health Services Research Methods II (HSPM 719) 3 hours
- Advanced Data Structures and Analytic Methods for Health Services Research (HSPM 830) 3 hours
- Doctoral Seminar (HSPM 800, one credit hour each) 4 hours

Concentration (designed by student): 9 hours

Approved electives related to HSPM studies: 20 hours

Dissertation: 12 hours
Total credit hours 60 hours

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

**Doctoral Seminar (HSPM 800 courses)**

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

- **Seminar 1, Faculty presentations (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, Developing the Specific Aims section of a National Institutes of Health research proposal (First half of spring, Year 1)** – Students will spend half of the semester working on how to craft specific aims for a health services research topic of their choice. This seminar provides an opportunity for students to begin to formalize their research interests and fellow students/instructor will serve as reviewers of their work. The final product by the end of the seminar is a 1-page specific aims section of an NIH-R03 proposal, with 2-3 well-developed specific aims of a research study.

- **Seminar 3, Significance and Conceptual Framework (Second half of spring, Year 1)** – Students will focus on developing the study background, significance and theoretical/conceptual frameworks in the R03 proposal format; and how to use/develop a theoretical/conceptual framework to underpin their research. Several different theoretical frameworks will be reviewed throughout the course of the seminar and students will continue to refine their specific aims as well as develop a supporting conceptual framework.

- **Seminar 4, Research Strategy (Fall Year 2)** – The final seminar covers development of the research strategy section. Students in this final seminar will explore and develop the analytical approach and methods to address their specific aims.

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

The Doctoral Program Director, in consultation with the 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 faculty member and Graduate Director who serves as the student’s advisor until completion of the comprehensive examination. Following successful completion of the comprehensive examination, a Dissertation Committee Chair is to be selected by the student in consultation with their advisor or Doctoral Program Director followed by the student notifying...
the Graduate Director of the selected Dissertation Committee Chair by a memo. 

All graduate students must maintain a cumulative GPA of 3.0 or better during the entire duration of graduate studies as well as receive a grade of B or better in all graded courses or face academic probation and/or termination from the program. Other than HSPM 899 (dissertation credits) a grade of U in a graduate course is calculated as an F in the cumulative grade point average. (Note that an S however does not count towards GPA.) 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 in a third graduate course after two C grades (other than the doctoral core courses), or after a combination of one C and one U grade (other than HSPM 899). Across all coursework taken since matriculation in the doctoral program, a fourth C (or lower grade) or U (any combination of Cs or Us) will result in automatic termination from the program. Students facing academic difficulties are strongly advised to proactively consult with their academic advisor and undertake remedial work before they receive grades at or below C level or U. If necessary, students may withdraw from a course before the deadline for a W (Withdrawal) to reflect as a WF grade (Fail grade in transcripts and accounted for in the GPA), or, if warranted, take a leave of absence (with documentation) for one or two semesters before taking additional courses. During the dissertation phase, a second U grade for dissertation credits (HSPM 899) will result in academic probation status (regardless of credit hours registered), and a third U will result in automatic termination from the program.

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

Required courses for incoming doctoral students without certain required prior coursework

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Public Health Core: 6 hours (not for MPH graduates, required for others)</th>
<th>Credits</th>
<th>Sem./Year</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Perspectives in Public Health (PUBH 700)</td>
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<td></td>
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The public health core and BIOS 700 do not count towards the doctoral credits. BIOS 757 can be counted towards electives.

Students coming in with statistics or math major in their master’s program can be waived BIOS 757 requirement. Note that students admitted with coursework deficits may not be able to complete the required HSPM core courses for the qualifying examination in Year 1 due to make-up courses.

Doctoral program of courses for students who seek to take their qualifying exam after Year 1 (Completion of HSPM 845, 846, 717 and 719 and BIOS 757 is required to be eligible to take the qualifying exam.)

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<tr>
<td>Advanced Topics in Health Policy &amp; Management II (HSPM 846)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Health Services Research Methods II (HSPM 719)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Intermediate Biometrics (BIOS 757) (Pre-req: BIOS 700/equivalent)</td>
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<td>Doctoral Seminar (HSPM 800, one credit hour each)</td>
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**Spring Year 1**

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

**Qualifying exam, Summer Year 1**

**Fall Year 2**

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

**Spring Year 2:**

Advanced Data Structures and Analytic Methods  
for Health Services Research (HSPM 830)  
3 (Spr. Year 1 or 2)
Concentration/Elective courses  
6-12
Spring Year 2 total  
6-12 credits

*(HSPM 791 and concentration area course completion must be completed to be eligible for the comprehensive exam.)*

**Comprehensive exam – Spring Year 2 or Summer Year 2**

Admitted to doctoral candidacy upon successful completion of Comprehensive examination.

Teaching competency-related activities  
0 credits

**Fall Year 3**

HSPM 899 (dissertation credits)  
3-6
Remaining electives  
3-9
Fall Year 3 total  
6-12 credits

**Spring Year 3:**

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

**After Year 3:**

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

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

**Note:**

Electives without credit transfer  
20
Electives with credit transfer  
20 minus credits transferred
Teaching requirements of the HSPM PhD program

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

- Teaching Assistant training workshop offered by Center for Teaching Excellence (CTE)
- Completing at least 3 workshops focused on improving teaching and classroom effectiveness skills (1-2 hours each, no extra cost) offered round the academic year by the CTE and obtaining documentation of attendance OR completing the CTE’s “Preparing Future Faculty” certification program (at no extra cost), see https://sc.edu/about/offices_and_divisions/cte/graduate_teaching_assistants/preparing_future_faculty/index.php .
- Presenting at least once in the doctoral student research seminar series arranged by the department.
- Teaching at least one class session as a mentored guest instructor in a structured course, supervised by the faculty of record OR Serving as a master’s residency project 2nd reader for at least one residency project

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

Research experience requirement

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

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

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

C. Degree Requirements

Students in the PhD program must complete 60 graduate credit hours. With approval of the Graduate Director, up to eighteen (18) hours of previous graduate credit may be used to address this requirement, for a net of 42 program hours, subject to the restrictions listed on page 5. To be acceptable as transfer credit, the previous graduate work must be recent, i.e., within 10 years of anticipated date of doctoral graduation, relevant to the student’s doctoral plan of study/research and earn a grade of B or better. MPH core courses or their equivalents cannot be used against doctoral credit hours. Relevance is determined by syllabus review by the advisor and doctoral program director/Graduate director. Syllabi of courses must be submitted by the student as applied in the semester that they took those courses.
Students should complete four out of the five HSPM core courses (HSPM 845, 846, 717 and 719) within the first year of study except for justified delays, to be documented by the Academic Advisor for the student file (e.g., student with a bachelor’s degree admitted to the program and taking pre-requisite coursework in the first semester, medical/other documented reasons). 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.

Every student, with the advice and counsel of their faculty advisor, must identify an area of concentration. This is a set of 3 courses (for a total of 9 credit hours) in a specific topic area in which the student seeks to develop in-depth competency for their doctoral research and post-doctoral research career. The concentration can be in any area of health services, management, health policy 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 can be used towards the concentration area credit hours.

D. Time Limits

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

E. Qualifying Examination

The qualifying examination must be taken following the completion of four required core courses (HSPM 845, 846, 717 and 719). The qualifying examination is a cumulative exam that tests students on the content areas of four departmental core courses relating to health services organization, delivery and policy, and research methods including data analysis. The examination is administered as two separate sections: (i) Research methods and data analysis (two sub-sections) and (ii) Health services policy and management (two subsections). The qualifying examination is offered twice per academic year, in late summer (August) and early spring (January). The student must be enrolled in the semester in which the exam is taken. Specific dates within these periods will be selected each year and the students will be notified at least 30 days prior to the actual dates. The qualifying examination is taken within the Department of Health Services Policy and Management and is closed book, unless indicated otherwise for a specific section. The examination must be completed on a school or departmental computer in Word, but one or both sections may require the use of statistical software for the analyses of data. Each section of the qualifying examination is graded by 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 sub-sections of the qualifying examination, the examinations must be retaken the very next time they are offered. The student must retake only the section(s) the student failed on the first attempt. Students cannot delay re-taking the qualifying examinations. It must be retaken in the next offering. Failure to do so, without documentation of any extenuating circumstances, will be assigned a grade of “Fail” on all qualifying sections the student was supposed to retake. A grade of “Fail” in any one section of the qualifying examination in the second attempt will result in automatic termination from the program.

F. Comprehensive Examination

The comprehensive examination (related to the concentration area) is organized in consultation with the major professor of the concentration area, the Doctoral Program Director and the Graduate Director of the department. To qualify for taking the comprehensive examination, students must pass the qualifying examination and complete all four doctoral seminars (HSPM 800) with a grade of S, and three courses in their chosen concentration area. 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-format proposal on a pre-determined research topic (see instructions in Annex A). Students should choose two faculty members from the department based on the student’s concentration area who will specify the general topic area/research question for the comprehensive examination. In most cases the faculty members will develop the research topic/question in consultation with the student to align the topic to the student’s research interest. 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
The research proposal must be completed and graded within the same semester in which the initial proposal was written.

The students receiving a passing grade on the written part of the exam (i.e., the R03 proposal) will be asked to present the proposal at a doctoral student research seminar in the department. The oral presentation will be open to all HSPM students and faculty members. The oral presentation must be evaluated by at least two faculty members of the department and the student will be assigned a grade of “pass” or “fail” on the oral part of the examination. If a student receives a failing grade in the oral presentation part of the comprehensive examination, the student will be required to retake the oral part of the examination in the semester within the first month of the following semester.

In case of failure in either the written and/or oral sections of the comprehensive examination, the student will be allowed to retake a new examination in the following semester (after the semester of the first attempt). Failure to pass the examination on the second try will lead to 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/](http://gradschool.sc.edu/forms/) for graduate school Doctoral Comprehensive Exam Verification form). The form signed by the academic advisor must be submitted to the department to be placed in the student’s academic file. This document is required to admit the student to doctoral candidacy and to be eligible to register for dissertation credits.

**Recommended flow chart for PhD studies (first two years)**
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 external committee member (s) must be consistent with the Graduate School policy on academic qualifications for Committee membership.

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

If the Dissertation Committee Chair subsequently becomes unaffiliated with the Department of Health Services Policy and Management, and the proposal defense is completed, he or she may continue to serve as the Chair until the dissertation is completed. However, unless the dissertation writing is close to completion, the student should select a Co-Chair who meets the eligibility requirement to be a Dissertation Committee Chair and who remains affiliated with the Department.

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

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

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

H. Dissertation Defense

Doctoral candidates are required to prepare and successfully defend a dissertation based on original research. When the research and dissertation writing are completed, the student and Committee members meet, and the dissertation is defended. The dissertation and its defense must be approved by a majority (> 50%; i.e. 3 of 4 of a 4-member Committee) of Committee members. The process of arranging the dissertation defense is similar to the process of organizing the proposal defense. The dissertation defense is also open to all students, faculty and community members. After the oral presentation of the dissertation, there will be a question and answer session. Committee members will ask questions first and then the floor will be open to others in the audience. At the end of the Q&A session, the Chair of the Dissertation Committee will excuse others to meet as a committee and evaluate the student’s performance. At this stage, the Committee can choose one of the following four options: (a) Dissertation accepted as drafted without any changes (b) Dissertation accepted with minor changes (c) Dissertation to be accepted with major changes (d) Dissertation not accepted as submitted. If the dissertation is accepted with major changes, all Committee members should be provided the revised version of dissertation and the Committee decides whether to accept the revised version with or without another defense. The student will be automatically terminated from the program after failing the dissertation defense twice. The Chair of the Committee will notify the student and the Graduate School in writing of the outcome of the dissertation defense. To graduate in the semester of dissertation defense, the dissertation defense must be successfully completed within the specified date for the semester and also within 5 years of receiving a pass grade on the Comprehensive exam. The student must also submit the satisfactorily formatted dissertation to the Graduate School by the date specified for each semester. In the event the student does not meet deadlines, the student will be required to register at least for one credit in the semester of graduation even if all required credit hours are completed.

I. Doctoral Residency Requirement

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

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

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

IV. Student Responsibilities and Code of Ethics

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

A. Academic standing in the doctoral program

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

B. Academic termination

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 of C or lower or any combination of four grades of U and C or lower in their graduate courses other than HSPM 899.
- Student receives a grade of C or lower 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 the credit hours taken in each semester.

C. Academic Integrity

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

D. Professional Responsibility

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

Students participating in assistantships will follow the dress code of their worksite. 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.

All U of SC students are bound by and held accountable to the code of academic integrity, available at http://www.sc.edu/policies/ppm/staf625.pdf and are required to commit to observe the Carolinian Creed at all times, https://sc.edu/about/offices_and_divisions/student_affairs/our_initiatives/involvement_and_leadership/carinlian_creed/index.php
V. INFORMATION ON DOCTORAL DISSERTATION

Definition of a HSPM Doctoral Dissertation

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

- "Original" means that, although the candidate will have made use of the contributions of others' research, the research question addressed, body of work undertaken, and intellectual contribution made are clearly the candidate's own. 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 format is to be decided in advance by the student and his or her Dissertation Committee chair. All students must prepare the first three chapters in the outline below; this content forms the basis for the oral proposal defense. Following the completion of the proposed research, the format could be either completion of the remainder of the monograph or preparing the agreed-upon manuscripts.

**Dissertation monograph:**

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

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

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

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

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

  OR Manuscript 1 if the agreed format)

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

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

**Publication option:**

Ph.D. students are highly encouraged to choose the publications option, with the concurrence of their Dissertation Committee chair. 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. If the publications option is agreed upon in writing at the time of proposal defense, the student will follow the publications format in submitting the final dissertation draft. When submitting the final draft, the usual concluding chapters (“Results” and “Conclusions and Recommendations”) will be replaced by two or more manuscripts. Following Graduate School guidelines for a manuscript format dissertation, a final chapter (Chapter Six) will be added that integrates the findings and implications of the two papers. Manuscript topics will have been agreed upon as part of the proposal defense. All materials must be reviewed and approved by the student’s Dissertation Committee and the Dissertation Committee Chair, as with a formally structured dissertation.
Annex A: R03 Proposal Preparation Instructions for Comprehensive Examination

- **Title of proposal:** Limited to 81 characters (includes spaces and punctuation marks).
- **Project Summary (Abstract):**
  - No longer than 30 lines of text.
  - Summary of the proposed activity suitable for dissemination to the public.
  - Briefly state the specific aims and research design.
  - Provide info on the significance (i.e., the gap the study is addressing and the public health significance).
- **Project Narrative:**
  - No more than 2 or 3 sentences.
  - Describe the relevance to public health.
  - Be succinct and use plain language appropriate for a lay audience.
- **Specific Aims:** 1-page limit, single spaced, Arial 11-point font, narrow margins (1/2 inch) allowed). The Specific Aims page does NOT count toward your Research Strategy, which has a 6-page limit. Concisely state the goals of the proposed research. Summarize the expected outcomes, including impact of research on fields involved. Succinctly list objectives of proposed research (e.g., to test a hypothesis, create a novel design, solve a specific problem, etc.).
- **Research Strategy:** Prepare a 6-page document excluding the bibliography (same font and other formatting guidelines as above). This section includes the following new headings: Significance, Innovation, and Approach.
  
  **A. Significance:** (i) Explain the importance of the problem or critical barrier to progress in the field that the proposed project addresses, (ii) Explain how the proposed project will improve scientific knowledge, technical capability, and/or clinical practice in one or more broad fields, (iii) Describe how the concepts, methods, technologies, treatments, services, or preventative interventions that drive this field will be changed if the proposed aims are achieved.
  
  **B. Innovation:** (i) Explain how the application challenges and seeks to shift current research or clinical practice paradigms, (ii) Describe any novel theoretical concepts, approaches or methodologies, instrumentation or intervention(s) to be developed or used, and any advantage over existing methodologies, instrumentation or intervention(s). (iii) Explain any refinements, improvements, or new applications of theoretical concepts, approaches or methodologies, instrumentation or interventions.
  
  **C. Approach:** (i) Describe the overall strategy, methodology, and analyses to be used to accomplish the specific aims of the project. Include how the data will be collected, analyzed, and interpreted, (ii) Discuss potential problems, alternative strategies, and benchmarks for success anticipated to achieve the aims.
Annex B: R03 Proposal Grading Instructions for Qualifying Examination (points in parentheses)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>Title of proposal</strong>: Limited to 81 characters including spaces and punctuation marks (-1 point if not in compliance)</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Project Summary (Abstract)</strong>:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No longer than 30 lines of text. (-1 point if not in compliance)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Summarize the proposed activity suitable for dissemination to the public. (0-1)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Briefly state the specific aims and research design. (0-1)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Provide info on the significance (literature gap study and the public health significance). (0-2)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Project Narrative</strong>:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No more than 2 or 3 sentences. (minus 2 if not in compliance)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Describe the relevance to public health. (0-2)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Write succinctly and use plain language appropriate for a lay audience. (0-2)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Biographical Sketch- (NOT NEEDED FOR QUALIFYING EXAM)</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Specific Aims</strong>:</td>
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<tr>
<td>1 page (Do not exceed 1 page; -2 if not in compliance with page limit)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Concisely state the larger purpose that the proposed research will serve. (0-4)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Summarize the expected outcomes including impact of research on fields involved (0-4)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Succinctly list the specific aims/objectives of the proposed research (0-4)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<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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<tr>
<td><strong>Significance</strong>:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Explain the importance of the problem or critical barrier to progress in the field that the proposed project addresses, (0-10)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<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>
</tr>
<tr>
<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>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Innovation</strong>: At least one of the 3 items addressed in the innovation section. (0-10):</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<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>
</tr>
<tr>
<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>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Explain any refinements, improvements, or new applications of theoretical concepts, approaches or methodologies, instrumentation or interventions.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Approach</strong>:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Describe the overall strategy (0-10)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Detail proposed methodology including data source, collection method and variables (0-10)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Propose analyses to be used to accomplish the specific aims of the project and interpretation (0-10)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Identify potential problems, alternative strategies, and benchmarks for success anticipated to achieve the aims (0-10)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Cover letter or Institutional Capability Statements</strong>: (NOT NEEDED FOR QUALIFYING EXAM)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total Score</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*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
Weaknesses

3. Approach:

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

Strengths

Weaknesses

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

Name of student:

Date of written exam:

Names of faculty members grading written exam:

Oral exam completion date:

First grader Second grader Third grader

Written exam grade (Pass=P, Fail=F)

Exam question (summarize if needed)

Title of the written document submitted by the student

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

First grader Second grader Third grader

Signature of faculty members: ________________________________

Signature of faculty members: ________________________________

Signature of faculty members: ________________________________

Date of oral exam