



PhD Comprehensive Examination and Dissertation Handbook 2020–2021

Jefferson College of Population Health

PhD Comprehensive Examination and Dissertation Handbook

The *PhD Comprehensive Examination and Dissertation Handbook* is intended to describe the policies and procedures regarding the Comprehensive Examination and Dissertation that all doctoral students at the Jefferson College of Health (JCPH) complete. It is accurate at the time of printing but is subject to change from time to time as deemed appropriate by the College in order to fulfill its role and mission or to accommodate circumstances beyond its control. Any such changes may be implemented without prior notice and without obligation and, unless specified otherwise, are effective when made.

To obtain the latest information, please consult the online version on the JCPH website at:
www.Jefferson.edu/PopulationHealth

University-wide policies are available on JCPH [Student Resources](#) Page under [Handbooks & Forms](#).

Thomas Jefferson University is accredited by The Middle States Commission on Higher Education. The Master of Public Health (MPH) Program is accredited by the Council on Education for Public Health (CEPH).

Please direct any suggestions for changes to this document to one of the following:

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Updated 9/16/2020

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OVERVIEW

The *PhD Comprehensive Examination and Dissertation Handbook* is for Doctor of Philosophy (PhD) students at the Jefferson College of Population Health (JCPH). This Handbook is intended to serve as a supplement to the larger [Student Handbook](#) and does not supersede any guidance contained in the *Student Handbook*. The guidance contained here refers specifically to the Comprehensive Examination and Dissertation phases of the PhD program. Please refer any questions to the Program Director and/or the Director of the Office of Academic Affairs.

ACADEMIC DISMISSAL & MISCONDUCT POLICIES

Academic Dismissal

Academic dismissal from the program may occur in the following situations:

- Two grades of C or worse during the program.
- Documented feedback from faculty and/or instructors of disruptive or unprofessional behavior during classes or in mentorship relationships (committee members or others).
- Conduct unbecoming a member of the professional community including behavioral or sexual misconduct, abusiveness toward faculty, staff or students, violations of research integrity (plagiarism and data falsification).
- Failure to make progress leading to the PhD within the allotted time frame of 9 years.
- Lack of professionalism, satisfactory academic and research performance.
- Students who receive a conditional pass or failed determination on a retake of Part I or a retake of Part II of the Comprehensive Exam may be dismissed from the program. Students who failed Part I but successfully remediated Part I, and then fail Part II may be dismissed from the program. See the sections on Evaluation of the Comprehensive Examination.
- Students who receive a conditional pass or failed determination on the Dissertation rewrite or additional Oral Defense may be dismissed. See the sections on Evaluation of Dissertation and Dissertation Defense for additional details.
- Failure to secure a dissertation committee: JCPH does not and cannot guarantee that you will find mentorship for your dissertation. Finding a primary mentor in your research area is the responsibility of the student. If for any reason the student is unable to assemble a dissertation committee competent to guide and mentor the student through the dissertation process the student may be dismissed from the program. Faculty retain the right to refuse mentorship.

Academic Integrity Policy

TJU and JCPH believe that academic integrity is one of the most important values and behaviors that should be practiced by students during their academic education. The College leadership and faculty are committed to mandating and enforcing the practice of academic integrity by all students. The following policy on academic integrity defines dishonesty and describes the procedures for responding to charges of academic dishonesty in the College.

Forms of Academic Dishonesty

Plagiarism

As stated in the American Medical Association Manual of Style (2007), “in plagiarism, an author documents or reports ideas, words, data or graphics, whether published or unpublished of another as his or her own without giving appropriate credit.”

When a student submits work for credit that includes the words, ideas or data of others, the source of that information must be acknowledged through complete, accurate and specific references, and, if verbatim statements are included, through quotation marks as well. By placing his or her name on work submitted for credit, the student certifies the originality of all work not otherwise identified by appropriate acknowledgments. Examples of plagiarism include, but are not limited to:

1. Quoting another person’s actual words, complete sentences or paragraphs, or entire pieces of written work without acknowledgment of the source.
2. Using another person’s ideas, opinions or theories, even if they are completely paraphrased in one’s own words, without acknowledgment of the source.
3. Noting the original source of only a part of what is borrowed.
4. Borrowing facts, statistics or other illustrative materials that are not clearly common knowledge without acknowledgment of the source.
5. Copying another student’s essay or test answers.
6. Copying, or allowing another student to copy a computer file that contains another student’s assignment and submitting it, in part or in its entirety, as one’s own.
7. Working together on an assignment, sharing the computer files and programs involved, and then submitting individual copies of the assignment as one’s own individual work. Students are urged to consult with individual faculty members if in doubt.

Fabrication

Fabrication is the use of invented information or the falsification of research or other findings with the intent to deceive. Examples include, but are not limited to:

1. Citation of information not taken from the source indicated. This may include the incorrect documentation of secondary source materials.
2. Listing sources in a bibliography not directly used in the academic exercises.
3. Submission in a paper, thesis, lab report or other academic exercise of falsified, invented or fictitious data or evidence, or deliberate and knowing concealment or distortion of the true nature, origin or function of such data or evidence.

4. Submitting as one's own any academic exercises (e.g., written work, printing, sculpture, etc.) prepared totally or in part by another.

Cheating

Cheating is an act or an attempted act of deception by which a student seeks to misrepresent that he or she has mastered information on an academic exercise that he or she has not mastered. Examples include, but are not limited to:

1. Copying from another student's test paper or allowing another student to copy from a test paper.
2. Using the course textbook or other material such as a notebook brought to a class meeting but not authorized for use during a test.
3. Collaborating during a test with any other person by receiving information without authority or collaborating with others on projects where such collaboration is not expressly permitted.
4. Using or possessing specifically prepared materials during a test (e.g., notes, formula lists, notes written on the student's clothing, etc.) that are not authorized.
5. Taking a test for someone else or permitting someone else to take a test in one's place.
6. Tapping pencils or other objects or otherwise signaling in code.
7. Entering any office or opening a file to obtain a test or answer key.
8. Viewing test materials on a secretary's or faculty member's desk.
9. Passing quiz/test questions or answers from one student to another, even after the test is completed.
10. Copying a posted answer key without permission.
11. Discussing test questions or answers outside the examination room while the test is in progress.

Academic Misconduct

Academic misconduct is the intentional violation of University policies by tampering with grades or taking part in obtaining or distributing any part of an unadministered test. Examples include, but are not limited to:

1. Stealing, buying or otherwise obtaining all or part of an unadministered test.
2. Selling or giving away all or part of an unadministered test including answers to an unadministered test.

3. Bribing any other person to obtain an unadministered test including answers to an unadministered test.
4. Entering a building or office for the purpose of changing a grade in a grade book, on a test or on other work for which a grade is given.
5. Changing, altering or being an accessory to the changing and/or altering of a grade in a grade book, on a test, in a computer, on a “change of grade” form or other official academic records of the University which relate to grades.
6. Entering a building or office for the purpose of obtaining an unadministered test.
7. Continuing to work on an examination or project after the specified allotted time has lapsed.
8. Signing into classes for others.

Sanctions

Two possible options exist for cases of academic dishonesty. Option A outlines adjudication of cases at the discretion of the faculty in consultation with the Dean (or Designee). Cases may also be referred directly to the Judicial Board for adjudication under Option B of these guidelines.

Sanctions under Option A are limited to one or more of the following, by choice of the faculty member in consultation with the Dean (or Designee):

- a verbal reprimand
- a written reprimand
- a grade of zero for an assignment or examination
- a requirement that the student repeat the work affected by the academic dishonesty

No notation of faculty action will appear on the student’s transcript. However, the College may choose to keep documentation in the student’s file and this may be taken into account if the student is involved in another incident of academic dishonesty. When the instructor chooses to have the student repeat the assignment, the instructor will tell the student the maximum grade that may be assigned for the repeated assignment. For example, it is acceptable for the instructor to assign no more than a minimal passing grade to a repeated assignment, if successfully completed by the student.

The student may contest the instructor’s allegation by requesting a hearing with the Judicial Board. Any such request must be made within five working days from the time the student has been informed of the charge and the instructor’s sanction. The instructor’s initial penalty will be considered in assessing a penalty for a guilty finding by the Judicial Board.

Option B: Direct referral of the charge by the faculty member in consultation with the Dean (or Designee) to the Judicial Board for adjudication.

See [University Handbook Policies](#) for information concerning procedures requesting a judicial hearing.

COMPREHENSIVE EXAMINATION

The purpose of the Comprehensive Examination is to:

- Assess knowledge and integration of key disciplines of population health sciences
- Demonstrate an ability for critical appraisal of the research literature
- Assess potential to apply research methods independently
- Provide constructive feedback and identify areas of strength and weakness

Course Registration & Scheduling

The student is eligible for the Comprehensive Examination if he or she:

- Is in good academic standing with a minimum grade point average of 3.3; and
- Has completed all core coursework (28 core credits) and at least 3 credits of *PHS 700: Integrative Research Seminar*.

The student may initiate the Comprehensive Examination process at any point after the core coursework is completed. Enrollment must occur by the trimester after which all coursework (core and specialization) has been completed.

It is the responsibility of the student to notify the Program Director in writing of his/her intention to initiate the Comprehensive Examination process. The examination is offered on an as-needed basis, depending on student need and availability. The preferred sequence for the examination is Spring-Summer.

Two courses encompass the Comprehensive Examination: *PHS 800: Comprehensive Examination Prep (1)* and *PHS 801: Comprehensive Examination (1)*. These two courses must be taken in order (PHS 800, PHS 801), but do not need to occur in successive trimesters, although it is strongly encouraged. PHS 801 is taken in the trimester in which the examination will be taken. Review the syllabus for PHS 800/801 for additional details.

As of 2020, the Comprehensive Examination is administered completely remotely via the Canvas Learning Management system. The program director will schedule the examination in consultation with students sitting for the exam each term (approx. June, February, and September for the summer, spring and fall terms respectively).

Components

The Comprehensive Examination includes the following components:

Part I: Take-Home Test

Part I is a written, open-book, un-monitored test consisting of four essay-format responses to questions in the topic areas below.

1. U.S. healthcare organization and delivery
 - a. Key influences on the structure and function of the US healthcare delivery system
 - b. Changes to the system over time
2. Health economics
 - a. Economic theories with implications for health insurance
 - b. Experimental design in the context of health economics
 - c. Policy evaluation and advocacy
3. Social and behavioral foundations in public health
 - a. Contrasting biological and behavioral influences on health
 - b. Biological and behavioral influences on health
 - i. Social Ecological Model
 - ii. Health disparities
 - iii. Role of medical care and health behaviors
 - iv. Culture and health
 - v. Social epidemiology
 - vi. Health Impact Pyramid
 - c. Health behavior theories/ behavioral interventions
 - i. Health Belief Model
 - ii. Theory of Reasoned Action/Planned Behavior
 - iii. Transtheoretical Model (Stages of Change)
 - iv. Social Cognitive Theory
 - v. Social Support Theory
4. Scientific Literature Critique

- a. Validity & bias in research
- b. Frameworks for assessing bias
- c. Causal inferencing across different study designs
- d. Critical review & interpretation of statistical conclusions
- e. Generalizability of research findings
- f. Frameworks for assessing bias
 - i. All elements of #4 apply to both individual empirical reports as well as evidence syntheses such as meta-analyses.

There is no ‘right answer’ with respect to the length of responses on Part I. Responses are graded for the extent to which they display a nuanced understanding of the topics and an ability to synthesize the research literature. Responses should be well-referenced and approaching publication quality, and formatted in APA style.

Part II: Take-Home Research Proposal

Part II is a written, open-book, non-monitored Research Proposal.

Research Proposal

The written Research Proposal may be started after the student has petitioned for the Comprehensive Examination and is due 30 days after receiving a passed without condition determination from the Examination Committee for Part I.

Procedures & Policies: 1) The preparation of the paper and its contents should not be discussed with anyone, including students and faculty. 2) The proposal cannot be work previously completed, rather a new research proposal must be submitted that is written after the determination in Part I is made. 3) Students will be asked to sign an attestation that the work is entirely new and not previously completed in the context of another class or elsewhere, before the passing determination of Part I is made. Any evidence to the contrary will be grounds for immediate program dismissal

The goal of Part II is to demonstrate mastery of research methods by proposing an entire research study. Ideally, this Proposal document will serve as a bridge for the student’s Dissertation Proposal, although that is not a requirement of the Comprehensive Examination.

The Research Proposal should:

- Be 15-20 pages, excluding graphs, tables, figures, reference list, title page, etc. but *including* an abstract of 200-250 words.
- Integrate the topics below as they apply to the proposed research question. The paper should not consist of listed answers.
- Follow the *Publication Manual of the American Psychological Association* (6th edition or later) formatting and citation guidelines.

The outline provided below is intended as a guide; not all items may be relevant to the proposed study topic:

1. Identification of the Problem and Development of Research Questions

- a. Identify/define the problem.
- b. Indicate the significance of the problem.
- c. Indicate the theoretical framework for study, if applicable.
- d. Pose the research questions and hypotheses to be used to investigate the problem.
- e. Clearly motivate the need for a mixed-methods study, if included.
- f. Indicate the population health impact of the research questions and of the proposed solution, if applicable.

2. Review of the Literature

- a. Develop key words for a literature search.
- b. Indicate the mechanisms to be used in the literature search.
- c. Identify method to be used to keep a record of the relevant literature.
- d. Describe method for organizing files for the literature and categorizing them (e.g., topic, process, study type).
- e. Provide enough of a preliminary literature review to motivate the Proposal's aims and/or hypotheses.

3. Methods

- a. Describe the study's participants, sample and population.
- b. Provide a power analysis, or justification for the exclusion.
- c. Explain how samples will be drawn or assigned including criteria for inclusion or exclusion, and randomization strategy, if applicable.
- d. Describe the design of the study including potential inferences to be drawn from the study.
- e. Indicate any/all treatment and measurement instruments.
- f. Identify all measured and unmeasured variables in the study. Provide a codebook as an appendix.
- g. Identify method(s) to apply controls to the sample, if applicable.
- h. Identify potential problems with obtaining a sample or carrying out proposed interventions.
- i. Describe method for keeping records of samples, processes, and statistical analyses.
- j. Describe method(s) used to determine reliability and validity of measurement instruments.
- k. Clearly tie analyses to aims and/or hypotheses.
- l. Present a conceptual model of the proposed study.
- m. Comment on the need for IRB approval and the expected type of approval appropriate for the study.
- n. Indicate timeline for the study.
- o. In broad terms, indicate any costs involved: direct and indirect (detailed budget is not required).

- p. Identify the following (as needed):
 - i. Consultants
 - ii. Advisors
 - iii. Statisticians
 - iv. Collaborators
 - v. Reviewers
- 4. Data Analysis**
 - a. Write an analysis plan for the study. Clearly tie appropriate analyses to each aim and/or hypothesis of the study.
 - b. Correlate the choice of analyses with the type of data that will be produced, as presented in the codebook.
 - c. Indicate tools or methods used to carry out the analyses (e.g., computer program).
 - d. Identify alpha and p levels. Indicate the significance of confidence intervals in the results.
 - e. Describe assumptions of statistical tests and the approach for assessing them.
 - f. Identify any problems with the planned analysis, including limitations of tests.
- 5. Results**
 - a. Include an entire shell of a results section.
 - b. Indicate use of tables, graphs, illustrations, figures, etc.
- 6. Discussion**
 - a. Provide general indication of possible significance of the study's results.
 - b. Integrate the study in the broader context of the literature.
 - c. Indicate if there will be applications for clinical practice, community practice, system changes, or policy formation/revision.
 - d. Include:
 - i. Limitations
 - ii. Biases
 - iii. Threats to validity
- 7. Publication/Dissemination**
 - a. Describe the intended audience for the research.
 - b. Indicate which journals would be appropriate for submission of the research.
 - c. Indicate which meetings/conferences would be appropriate for dissemination of the research.
- 8. Future**
 - a. Briefly describe a personal research agenda or future research activities related to this study.

Evaluation of the Comprehensive Examination

The Comprehensive Examination Committee is composed of members of the JCPH faculty. The Program Director assembles the Examination Committee and serves as Chair. The Committee will be responsible for grading the Comprehensive Examination.

Parts I and II are graded separately. Part I is graded by the faculty members who wrote the content area questions and/or other content area experts. Part II is graded by an ad-hoc Comprehensive Examination Committee. The student must successfully pass Part I before he or she can be evaluated for Part II.

Part I Grading

The Examination Committee may assign one of the following determinations for Part I:

- Pass without condition – All questions passed without condition; or a student may receive a conditional pass on one question in Part I and still pass Part I if the other questions are passed unconditionally. If one question receives a conditional pass, the student will be asked to revise the same question (the student may still proceed with Part II in this case).
- Conditional pass – If a conditional pass is received for two or more questions in Part I the student must arrange with the Program Director to retake the entire examination, which may be based on new questions. Only one retake is allowed.
 - If the student receives a conditional pass on the retaken examination, the student must petition the College for permission to re-enroll in both PHS 800 and PHS 801 for credit. The new examination will be based on new questions. After successfully repeating PHS 800 and re-attempting Part I of the Comprehensive Examination in PHS 801, the student must earn a pass without condition. A conditional pass or failed determination is grounds for dismissal from the program.
- Failed – If any questions in Part I are failed, the student will be placed on academic probation and must petition the College for permission to re-enroll in both PHS 800 and PHS 801 for credit. The new examination will be based on new questions.
 - After successfully repeating PHS 800 and re-attempting Part I of the Comprehensive Examination in PHS 801, the student must earn a pass without condition. A conditional pass or failed determination is grounds for dismissal from the program.

Part II Grading

Part II may not be attempted until Part I is passed without condition. The Examination Committee may assign one of the following determinations for Part II:

- Pass without condition – If the student receives a pass without condition on the written Research Proposal, s/he will earn a P (Pass) in *PHS 801: Comprehensive Exam*.
- Conditional pass – If the written Research Proposal is conditionally passed, the student will have up to four weeks to rewrite the Part II proposal incorporating the Committee's feedback.

- If the revision is conditionally passed, the student must petition the College for permission to re-enroll in both PHS 800 and PHS 801 for credit. After successfully repeating PHS 800 and reattempting Part II of the Comprehensive Examination in PHS 801, the student must earn a pass without condition. A conditional pass or failed determination on the revision is grounds for dismissal from the program.
- **Failed** – If the student receives a failed determination on the written Research Proposal, the student will be placed on academic probation and must petition the College for permission to re-enroll in both PHS 800 and PHS 801 for credit. After successfully repeating PHS 800 and reattempting Part II of the Comprehensive Examination in PHS 801, the student must earn a pass without condition on the written Research Proposal. A conditional pass or failed determination is grounds for dismissal from the program.
 - In the case that a student failed but successfully remediated Part I, failure of Part II may be grounds for dismissal from the program.

Appeals

Appeals of any failed determinations in the Comprehensive Examination and of program dismissal decisions must be submitted in writing to the Associate Dean for Academic and Student Affairs and are evaluated on a case-by-case basis. Appeals should demonstrate to the College exceptional circumstances leading to a failed determination.

Advancement to Candidacy

A student is considered a *candidate* for the PhD degree upon completion of all core and specialization coursework (including 3 credits of PHS 660 and 4 credits of PHS 700); a passing grade in PHS 801 (signifying a successful Defense of both parts of the Comprehensive Examination); and submission and acceptance by the College of the *Petition for Advancement to Candidacy Form*, which can be obtained upon request from the Program Director. After advancement to Candidacy, students may use the term ‘candidate for the PhD’ (or ‘PhD candidate’), but not before.

DISSERTATION

Course Registration

After advancing to candidacy the student must enroll in *PHS 805: Dissertation Proposal Seminar* (3) in the next trimester it is offered. PHS 805 provides skills and guidance in drafting of the Dissertation Proposal and assembling a Dissertation Committee. If ready, a student may prepare a draft of the Dissertation Proposal, under the guidance of the Dissertation Committee and its Chair. However, this is not a requirement of PHS 805.

After completing *PHS 805: Dissertation Proposal Seminar*, the student must enroll in *PHS 807: Dissertation Proposal* (1). During PHS 807, the student continues toward the goal of a successful Dissertation Defense. When the student is ready, he or she submits and presents the Dissertation Proposal to the Dissertation Committee for approval. To ensure compliance with the continuous enrollment policy, a student may register for PHS 807 for up to three consecutive trimesters.

Once the Dissertation Proposal has been approved by the Dissertation Committee, the student must first enroll in *PHS 810: Dissertation I* (3) followed by *PHS 811: Dissertation II* (3). If the student has not successfully defended the Dissertation after completion of six credit hours of PHS 810 and PHS 811, the student may continue to enroll in *PHS 812: Dissertation* (1) for as many trimesters as are needed to complete the Dissertation, but limited by the time-to-degree of nine years (see [Student Handbook](#)).

All Dissertation courses (PHS 805, 807, 810, 811 and 812) are graded on a Pass/Fail basis. The courses are designed to ensure continuous enrollment. Refer to the [Student Handbook](#) for information regarding continuous enrollment requirements.

Dissertation Committee

The student works with the Program Director to assemble a Dissertation Committee. Under the leadership of the Committee Chair, the Committee will guide and advise the student in the approved Dissertation research.

Assembling and interacting with the dissertation committee is often a student's first example of guided, collaborative, and scholarly work, and as such is an important opportunity for modeling collaborative effort and appropriate use of the time, expertise and feedback of the committee members. The dissertation committee members serve to welcome the PhD candidate into the scientific community. The college expects exemplary professional behavior from candidates at all times. Any cases of inappropriate interactions will be reviewed by the college and acted on.

The Dissertation Committee is composed of 3-5 members, including the Chair, who represent specific areas of expertise required for the Dissertation. To assist in selecting Committee members, a resource list of past dissertation mentors and chairs with their specialties is available in the College, and a resource list of potential mentors external to JCPH along with their interests, availability, and current projects are available from the Program Director.

MEMBER	DESCRIPTION	ROLE
Chair	Full-time JCPH faculty member	<p>Leads, monitors, coordinates, and assesses the student's Dissertation from start to finish.</p> <p>Responsible for ensuring that the student's Dissertation meets all JCPH requirements, including those pertaining to content coverage, methodology, research ethics, form, and style.</p> <p>Serves as an arbitrator to resolve any conflicts within the Dissertation Committee concerning the student's progress in formulating and completing the Dissertation.</p> <p>Engages as appropriate other potential committee members.</p>
Committee Members (2-4)	<p>At least one must be full-time JCPH faculty</p> <p>Members may be other full-time or part-time/adjunct faculty at TJU</p> <p>One member may be from an outside, accredited institution. If an external Committee member is identified, a copy of his or her CV must be forwarded to the Program Director for approval</p>	<p>Guides the student as a content expert, a methodology expert, or a combination of both areas of expertise.</p> <p>Supports the Dissertation Committee Chair through his or her respective expertise and any special knowledge that he or she may be able to contribute to the student's Dissertation.</p> <p>Coordinates with the Chair before beginning to work with the student.</p>

Once the Chair and other members of the Dissertation Committee have been identified and have agreed to serve, the Program Director will notify them in writing. Any subsequent change in the composition of the Dissertation Committee must be submitted in writing by the Chair to the Program Director for approval.

Costs Associated with Dissertation Research

The Dissertation is a requirement of the program, and the student may incur expenses associated with it. In cases where the research is associated with another non-JCPH organization (either within or outside the Jefferson community), that organization should cover project-related expenses associated with elements of the project that are specific to their organization. In the case when the Dissertation Project is conducted independent of any

outside organization, incurred expenses may be eligible for reimbursement from the Jefferson College of Population Health.

Eligible expenses may include, but are not limited to: incentives to potential participants/remuneration for participation, development of materials, printing and mailing study materials, and travel expenses. A resource guide to available dissertation awards/fellowships/funding is available from the Program Director.

To be eligible for reimbursement:

1. All reimbursable expenses should be a vital part of the approved Dissertation Project and be included in the budget of the approved Dissertation Proposal.
2. The student must submit the *Dissertation Reimbursement Approval Request* to the Program Director (signed by student and Dissertation Committee Chair) which itemizes the items for reimbursement, the rationale for their use and the expected cost of the items BEFORE any expenses are incurred.
3. **Approvals must be obtained before the start of the Dissertation.**
4. Maximum reimbursement is \$1000.
5. Reimbursement requires the approved application and receipts submitted to the Program Director.

Use the Dissertation Reimbursement Approval Request form to submit your request.

Outside Consultation on Dissertation

The student may obtain outside consultation on the dissertation, such as following APA guidelines and copyediting for format. Jefferson's Student Writing Center has many resources that may be helpful. However, the JCPH may not recommend such sources.

Dissertation Proposal and its Oral Defense

The purpose of the Dissertation Proposal Oral Defense is to evaluate the content and methods of the research being proposed for the Dissertation, as well as the student's readiness to conduct the research.

Dissertation Proposal

The Dissertation Proposal is developed in *PHS 805: Dissertation Proposal Seminar* and *PHS 807: Dissertation Proposal* under the guidance of the Dissertation Committee. By the end of the final trimester of PHS 807, the student will have successfully created a Dissertation Proposal and successfully defended it. The Dissertation Proposal describes the area of research, the methods that will be used, and the Dissertation's contribution to the field. The student needs to demonstrate that he or she has mastered the substantive content and

methods required to conduct the research. The Dissertation Proposal represents the first three chapters of the Dissertation and must also include references and other back matter as shown below. The JCPH Dissertation Template must be used to develop the Dissertation Proposal and completed dissertation.

As the proposal document serves as the first 3 chapters of the dissertation, it must be formatted properly and contain close to the same level of detail that will be contained in the dissertation itself. No major changes to the process and methods in the proposal are permitted after the dissertation research begins (see below). The proposal is therefore a detailed protocol describing the proposed work exhaustively, with explication of methods sufficient for a replication.

Oral Defense of the Dissertation Proposal

In addition to a written Dissertation Proposal, the student will present the Dissertation Proposal to the Dissertation Committee. It is the responsibility of the student, working with their Dissertation Committee Chair and the Program Director, to identify proposed dates for the Dissertation Proposal Defense. The student should prepare a 25-30 minute PowerPoint presentation of the proposed work to include: background, research questions/aims/hypotheses, literature review, and methods to conduct the Dissertation research. The student also must prepare the *Dissertation Proposal Defense Signature Sheet found in the JCPH Dissertation Template* and bring it to the Oral Defense. The Oral Defense of the Dissertation Proposal gives the student an opportunity to respond to questions and recommendations posed by the Dissertation Committee. The presentation and response sessions are collectively known as the Dissertation Proposal Defense.

Evaluation of the Dissertation Proposal and its Oral Defense

The Dissertation Committee is responsible for evaluating the Dissertation Proposal. The Committee will have four weeks to evaluate the Dissertation Proposal after the Oral Defense before rendering a decision. The Dissertation Committee provides one of three written determinations:

- Pass without condition – At least three members of the Dissertation Committee agree that the Dissertation Proposal does not require any changes. Each Dissertation Committee member signs the *Dissertation Proposal Defense Signature Sheet*, which is returned to the Program Director and entered into the student's academic file. The student has not officially completed the Dissertation Proposal and its Oral Defense until the *Dissertation Proposal Defense Signature Sheet* has been received by the Program Director.
- Conditional pass – The Dissertation Committee determines that the Dissertation Proposal does not meet expectations but gives the student the opportunity to revise the Dissertation Proposal and/or attempt a second Oral Defense. The Committee will reevaluate the revised Dissertation Proposal or second Defense and either determine

that the student has passed without condition or the student has failed. The student may attempt only one rewrite or additional Defense.

- **Failed** – The Dissertation Committee determines that the Dissertation Proposal and/or Defense (first or second attempt) does not meet expectations. The student is not given the opportunity to revise and resubmit and is put on academic probation. The student may petition the College for permission to re-enroll in PHS 805 and PHS 807. Any conditional pass or failure after a second sequence of PHS 805 and PHS 807 and subsequent Dissertation Proposal submission and Defense is grounds for dismissal from the program.

Institutional Review Board Review & Approval

Once the Dissertation Proposal has been approved by the Dissertation Committee, the student must obtain Institutional Review Board (IRB) approval prior to implementation of the proposed Dissertation research. Students should consult with their Dissertation Chair and the [Jefferson Office of Human Research](#). Depending on the nature of the Dissertation, the project may need other formal ethics-related submissions, such as to an external agency. Students are advised to determine these requirements in advance as approvals take time and may need to be done in a specific sequence. Students should maintain all documentation related to IRB approval. The method section of the Dissertation must make reference to the IRB approval including type, date and IRB control number.

Dissertation and its Oral Defense

Dissertation

The Dissertation is developed in *PHS 810: Dissertation I* and *PHS 811: Dissertation II* (and PHS 812, if needed) under the guidance of the Dissertation Committee. The Dissertation contains the results of research conducted as presented in the approved Dissertation Proposal. The Dissertation should demonstrate the scientific merit of the work and the student's mastery of content and methods. It must demonstrate that the student is qualified to conduct independent research.

The Dissertation document is approximately 100-250 pages, not including references and appendices. The structure of the Dissertation is determined through consultation between the Dissertation Chair and Committee members, but in all cases the Dissertation must be in the JCPH Dissertation Template and American Psychological Association (APA) format, 6th edition or later. The Dissertation is composed of three major parts, each containing several sections (see the JCPH Dissertation Template for details).

Oral Defense of the Dissertation

The purpose of the Oral Defense of the Dissertation is: (1) to evaluate the research conducted for the Dissertation; and (2) to assess the student's ability to conduct independent research.

After the student submits a draft of the completed Dissertation to all members of the Dissertation Committee and Program Director, he or she requests, in writing to the Program Director, a date for the Oral Defense. This date will be a minimum of four weeks from the date of the request. It is the responsibility of the student, working with their Dissertation Committee Chair and the Program Director, to identify proposed dates for the Dissertation Defense. The Program Director will send written confirmation of the constitution of the Dissertation Committee and approved date of the Dissertation Defense to the student, Committee members, and Associate Dean for Academic and Student Affairs.

Once the Dissertation Defense date has been established, JCPH will post an announcement to the Jefferson Faculty & Student Communities. The presentation portion of the Defense may be attended by other faculty, students, and invited guests. The oral presentation should last no more than 45 minutes and include an overview of the student's research, following the structure of the Dissertation. A 15-minute general audience question period follows the oral presentation. After the public oral presentation period, the student will meet privately with the Dissertation Committee and respond to questions and comments. This process constitutes the Oral Defense of the Dissertation.

Conduct of the Dissertation Research

Students must maintain continuous enrollment in PHS 811 and/or PHS 812 during the conduct of the dissertation research. In no cases can students be conducting dissertation research without formal registration in dissertation coursework. Students must take a leave of absence if a lapse in the dissertation research is anticipated.

Changes to Approved Proposals

No deviations to the research specified in the approved proposal are permitted. When any such changes occur, the student must stop conducting the research and consult the Committee Chair. In some cases, changes are substantial enough to warrant reconvening the Committee. Examples of changes include: changes to the number of participants, changes in the means or mode of data collection, inability to secure data, changes to protocols, and changes to aims or objectives.

Evaluation of the Dissertation and Dissertation Defense

The Dissertation Committee is responsible for evaluating the Dissertation. The Committee will deliberate and vote on the Dissertation following the Oral Defense of the Dissertation. During deliberations, the student is asked to withdraw from the room. The Dissertation Committee provides one of the following written determinations:

- Pass without condition – The Dissertation Committee agrees that the Dissertation does not require any changes. If the Dissertation Committee determines that the student has passed the Dissertation and Oral Defense without condition, the Dissertation Committee feels that the student has demonstrated sufficient mastery of the Dissertation subject. Each Dissertation Committee member signs the *Dissertation Defense Signature Sheet*. The *Sheet* is submitted to the Program Director and the

student earns a P (Pass) in *PHS 811 or PHS 812 (Dissertation coursework as appropriate)*. This sheet is forwarded to the Program Director and the Director, Office of Academic Affairs, and makes the student eligible to begin the Graduation Certification Process.

- **Conditional pass** – If the Dissertation Committee makes a conditional pass determination, the Dissertation Committee feels that the student’s Dissertation or Oral Defense does not meet expectations. The student is given the opportunity to revise the Dissertation and/or attempt a second Oral Defense. The Dissertation Committee will reevaluate the revised Dissertation or second Oral Defense and either determine that the student has passed without condition or the student has failed. The student may attempt only one rewrite or additional Oral Defense.
- **Failed** – If the Dissertation Committee makes a failed determination, the Dissertation Committee feels that the student’s Dissertation and/or Oral Defense (first or second attempt) does not meet expectations. The student is not given the opportunity to revise and resubmit, and the determination is grounds for dismissal from the program.

Appeals

Appeals of any failed determinations in the Dissertation phase of the PhD and of program dismissal decisions must be submitted in writing to the Dean and are evaluated on a case-by-case basis. Appeals should demonstrate to the College exceptional circumstances leading to a failed determination.

Submission of Final Dissertation and Additional Required Documents

After receiving a pass without condition determination, it is the student’s responsibility to deliver a high-quality, edited and formatted *Final Dissertation* to the Program Director. An external proofreading and editing service may be hired at the candidate’s expense to prepare the document in APA 6th edition or later style.

To be eligible for graduation, the following items must be completed as part of the program requirements:

- A USB (flash drive) should be provided to the Program Director with the following items:
 - A locked PDF file of the *final* Dissertation
 - A copy of the IRB approval or exemption
 - A scanned image of the *Dissertation Defense Signature Sheet* containing signatures of each member of the Dissertation Committee
- The original *Dissertation Defense Signature Sheet* containing signatures of each Dissertation Committee member should be provided to the Program Director.

- Paper copies of the *Dissertation Defense Signature Sheet*, corresponding to the number of printed Dissertations ordered, should be provided to the Program Director.
- ProQuest is an on-line data management vendor system for libraries and research chosen by Jefferson. Dissertations are printed and stored through ProQuest. ProQuest is designated as an official off-site repository for the U.S. Library of Congress. You may have your work protected under copywrite. [The ProQuest workflow is noted at the end of this Handbook.](#)
 - Do NOT submit the signed versions of the Defense Signature Sheet or the signed Certification page in your upload to ProQuest, rather you must include unsigned versions.
 - The signed [Author Agreement Form](#) for submitting the Dissertation to ProQuest should be sent to the Program Director.
 - The *final* Dissertation should be uploaded to [Jefferson's ProQuest website.](#)
 - The publishing fee and optional open-access and copyright fees are payable to ProQuest LLC.
 - Student must prepay for three hardbound copies of the *final* Dissertation for the JCPH and University archives. Additional copies of the *final* Dissertation for the student's own use may be purchased for additional fees.
- The online [Survey of Earned Doctorates \(SED\)](#) should be completed and the Certificate of Completion should be emailed to the Program Director.
- The JCPH Graduation Exit Survey, sent by the Jefferson Office of Institutional Research, should be completed.

Note: There may be additional graduation requests by the Office of Financial Aid, the Office of the Registrar or other University Offices.

GRADUATION AND AWARDING OF THE DEGREE

The student should consult with the Program Director to determine the anticipated graduation date. All students anticipating graduation in an academic year must complete the *Application for Degree* in the fall of the academic year in which graduation is anticipated. To meet a specific graduation date, students should refer to the table below to determine the deadline for submission of degree requirements (See [Submission of Final Dissertation and Additional Required Documents](#)).

Only one Commencement ceremony is held in in the spring (May) of a given academic year. Students expecting to graduate must stay in contact with the Office of Academic Affairs. Questions regarding graduation should be directed to the Director of the Office of Academic Affairs in JCPH.

It is the candidate's responsibility to complete the application for graduation and ensure that all appropriate deadlines will be met.

DISSERTATION DEFENSE COMPLETED	FORMS SUBMISSION DEADLINE	GRADUATION DATE
September 30	November 30	December 31
February 1	April 1	May 31
May 31	July 31	August 31

*The deadline for the *Application for Degree* is the same for graduation in any trimester of an academic year. The registrar's office typically emails eligible students with information about the Application for Degree. If you do not receive an email by the end of October of the academic year in which you anticipate graduating, please contact the Director of the Office of Academic Affairs or the Program Director.

SUMMARY OF PROGRAM PROGRESSION

The student:

1. Notifies in writing to the Program Director of his or her intention to initiate the Comprehensive Examination.
2. Registers for *PHS 800: Comprehensive Exam Prep*.
3. Begins developing the Research Proposal (Part II of the Comprehensive Examination).
4. Registers for *PHS 801: Comprehensive Exam* in the trimester in which the student expects to complete the Comprehensive Examination.
5. Takes Part I of the Comprehensive Examination.
6. Receives the Comprehensive Examination Committee's written determination on Part I. Only after Part I has been successfully passed may the student submit Part II.
7. Submits the Research Proposal (Part II) to the Committee within 30 days of receiving a pass without condition determination from the Committee for Part I of the Examination.
8. Receives the Committee's written determination on the written Research Proposal (Part II). If applicable, the student may revise the Research Proposal.
9. Presents the Research Proposal at the Oral Defense component of Part II of the Examination. Responds to any comments or questions posed by the Committee.
10. Petitions in writing for advancement to candidacy for the PhD to the Program Director.¹
11. Registers for and completes *PHS 805: Dissertation Proposal Seminar* with a passing grade.
12. Enrolls in *PHS 807: Dissertation Proposal*. May enroll in up to three consecutive trimesters of *PHS 807: Dissertation Proposal* until the Dissertation Proposal is successfully defended.²
 - a. Depending on the Committee members and the student, the process of preparing the Proposal for Defense is unique. In some cases, the Chair may reserve the right to review several drafts before other Committee members are consulted. In other cases, the student may work more closely with a specific Committee member during the drafting process. Students should stay in close contact with their Committee Chair to find a mutually agreeable process. Final pre-Defense approval of the Proposal and initiation of the Defense process is at the discretion of the Dissertation Committee Chair.

¹ To be eligible, a student must have completed all required coursework (core and specialization) and have passed *PHS 801: Comprehensive Examination*.

² During either (or both) *PHS 805* and/or *PHS 807*, the student should be undertaking the process of identification and convening of the Dissertation Committee and composing the draft of the Dissertation Proposal.

- b. Once the written Dissertation Proposal is approved by the Chair, he or she will notify the Program Director and a Dissertation Proposal Defense is scheduled. It is the responsibility of students, working with their Dissertation Committee Chair and the Program Director, to schedule the Dissertation Proposal Defense. When the Committee has agreed on a date and time, JCPH administrative staff will help schedule a room in the College. All Dissertation Committee members are expected to attend the Defense, either in person or remotely.
13. Presents the Dissertation Proposal to the Dissertation Committee (closed session). Receives the Dissertation Committee's written determination. If applicable, the student may make a second attempt on the Dissertation Proposal and/or Defense.
14. Enrolls in *PHS 810: Dissertation I* during the trimester after the Dissertation Proposal is successfully defended. Following *PHS 810*, students must also enroll in *PHS 811: Dissertation II* to graduate. If additional time is needed to complete the Dissertation research, students may enroll in *PHS 812: Dissertation* in subsequent trimesters. There is no limit on *PHS 812* enrollment, as long as the student does not exceed the time to degree rule (see [Student Handbook](#)).
15. Obtains IRB approval once the Dissertation Proposal has been approved by the Dissertation Committee.
16. Conducts the Dissertation research and continues to develop the Dissertation manuscript in consultation with the Chair and with assistance from the other Dissertation Committee members. A mutually agreeable timeline for completion should be established by the student and Chair.
 - a. Each Dissertation project and each Dissertation Committee is unique. Students are expected to work with their Dissertation Committee Chair and Committee members as the research progresses to ensure that it is conducted in accordance with the approved Dissertation Proposal. Notification of deviations from the approved Dissertation Proposal in the research plan must be made to the Committee Chair who will decide whether the other Committee members should be re-convened to review the changes in the approved Dissertation Proposal.
17. Submits the completed Dissertation to the Dissertation Committee Chair. The Chair will circulate the completed Dissertation to the Committee members for review and approval for a Defense. At this stage, the Committee may make recommendations for minor revisions.
18. Schedules the Dissertation Defense. It is the responsibility of students, working with their Dissertation Committee Chair and the Program Director, to identify dates for the Proposal Defense. When the Committee has agreed on a date and time, JCPH administrative staff will help schedule a room in the College. All Dissertation Committee members are expected to attend the Defense, either in person or remotely. The Program Director will make a public announcement of the Dissertation Defense date and location.

19. Presents the Dissertation at a public forum.
20. Responds to questions and comments by the Dissertation Committee after the general audience is dismissed. This process constitutes the Oral Defense of the Dissertation.
21. Receives the Dissertation Committee's written determination within a week of the Dissertation Oral Defense.
22. Finalizes format of the Dissertation.
23. Completes program requirements to be eligible for graduation.
24. Completes the [Survey of Earned Doctorate](#) (SED) after commencement. The SED organization will contact the student directly to complete this short survey.

PROQUEST WORKFLOW

STEPS:

1. Go to [Jefferson's ProQuest website](#)
2. Create an account
3. Send the signed [Author Agreement Form](#) for submitting the Dissertation to ProQuest to the Program Director.
4. The publishing fee and optional open-access and copyright fees are payable to ProQuest LLC. Student must prepay for **three hardbound copies** of the final Dissertation for the JCPH and University archives. Additional copies of the final Dissertation for the student's own use may be purchased for additional fees.
5. Submit the final version of the Dissertation by uploading it to Jefferson's ProQuest website. **Do NOT submit the signed versions of the Defense Signature Sheet or the signed Certification page in your upload to ProQuest**, rather you must include unsigned versions.
6. The JCPH's designated ProQuest EDT Administrator will review your submission to make sure that it adheres to JCPH's required standards.
7. The Administrator will let you know of any revisions that are required. Then you resubmit the revised version. When the standards are satisfied, the Administrator approves your submission.
8. The Administrator delivers it to Jefferson's repository and ProQuest. It is prepared for discovery on ProQuest within 4-6 weeks. You may specify an embargo period.
9. ProQuest staff ensure proper formatting and that details about your work are correct. After the embargo period, if one is specified, your work will be available for discovery on ProQuest.
10. ProQuest prints the number of copies that were order. You can expect to receive your copies within 2-4 weeks from when the work is published and available on ProQuest.