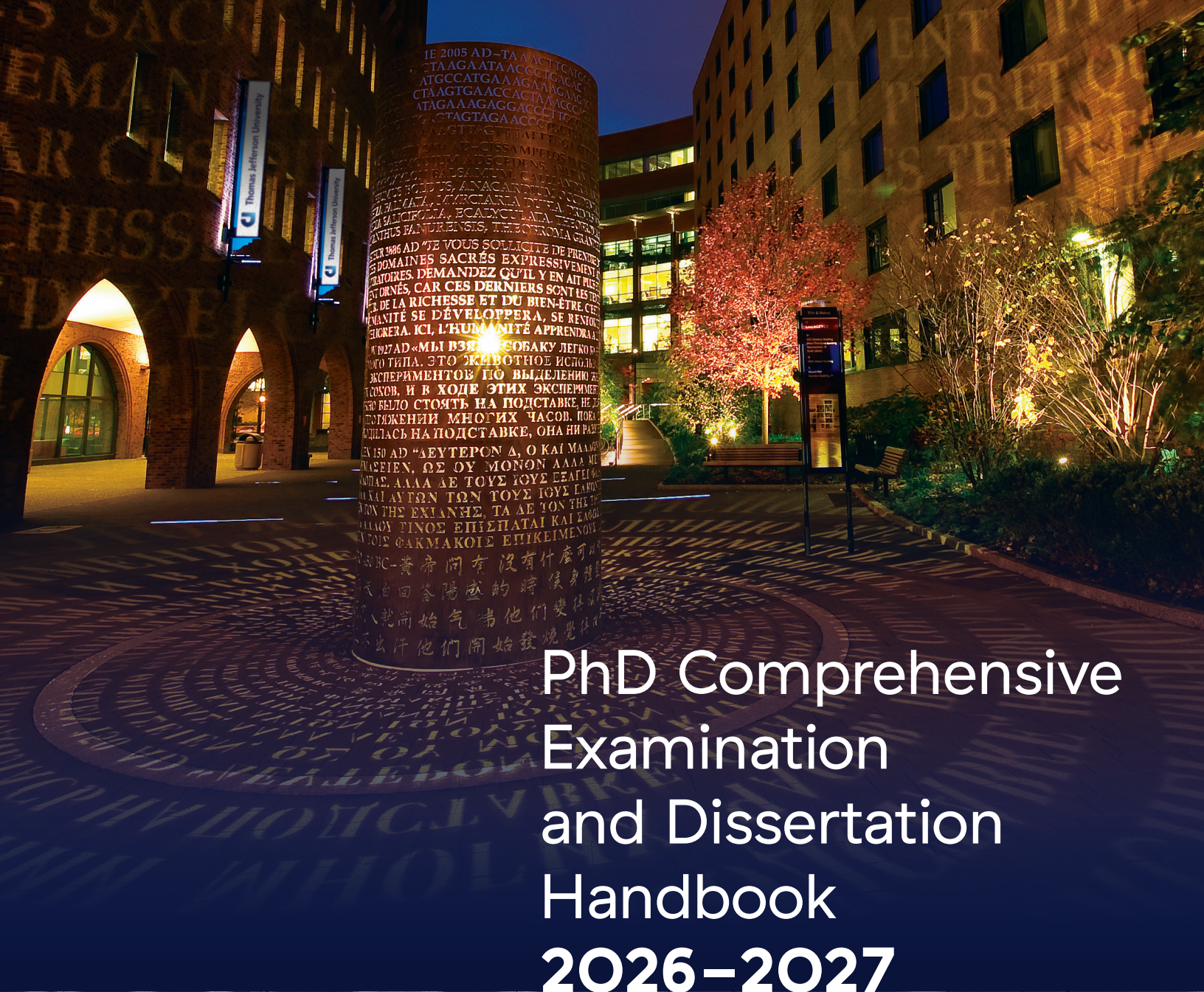




PhD Comprehensive Examination and Dissertation Handbook 2026–2027

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 PhD students at the Jefferson College of Population 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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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 located under Handbooks & Forms on the [Student Resources](#) page, 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.

A comprehensive overview of all courses that must be completed as a part of the program is available in the Degree Requirements guide under Handbooks & Forms located on the [Student Resources](#) page as well as under [Curriculum](#) on the [PhD program](#) page and will not be reproduced here.

Please also make use of the resources that the [Scott Library](#) and [Student Writing Center](#) have to offer in writing the comprehensive exam Part II and completing dissertation drafts.

ACADEMIC POLICIES

Up-to-date policies on academic dismissal and academic integrity can be found in the University & Student Handbooks under Handbooks & Forms on the [Student Resources](#) page. Additional factors that are considered for academic dismissal are:

- Lack of professionalism and/or unsatisfactory academic and research performance.
- Students who retake Part I or Part II of the comprehensive exam and receive a conditional pass or failed determination 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. For additional details, see the comprehensive examination sections.
- Students who receive a conditional pass or failed determination on the Dissertation rewrite or additional oral defense may be dismissed. For additional details, see the Dissertation sections.
- Failure to secure a Dissertation committee: Finding Dissertation committee members is the responsibility of the student. If a student is unable to assemble a Dissertation committee competent enough to guide and mentor the student through the Dissertation process, the student may be dismissed from the program. Faculty retain the right to refuse participation on Dissertation committees.
- General note on grades for PHS 800, 801, 805, 807, 810, and 811: Students are permitted to receive an IP (In Progress) grade in courses that have already been approved for this grading status. Students can refer to their Program Director or the Office of Academic Affairs to inquire if a specific course has this option. An IP grade needs to be addressed within a year (three semesters) including the one in which they registered for the course. Addressing an IP means completing the course requirements and expectations. If a student does not address requirements and expectations of a course in this required timeframe, they are at risk of the IP defaulting to an F grade. This includes Extension courses (which need additional approval).

COMPREHENSIVE EXAMINATION

The purpose of the Comprehensive Examination is to:

- Assess knowledge and integration of key disciplines of population health science
- 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

Registration & Scheduling

The student is eligible for the Comprehensive Examination if they:

- Are in good academic standing with a minimum grade point average of 3.3; and
- Have completed 3 credits of *PHS 700: Integrative Research Seminar*; and
- Have completed the following core courses:
 - PHS 605, PHS 615, PHS 650 or AHE 510 (AHEOR), PBH 606 or AHE 509, PBH 500, POP 500, AHE 501, PBH 502
 - Note: PHS 620 and PHS 602 can be taken after the exam

Students may complete one or more of the core courses or PHS 700 credits while enrolled in PHS 800. Enrollment in PHS 801 must occur by the semester after which all named coursework above has been completed.

The examination is offered each semester on an as-needed basis, depending on student need and availability.

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 semesters, although it is strongly encouraged. Student enrolls in PHS 801 to take the exam. Review the syllabus for PHS 800/801 for additional details. The comprehensive exam will be scheduled to start on the second Tuesday of each semester unless no students are enrolled in PHS 801.

PHS 800 is a course in which students have an opportunity to prepare for the exam. Though this course involves some meetings with the Assistant Program Director, students are ultimately responsible for their own preparation. Some preparation material is provided to students, but students are responsible for saving any course materials for use in exam preparation. Students who have transferred credits in from other institutions are still responsible for content covered in JCPH courses.

Components

The Comprehensive Examination includes the following components:

Part I: Population Health Knowledge

Part I is a test consisting of four essay-format responses to questions in the topic areas below. Note: the list of concepts under each topic is not exhaustive; during PHS 800 students will have access to some preparatory materials **but it is the student's responsibility to retain course notes and syllabi to facilitate studying**. Part I is administered via Canvas. Questions are made available on the second Tuesday of each semester and students have one week to answer the four essay questions and upload their answers to Canvas.

1. U.S. healthcare organization and delivery (PBH 500, POP 500)
 - a. Key influences on the structure and function of the US healthcare delivery system
 - b. Changes to the system over time
2. Health economics (AHE 501)
 - 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 (PBH 502)
 - a. Contrasting 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
 - b. 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 (PHS 650, AHE 509/510, PHS 700)
 - a. Validity & bias in research
 - b. Causal inferencing across different study designs
 - c. Critical review & interpretation of statistical conclusions
 - d. Generalizability of research findings
 - e. Frameworks for assessing bias
 - i. Applies to both individual empirical reports as well as evidence syntheses such as meta-analyses.

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 include detailed discussions of topics, be well-referenced, approach publication quality, and be formatted in APA style.

Part II: Research Proposal

The written research proposal may be started after the student has passed Part I of 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 consist of work previously completed (i.e., in another course or for publication), 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. Students must sign an attestation of the above before Part II starts.

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. Importantly: Part II is not an extensive Dissertation proposal, but rather an examination of the competency of the student in designing a study.

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 (APA)*, 7th edition, 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. Plan the 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. Proposed Methods**
- a. Describe the study's participants, sample, and population.
 - b. Provide a power analysis or justification for its exclusion.
 - c. Explain how samples will be drawn or assigned including criteria for inclusion or exclusion, and any randomization strategy that is used.
 - d. Describe the design of the study including potential inferences to be drawn from the study.
 - e. Describe 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 (if applicable).
 - 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 (if applicable).
 - 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.
- 4. Proposed 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. State the alpha level (p-value criterion) for all tests.
 - e. Indicate the confidence level for confidence intervals (i.e., 95%)
 - f. Describe assumptions of statistical tests and the approaches for assessing them.

- g. Identify any problems with the planned analysis, including limitations of tests.
- 5. Expected 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 proposed 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 a thorough discussion of:
 - i. Limitations of the proposed method
 - ii. Biases
 - iii. Threats to validity
- 7. References**
 - a. APA formatted reference list

Evaluation of the Comprehensive Examination

The comprehensive examination committee is composed of members of the JCPH faculty. The Program Director or Assistant 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. Students must successfully pass Part I before they can be evaluated for Part II.

Grading Timeframes (average 2-3 examinees):

- Part 1: 2 weeks
- Part 2: 2-3 weeks

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 to two questions in Part I and still pass Part I if the other questions are passed unconditionally. If questions receive 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 more than two 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 reattempting 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.

Note on revising answers:

- Students will have up to one week to address revisions after a grade is made available for a question
- Students may be asked to revise an existing answer or answer a different question. This is at the discretion of the examination committee

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, they 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.

Note on revising Part II: students shall have 2 weeks to address revisions after a grade is made available for the assignment

Appeals

Appeals of any failed determinations in the comprehensive examination and of program dismissal decisions can be addressed through the University Grade Appeal process and the College Student Grievance Procedure, respectively. The Grade Appeal policy can be found at www.jefferson.edu/handbook. The Student Grievance Procedure can be found in the Student Handbook located under Handbooks & Forms on the [Student Resources](#) page.

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) and a passing grade in PHS 801. After advancement to Candidacy, students may use the term ‘candidate for the PhD’ (or ‘PhD candidate’), but not before. The use of PhD(c) in email signatures or on LinkedIn is only allowed once the student is a candidate for the PhD (i.e., once all core coursework and the comprehensive exam are completed).

DISSERTATION

The dissertation phase of the program comprises four courses: PHS 805, PHS 807, PHS 810, and PHS 811. These courses **must be taken in separate semesters** and in that order. Many of the details of the dissertation process are discussed in PHS 805, including forms to be signed and how to assemble a committee. This handbook includes that information, but students should consult with the PHS 805 instructor for more information.

Registration

The following are graded as Pass/Fail:

PHS 805: Dissertation Proposal Seminar (3 credits)

Students sign up for this course to begin the development of the Dissertation proposal. The course includes seminars and other activities to assist the student in developing a Dissertation proposal that meets the requirements of the PhD in Population Health Science. Students are also aided in assembling their Dissertation committees. The course culminates with the preparation of an annotated outline of the draft Dissertation proposal. Students earn a Pass or Fail at the end of the semester based on completion of expectations. Students may complete up to two specialization courses during the semester in which they enroll in PHS 805 but may not register for PHS 807 until all other coursework is completed.

PHS 807: Dissertation Proposal Defense (1 credit)

Before registering for PHS 807, students will submit a *Dissertation Committee Approval* form found on the Handbooks & Forms section of the [Student Resources](#) page. Students sign up for this course in the semester in which they will defend the Dissertation proposal. The results of the proposal defense are recorded for this course. Students earn a Pass when their proposal is approved and may earn an IP (In Progress) until that occurs.

PHS 810: Dissertation Progress (3 credits)

Students sign up for this course after the successful defense of the Dissertation proposal. This course is self-directed and provides additional time and support to complete the final Dissertation document. Students can earn a P (Pass) at the end of the semester in which they register for PHS 810 if they have made reasonable progress on their Dissertation.

PHS 811: Final Dissertation Defense (3 credit)

Students sign up for this course in the semester in which they will defend the final Dissertation. The results of the final Dissertation defense are recorded for this course. Students will earn an IP (In Progress) until they defend the Dissertation. At that time, a Pass or Fail is earned based on results.

Dissertation Committee

The student works with the Program Director and Instructor of PHS 805 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. Please see academic standards and integrity policies in our Student & University Handbooks on the [Student Resources](#) page.

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 and Instructor of PHS 805. Students are required to submit a *Dissertation Committee Approval* form located under Handbooks & Forms on the [Student Resources](#) page.

Note to students:

Dissertation students should prepare to meet either semimonthly or monthly with their chairs between the time of the proposal defense and the scheduling of their final dissertation defense. Dissertation chairs should report progress to the program director at the end of each semester between the proposal defense and dissertation defense via email. Additionally, students should plan to meet with all committee members once a semester, either as a group or individually depending upon the students' and committee members' schedules. Responsibility for planning and maintaining meetings lies with the student, supported by the committee chair.

MEMBER	DESCRIPTION	ROLE
Chair	Full-time JCPH faculty member	Leads, monitors, coordinates, and assesses the student's Dissertation from start to finish. Ideally, a chair should have regular contact with the student during all phases of the Dissertation, with 1-2 meetings a month recommended. Responsible for ensuring that the student's Dissertation meets all JCPH requirements, including those pertaining to content coverage, methodology, research ethics, form, and style. Serves as an arbitrator to resolve any conflicts within the Dissertation committee concerning the student's progress in formulating and completing the Dissertation. Engages, as appropriate, other potential committee members.
Committee Members (2-4)	At least one must be full-time JCPH faculty Members may be other full-time or part-time/adjunct faculty at TJU One member may be from an outside, accredited institution. If an external Committee member is identified, a copy of their CV must be forwarded to the Program Director for approval	Guides the student as a content expert, a methodology expert, or a combination of both areas of expertise. Supports the Dissertation committee chair through their respective expertise and any special knowledge that they may be able to contribute to the student's Dissertation. Coordinates with the chair before beginning to work with the student.

Once the chair and other members of the Dissertation committee have been identified and approved by the Program Director with the *Dissertation Committee Approval* form, any subsequent change in the composition of the Dissertation committee will require resubmission of the *Dissertation Committee Approval* form.

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 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 and be included in the budget of the approved Dissertation proposal.
2. The student must submit the *Dissertation Reimbursement Approval Request*, located under Handbooks & Forms on the [Student Resources](#) page, 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 [located on the Student Resources](#) page under Handbooks and Forms.

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](#) is also a helpful resource, and students have access to [Grammarly via the Library](#). Students are expected to perform statistical analyses themselves but can receive support from JCPH faculty and staff.

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* under the guidance of the Dissertation committee. By the end of *PHS 807: Dissertation Proposal Defense*, the student will have successfully created and 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 they have 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* (available via PHS 805) must be used to develop the Dissertation proposal and completed Dissertation.

As the proposal document serves as the first 2-3 chapters of the Dissertation, depending on whether the student chooses the traditional five-chapter format or “three-article” format. The proposal must be properly formatted 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.

Details on the difference between the “five-chapter” and “three-article” formats are given in PHS 805.

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 30-40 minute presentation, with slides, 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* form found in the Handbooks & Forms section of the [Student Resources](#) page and bring it to the oral defense to collect responses. The chair will submit the form to the Program Director. 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 using the *Dissertation Proposal Defense* form which is submitted to the Program Director by the chair:

- 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* form, 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 this form 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 IRB approvals take time (1 – 4 months average) 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 Progress* and defended in *PHS 811: Final Dissertation Defense* 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 80-250 pages including references and appendices. The structure of the Dissertation is determined through consultation between the Dissertation chair and committee members. The dissertation can follow the ordinary 5-chapter format using the *JCPH Dissertation Template*, or it can follow the "three-article" format. Both should adhere to the standards of American Psychological Association (APA) format, 7th edition. Details about the two formats will be presented as a part of PHS 805.

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, they request, 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 student will reach out to the Office of Academic Affairs to confirm the date's availability and set up the defense.

Once the Dissertation defense date has been established, JCPH will post an announcement to the Jefferson University 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. The student is responsible for distributing the *Dissertation Final Defense* form to committee members and the chair will submit to the Program Director.

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 using the *Dissertation Final Defense* form which is submitted to the Program Director by the chair:

- 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 Final Defense* form. The form is submitted to the Program Director and the student earns a P (Pass) in *PHS 811*.
- 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 can be addressed through the University Grade Appeal process and the College Student Grievance Procedure, respectively. The Grade Appeal policy can be found at

www.jefferson.edu/handbook. The Student Grievance Procedure can be found in the Student Handbook located under Handbooks & Forms on the [Student Resources](#) page.

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 7th edition or later style.

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

- The final Dissertation should be provided to the Program Director including:
 - A PDF file of the *final* Dissertation
 - A copy of the IRB approval or exemption
 - *Dissertation Title Page* containing names of the committee members
 - *Final Dissertation Document Approval* form found under Handbooks & Forms on the [Student Resources](#) page
- See below for directions on submitting to ProQuest. There is a \$120 fee for ProQuest processing. Students are not required to order hard copies of the dissertation.
- 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 Assessment and Accreditation, should be completed.
- JDC Release Form & Abstract – The recording of the Dissertation defense as well as the abstract are posted to the [Jefferson Digital Commons \(JDC\)](#) and students are encouraged to view past presentations at any time. To post these in the JDC, students are required to sign a JDC Release Form. Submit the form and the abstract to the corresponding dropbox in the [JCPH Student Community](#) in Canvas **no later than a week prior to when final grades are due in the semester in which presentation is made.** If a student is not able to post details of their Dissertation publicly for any reason, please inform the Program Director. The JDC Release Form can be found online in the Handbooks & Forms section of the [Student Resources](#) page.

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

SUMMARY OF PROGRESSION: COMP EXAM & DISSERTATION

The student:

1. Registers for *PHS 800: Comprehensive Exam Prep*.
2. Begins developing the research proposal (Part II of the comprehensive examination).
3. Registers for *PHS 801: Comprehensive Exam* in the semester in which the student expects to complete the comprehensive examination.
4. Takes Part I of the comprehensive examination.
5. 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.
6. 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.
7. Receives the committee's written determination on the written research proposal (Part II). If applicable, the student may revise the research proposal.
8. Registers for and completes *PHS 805: Dissertation Proposal Seminar* with a passing grade.
9. Enrolls in *PHS 807: Dissertation Proposal Defense*.
 - 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.
 - b. Once the written Dissertation proposal is approved by the chair, they 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 Office of Academic Affairs will help schedule a room in the College. All Dissertation committee members are expected to attend the defense, either in-person or remotely.
10. 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.

11. Enrolls in *PHS 810: Dissertation Progress* during the semester after the Dissertation proposal is successfully defended. Following PHS 810, students must also enroll in *PHS 811: Final Dissertation Defense* to graduate.
12. Obtains IRB approval once the Dissertation proposal has been approved by the Dissertation committee.
13. 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.
14. 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.
15. 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 Office of Academic Affairs will help schedule a room in the College. All Dissertation committee members are expected to attend the defense, either in-person or remotely. There will be a public announcement of the Dissertation defense date and location.
16. Presents the Dissertation at a public forum.
17. Responds to questions and comments by the Dissertation committee after the general audience is dismissed. This process constitutes the oral defense of the Dissertation.
18. Receives the Dissertation committee's written determination within a week of the Dissertation oral defense.
19. Finalizes format of the Dissertation.
20. Completes program requirements to be eligible for graduation, including all forms, and dissertation uploads.
21. Completes the [Survey of Earned Doctorate](#) (SED). 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. 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 including the *Dissertation Title Page* (no signatures needed).
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 ordered. You can expect to receive your copies within 2-4 weeks from when the work is published and available on ProQuest.