



DHSc Dissertation Handbook 2026–2027

COLLEGE *of* POPULATION HEALTH

DHSc Dissertation Handbook

The *DHSc Dissertation Handbook* is intended to describe the policies and procedures regarding the dissertation for all students in the Doctor of Health Science in Population Health Leadership program at the Jefferson College of Health (JCPH). 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.

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

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OVERVIEW

The *DHSc Dissertation Handbook* is for Doctor of Health Science (DHSc) students at the Jefferson College of Population Health (JCPH). This handbook is intended to serve as a supplement to the *Student Handbook* (see Handbooks & Forms on [Student Resources](#) page) and does not supersede any guidance contained in the *Student Handbook*. The guidance contained here refers specifically to the Dissertation phase of the DHSc program. Please refer any questions to the Program Director.

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 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: JCPH will offer guidance and advice to assist students in identifying an appropriate primary mentor for their Dissertation. 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.

PROGRAM REQUIREMENTS

The DHSc program does not require a comprehensive examination. However, to advance to the Dissertation phase, students must achieve the following:

- successfully complete all year 1 and year 2 program coursework (40 credits); and
- be in good academic standing, with a minimum grade point average of 3.3

All Dissertation courses (*DHS 800, 801, 802*) and the associated Year 3 residencies, (*DHS 754, 755*) are graded on a Pass/Fail basis.

DHS 800 Dissertation I is the first stage of the Dissertation development process. It offers guidance in developing the Dissertation Proposal and working with an approved Dissertation Committee. The student will prepare a draft of the Dissertation Proposal, under the guidance of the Dissertation Committee and its Chair. The student will advance to DHS 801 upon completion of all required coursework with passing grades as well as approval for the Dissertation Proposal document, Dissertation Proposal Slide Deck, and successful Dissertation Proposal defense. Upon successfully passing the proposal defense, students may advance to the “DHSc Candidate” status.

DHS 801 Dissertation II is the second stage of the Dissertation process where the student may begin conducting the approved research project described in the Dissertation Research Proposal. The results will be analyzed, compiled, and described in writing in *DHS 801: Dissertation II*. Upon completion of all required coursework with a passing grade, students will advance to DHS 802.

DHS 802 Dissertation III is the final stage of the Dissertation process where the student writes the final chapter, compiles the completed dissertation document, and successfully defends the research study. Upon successful defense, the student will finalize the dissertation document, and upon approval from the Program Director, upload the approved Dissertation Manuscript to ProQuest to earn a final grade.

If the student has not successfully defended the Dissertation during DHS 802 Dissertation III, the student must seek approval from the Program Director and the Senior Director, Academic Operations, for an extension to the required timeline which includes registration for the one-credit *DHS 855 Dissertation Extension* course the following semester. Contact the Program Director for more information.

DHS 754 Fall Residency V, in the third year, will offer guidance in working with the Dissertation Committee and include activities to prepare students for the creation of an approved Dissertation Proposal. *DHS 755 Final Residency VI* will assist students with finalizing the Dissertation document post-defense.

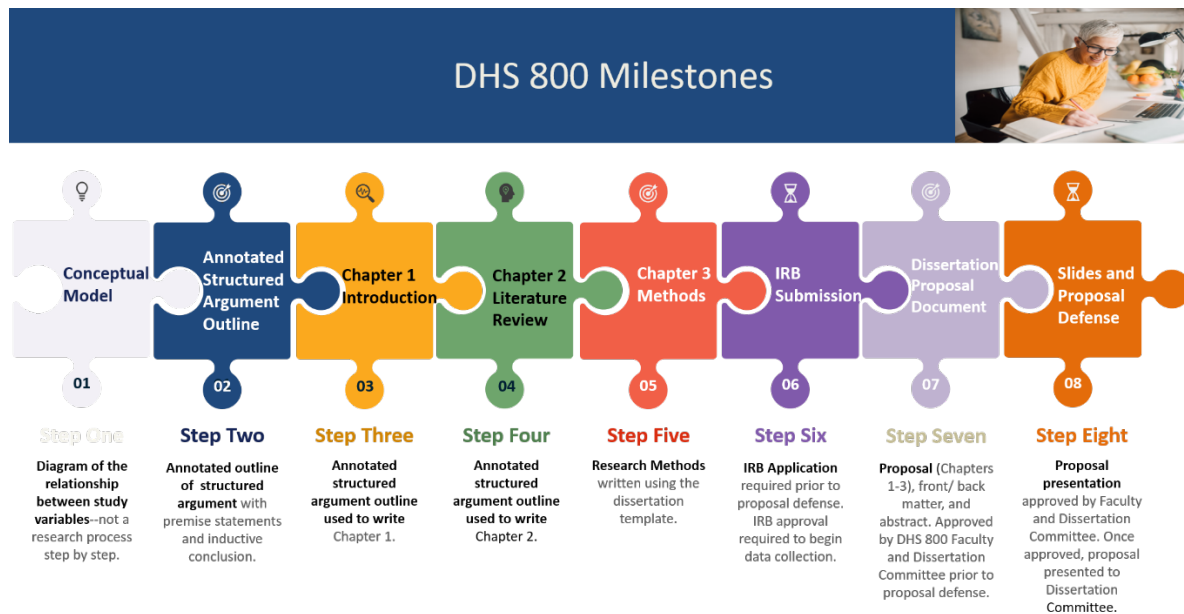
DISSERTATION TIMELINE AND MILESTONES

Every Dissertation is unique, but the Dissertation process follows a structured sequence of milestones for all learners. Progress is measured through the successful completion of DHS 800, DHS 801, and DHS 802. Milestone details and Dissertation Checklist (by chapter) are posted in the dissertation course pages in Canvas. It is essential that students meet the required timelines and milestone expectations for each course. Failure to do so may prevent enrollment in the subsequent dissertation course which can cause delayed dissertation progress, delayed time-to-degree, and potentially require re-enrollment in the dissertation course during the following academic year (with financial impact).

 DHS 800 □ Conceptual Model □ Annotated Structured Argument Outline □ Chapter 1 Introduction □ Chapter 2 Literature Review □ Chapter 3 Methods □ Prepare and submit IRB documentation for approval. □ Dissertation Proposal Document and Slides □ Dissertation Proposal Defense Presentation to Committee	 DHS 801 □ Data Collection and Analysis □ Peer Review of Chapter 4 □ Chapter 4 Outline □ Chapter 4 Results □ Chapter 5 Organizational Framework □ Results for Final Defense Slides	 DHS 802 □ Chapter 5 detailing discussion, implications, and recommendations. □ Finalize written dissertation manuscript □ Finalize slide presentation deck. □ Successfully conduct final defense. □ Upload approved Dissertation Manuscript to ProQuest
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DHS 800

The Dissertation Research Proposal paper and defense is completed in DHS 800 and includes the steps described below. The successful defense of Dissertation Research Proposal is required to progress to DHS 801.

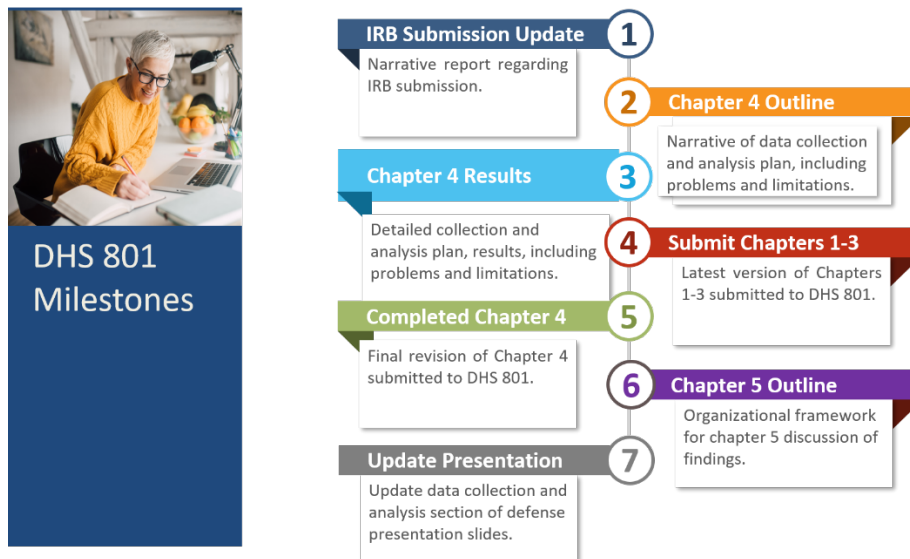


Procedures & Policies:

1. The proposal cannot consist of work previously completed (i.e., in another course or for publication), but it may be a continuation or expansion of work in that area.
2. The work is expected to be entirely new and not previously completed in the context of another course or elsewhere before a passing determination is made. Any evidence to the contrary will be grounds for immediate program dismissal.
3. Consist of roughly 15–20 pages, including an abstract of 200-250 words. Graphs, tables, figures, reference list, title page, etc. are not included in the page count.
4. Integrate the required topics described in DHS 800 as they apply to the proposed research question/project. The paper should not consist of listed answers.
5. Follow the formatting and citation guidelines of the Publication Manual of the American Psychological Association (APA), 7th edition.

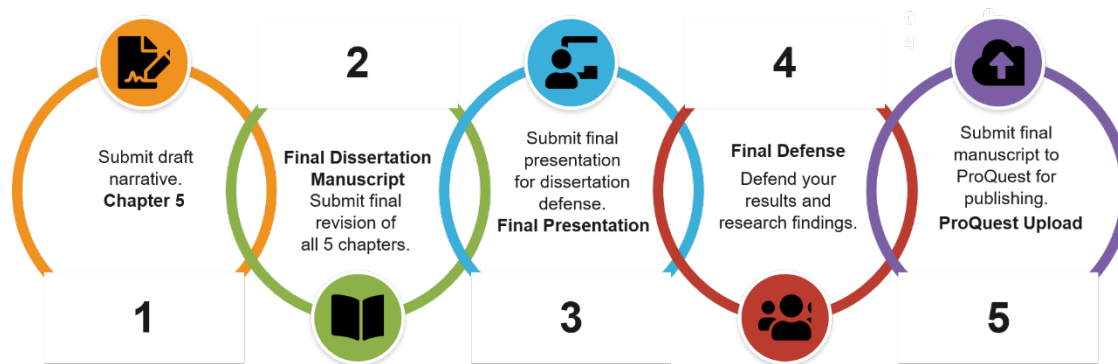
DHS 801

In DHS 801, students will begin working on dissertation research. They may not begin data collection until they receive a determination and approval from the IRB.



DHS 802

Once students successfully complete DHS 801, they may move forward with completion of their manuscript and schedule the presentation of the final dissertation defense.



Grading

Students can register for *DHS 801* once they earn a P (Pass) grade in *DHS 800*. The Committee may assign one of the following determinations for the Dissertation Proposal Defense:

- **Pass without condition** — If the student satisfactorily completes the written Dissertation Research Proposal, they will earn a P (Pass) in *DHS 800 Dissertation I* and can move on to *DHS 801 Dissertation II*.
- **Conditional pass** — If a conditional pass is received for the written Dissertation Research Proposal, the student will have the opportunity to rewrite the proposal incorporating the Committee's feedback. If the revision is accepted, the student will earn a P (Pass) in *DHS 800* and can register for *DHS 801*.
 - To advance to *DHS 801*, the student must earn a P (Pass) in *DHS 800*. Earning an F (Fail) grade in *DHS 800* could be grounds for dismissal from the program.
- **Failed** — If the student receives a failed determination on the written Dissertation Research Proposal, the student will be placed on academic probation and must petition the College for permission to re-enroll in *DHS 800*. After repeating *DHS 800*, the student must earn a P (Pass) to advance to the next phase. A second conditional pass or failed determination is grounds for dismissal from the program.
 - A student who receives a failed determination on the written Dissertation Research Proposal will have a maximum of six months to successfully remediate the proposal and petition the College for permission to be reinstated to the program. Failure to successfully complete the Dissertation Research Proposal is grounds for dismissal from the program.

Appeals

Appeals of any failed determinations in the Dissertation Research Proposal 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.

DISSERTATION

Registration

All Dissertation courses (*DHS 800, 801, and 802*) and associated residencies (*DHS 754 and 755*) are graded on a Pass/Fail basis.

The following are graded as Pass/Fail:

DHS 754: Fall Residency V (1 credit)

Students sign up for this course to review the steps, processes, and paperwork related to the Dissertation process. Students will be aided in assembling their Dissertation committee.

DHS 800: Dissertation I (3 credits)

Students sign up for this course to begin the development of the Dissertation Research Proposal. The course includes seminars and other activities to assist the student in developing a Dissertation Research Proposal that meets the requirements of the DHSc in Population Health Leadership. Students will submit a final *Dissertation Committee Approval* form found on the Handbooks & Forms section of the [Student Resources](#) page. The course culminates with the preparation of the Dissertation Research Proposal. Students earn a P (Pass) when their proposal is approved and they have successfully defended their proposal.

DHS 801: Dissertation II (3 credits)

Students sign up for this course after the Dissertation proposal is approved and they have earned a P (Pass) grade in *DHS 800*. The applied research is conducted during this time. This course is self-directed and provides additional time and support to develop the final Dissertation document. Students can earn a P (Pass) at the end of the semester in which they are registered for *DHS 801* if they have made reasonable progress on their Dissertation. They can then register for *DHS 802* in the next semester.

DHS 802: Dissertation III (3 credits)

Students sign up for this course in the semester in which they will defend the final Dissertation following the successful completion of *DHS 801*. The results of the final Dissertation defense are recorded for this course. The Dissertation Final Defense and Final Dissertation Document forms are submitted in DHS 802. Students will earn a P (Pass) upon completion of all requirements within the semester and upon successful defense of the Dissertation. At that time, a P (Pass) or F (Fail) is earned based on results.

DHS 755: Final Residency VI (1 credit)

Students register for this course before their Dissertation defense. They will receive advice and support in producing the final written version of their Dissertation for publication on ProQuest.

DHS 855: Dissertation Extension (1 credit)

Upon approval from the Program Director and the Senior Director, Academic Operations, students register for this one-credit course if they are unable to complete the requirements of *DHS 802*. Students will be charged 1 credit instead of the comprehensive tuition rate. In order to register, a formal request for

an extension must be submitted to the Program Director and the Senior Director, Academic Operations, via email. The email communication must include an expected timeline for completing the dissertation within the course semester. Failure to successfully meet the expectations of this extension can result in an F grade in *DHS 802* and *DHS 855*.

Dissertation Committee

The student works with the Program Director and instructor of *DHS 800* 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 DHSc candidate into the scientific community. Candidates are expected to exhibit exemplary professional behavior 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 up to three (3) 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 *DHS 800*.

Collaboration Platform

Students and their Committee members will be given access to Box, a secure cloud storage and collaboration platform, to manage the paperwork related to the dissertation, and to access and review drafts of the dissertation manuscript. This resource facilitates version control, supports collaboration and coordinated feedback, ultimately contributing to the student's progress and the dissertation's refinement.

Role of the Dissertation Committee

The Dissertation committee has the authority and responsibility for accepting and endorsing all aspects of the Dissertation, prior to the final approval by the DHSc Program Director. The Dissertation committee evaluates the Dissertation proposal and overall Dissertation to ensure that the work meets rigorous academic standards for quality and that the student meets the guidelines for ethical research, academic honesty, and academic writing and presentation. The committee approves the Dissertation based upon satisfactory performance on the Dissertation defense.

The Dissertation committee should form a collective of subject matter and methodological experts that coincide with the topic under investigation and the methods proposed. The committee chair must hold an earned doctorate. Other committee members may have specific subject matter expertise and must, at a minimum, hold a graduate degree in the specific subject area.

Forming a Dissertation Committee

Students are required to submit a *Dissertation Committee Approval* form located under Handbooks & Forms on our [Student Resources](#) page. This is submitted during DHS 800 Dissertation I. If an external Committee member is identified, a copy of the individual's CV must be forwarded to the Program Director for approval. Once the committee members have been approved by the Program Director, and all the members have agreed to participate on the committee, students will need to complete the *Dissertation Committee Approval* form located under Handbooks & Forms on our [Student Resources](#) page. Students should not assume that a committee member is on their committee until the form has been signed.

Role of the Student

The student owns their Dissertation and has the final responsibility for its planning, execution, completion, and quality. Chair and committee members are involved in a support capacity. Students are expected to uphold academic, scholarly, and professional behavior that reflects the core values of JCPH.

Students are expected to:

1. Schedule standing bi-weekly meetings to provide updates on progress, highlight potential barriers in the study, and to seek guidance on any concerns. While email, phone calls, and other communication methods outside Canvas are allowed and expected, a summary of the conversations is recommended (e.g., recorded Zoom meeting, meeting notes). This will help the student and chair keep track of discussions and any decisions or recommendations made during those meetings.
2. Post files for Committee review in the student-dedicated Box folders and provide a timeframe for feedback (e.g., 5-7 days).
3. Notify their chair of all academic concerns. Examples of academic concerns include transition point deliverable content, structure, and format; requirements for chapter content as outlined in this DHSc Dissertation Handbook; results of reviews by committee members; and any other academic issues that may arise toward completing the Dissertation.
4. Acknowledge that there may be differences in opinions and ideas that should be discussed using supporting evidence and logic as students learn about how scholarly feedback is given and received.
5. Engage in collegial, scholarly, and professional communications with all faculty, committee members, and partners throughout the Dissertation process.
6. Use the student Jefferson email to keep a record of the content of email messages.
7. Schedule the Dissertation defense with the Office of Academic Affairs once the Dissertation is approved by the committee chair. It is the responsibility of the student, working with their chair and Program Director, to identify dates for the proposed defense.

Role of the Committee Chair

Committee chairs are vitally important to the success of students working on their Dissertation. The chair provides guidance and support that allows the student to consistently make progress toward Dissertation completion. The committee chair serves as the liaison for the student, the committee, and Jefferson College of Population Health (JCPH).

Chairs are expected to:

1. Lead, monitor, coordinate, and assess the student's Dissertation from start to finish.
2. Participate in monthly update meetings with program leadership to discuss student progress and identify/resolve any issues or challenges that could impede student progress.
3. Engage with the student in collaborative efforts involving communication, regular check-ins, and student-initiated contact to review progress, obtain feedback, and receive supportive guidance. Post comments and feedback to chapter drafts in the student's dedicated Box folders within the agreed upon timeframe (e.g., 5-7 days).
4. Serve as the central point for communication between the committee members and the student and help to facilitate the pace and flow of all meetings.
5. Ensure that the Dissertation proposal, proposal defense, and completed Dissertation comply with all criteria used to evaluate acceptable scholar-practitioner work at the doctoral level. This includes, but is not limited to the content coverage, methodology, research, structure, format, style, and ethical guidelines.
6. Serve as an arbitrator to resolve any conflicts within the Dissertation committee concerning the student's progress in formulating and completing the Dissertation.
7. Guide and support the student as they develop and demonstrate competencies in critical thinking, analysis, synthesis, and integration of relevant theories and research.
8. Provide student support through the Dissertation proposal preparation and defense, supervise the design and research, and oversee the completion of the Dissertation.
9. Provide feedback on the student's writing and research skills and refer the student to additional support and resources when those skills need further development.
10. Collaborate with the student to promote consistent progress in chapter completion. For example, external factors may influence how a student progresses toward Dissertation completion. The chair, however, may follow up with the student to assess progress, help student redirect their focus, or set due dates for deliverables.

Role of the Committee Members

All members of the student's Dissertation committee share responsibility in ensuring that the student produces high-quality scholarship material. The committee members support the student and chair as the reviewer of the proposal and Dissertation. Committee members should encourage, support, and reflect the core values of JCPH. One or more members may be from an outside, accredited institution. One member may be an appropriately qualified non-academic subject matter expert.

Committee members are expected to:

1. Balance their individual preferences with those of other committee members, the chair, and the student and work together to resolve disagreements.
2. Guide the student as a content expert, a methodology expert, or a combination of both areas of expertise by reading drafts and providing meaningful feedback.
3. Support the Dissertation committee chair through their respective expertise and any special knowledge that they may be able to contribute to the students' Dissertation.
4. Coordinate with the chair before beginning to work with the student about questions relating to process, policies, and procedures.
5. Maintain appropriate communication with each other and the student and respond to all student requests in a timely manner. Post comments on shared dissertation documents in the students' dedicated Box folders within the agreed upon timeframe for feedback (e.g., 5-7 days).
6. Barring unforeseen circumstances, committee members should read and respond to all student submissions within the agreed timeframe.

MEMBER	DESCRIPTION	ROLE
Chair	Full-time JCPH faculty member. Part-time and adjunct faculty member may be considered to serve in this role with review and approval of the Program Director.	Leads, monitors, coordinates, and assesses the student's Dissertation from start to finish. 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 (2-3)	Members may be full-time or part-time/adjunct faculty at TJU One or more members may be from an outside, accredited institution. One member may be an appropriately qualified non-academic subject matter expert. If an external Committee member is identified, a copy of the individual's CV must be forwarded to the Program Director for approval Candidate's direct supervisor may not serve as a committee member	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 Project

The Dissertation is a requirement of the program, and the student may incur expenses associated with it. In cases where the Dissertation research project 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 submission of 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 & 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.

DISSERTATION PROPOSAL AND ITS ORAL DEFENSE

The purpose of the Dissertation proposal oral defense is to evaluate the content and methods of the applied research being proposed for the Dissertation, as well as the student's readiness to implement the research project.

Dissertation Proposal

The Dissertation proposal is developed in *DHS 800: Dissertation I* and implementation is initiated in *DHS 801: Dissertation II* under the guidance of the Dissertation committee. By the end of *DHS 802: Dissertation III*, the student will have successfully created and completed their final defense. 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 *DHS 800*) 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 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 **three 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 — A majority of the 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 fully meet expectations, and 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 *DHS 800, 801, and 802*. Any conditional pass or failure after a second sequence of *DHS 800, 801, and 802* and subsequent Dissertation proposal submission and defense is grounds for dismissal from the program.

Institutional Review Board Review & Approval

Students will have completed the university-required CITI training and the Conflict of Interest (COI) form prior to entering DHS 800. Prior to the oral proposal defense, students must submit information about their proposed research project to the [Office of Human Research Protection](#) through iRIS, the Jefferson IRB platform. All projects, whether or not they qualify as human subjects research, must be submitted through the iRIS platform.

Students must obtain Institutional Review Board (IRB) approval if the Dissertation involves human subjects, analysis of materials originating from human subjects, or data obtained from people (TJU or elsewhere). There are educational modules and videos available on the [Jefferson Office of Human Research Protection](#) website. In addition, JOHRP offers Help Desk sessions twice a week where students can receive personalized guidance from an analyst. Any project with public presentation must be given a research determination (either human subjects or non-human subjects) either by the Jefferson IRB or by the IRB at the organization where the project will take place (e.g., at a student's workplace).

Under the supervision of the Dissertation chair or Program Director, the student is ultimately responsible for managing the IRB submission and/or non-human subjects determination.

- If submitting to the Jefferson IRB, the Dissertation chair or Program Director should be named as the Primary Investigator (PI) on a project. The PI must be a Jefferson faculty member.
- If a student dissertation involves activities at a non-Jefferson organization, and that organization has an IRB, students are responsible for submitting an IRB protocol to that institution's IRB or obtaining a determination from that institution that their activities do not constitute human subjects research. If the non-Jefferson institution does not have an IRB, the Jefferson IRB may be used for this purpose.

Students should allow adequate time for any review process. More details about IRB submission via iRIS, the Jefferson IRB platform, are available on the [Office of Human Research Protection](#) site.

DISSERTATION AND ITS ORAL DEFENSE

Dissertation

The Dissertation proposal is developed in *DHS 800: Dissertation I*, the research is conducted in *DHS 801: Dissertation II*, and the final work product is defended in *DHS 802: Dissertation III* under the guidance of the Dissertation committee. The Dissertation contains the results of an applied research project 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 applied research.

The Dissertation document is approximately 100-175 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, 7th edition*. 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 applied 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 at least two 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, found on the Handbooks & Forms section of the [Student Resources](#) page, 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 *DHS 802*.
- **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 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 (located on the Handbooks & Forms section of [Student Resources](#))
- See below for directions on submitting to ProQuest.
 - 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, & Presentation Slides – The recording of the Dissertation defense as well as the abstract and slides are posted to the [Jefferson Digital Commons \(JDC\)](#) and students are encouraged to view past presentations at any time. 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. The JDC release form, abstract, and presentation slides must be submitted to the corresponding DHSc dropboxes in the Student Community in [Canvas](#) prior to the final Dissertation Defense in order to have the Dissertation posted to the Jefferson Digital Commons.

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

SUMMARY OF PROGRAM PROGRESSION

The student:

1. Registers for *DHS 800: Dissertation I* and begins developing the Research Proposal.
2. Submits the Research Proposal to the committee within 45 days of the scheduled conclusion of *DHS 800*.
3. Receives the committee's written determination on the written Research Proposal. If applicable, the student may revise the Research Proposal.
4. Presents the Research 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.
5. Obtains IRB approval once the Dissertation proposal has been approved by the Dissertation committee.
6. Upon advancing to candidacy, registers for *DHS 801: Dissertation II*.
7. 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.
8. Registers for *DHS 802: Dissertation III*.
9. 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.
 - 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.
10. Schedules the Dissertation defense. Once the Dissertation proposal is approved by the committee chair, they will notify the Program Director to schedule the proposal 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 or provide virtual space. 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.

11. Presents the Dissertation at a public forum.
12. Responds to questions and comments by the Dissertation committee after the general audience is dismissed. This process constitutes the oral defense of the Dissertation.
13. Receives the Dissertation committee's written determination within a week of the Dissertation oral defense.
14. Finalizes format of the Dissertation.
15. Completes program requirements to be eligible for graduation by the end date of the final semester (See Academic Calendar located on the [Student Resources](#) page for start/end dates of semesters).
16. 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 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.