



SCHOOL OF
PUBLIC HEALTH

OHSU-PSU School of Public Health

PhD in Community Health

Program Guide and Degree Requirements 2025-2026



<https://ohsu-psu-sph.org/phd-community-health/>

Community Health

Information in this document is updated annually. Please refer to the document for the year you entered the PhD program, as the degree requirements listed are your programmatic contract. Some institutional information and contacts may change while you are enrolled; check the OHSU-PSU School of Public Health website and online resources referenced throughout this document for the most current information.

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This document is also available at the SPH website. Forms and other online resources referenced can be accessed from the SPH website.

1.0 PROGRAM DESCRIPTION

The OHSU-PSU School of Public Health (SPH) Community Health PhD program is designed to provide students with advanced training in conducting research and developing public health instructional skills, with a specific focus on the structural, social and behavioral determinants of health. The program curriculum is complemented by an interdisciplinary faculty that have educational backgrounds in public health communication, social work, and sociology. The curriculum includes intensive training in research methodology, study research design, qualitative approaches, statistical analyses, and theory. Students will participate in two years of doctoral seminar and have a wide variety of electives to choose from to form a focused area of emphasis.

The PhD program in Community Health is one of three doctoral programs within the OHSU-PSU School of Public Health, which has the following overarching Mission Statement:

“Educate future public health leaders, and advance public health scholarship and practice, in collaboration with our communities to promote health and social equity.”

OHSU-PSU School of Public Health Core Competencies: All graduates of the School of Public Health will act ethically and demonstrate cultural humility to 1) Integrate social determinants into public health science, practice and policy; 2) Engage with communities to improve population health; and 3) Apply public health knowledge and skills to eliminate health inequities.

2.0 PROGRAM LEARNING OBJECTIVES

The Community Health doctoral curriculum is designed to provide training and mastery around a set of six program level learning objectives:

- 1) Identify gaps in the field of Community Health by critically analyzing relevant peer-reviewed literature.
- 2) Apply appropriate theoretical frameworks to topics relevant to the field of Community Health, including pedagogical theory in the context of teaching.
- 3) Utilize pertinent research design, analytic methods, and interpretation of results to address timely research questions in the field of Community Health.
- 4) Evaluate the impact of social, cultural and contextual factors on health outcomes.
- 5) Effectively disseminate Community Health knowledge and research findings to public, professional, and student audiences using multiple modes of communication.
- 6) Demonstrate ethical conduct and cultural competence in research design, analysis, dissemination, and critique.

3.0 PROGRAM FACULTY

Faculty members participate in the Community Health PhD program through teaching, advising, mentoring, and School governance. The core faculty in the Community Health group in the School of Public Health have expertise in multiple domains related to social epidemiology, social determinants of health, community-based research, and population health inequities; they are listed on the School of Public Health faculty web page. Many other School of Public Health, PSU and OHSU faculty teach required and elective courses, and may participate in advising, mentoring, and student supervision for academic committees and research projects. Students should feel free to approach any faculty with questions, inquire about their research, and consult with them on issues of professional development; core faculty should be consulted regarding the course of study.

3.1 Faculty Advisor

Upon entry to the doctoral program, each student is assigned an advisor from among the School of Public Health faculty whose work overlaps with the student's stated research interests. Faculty advisor duties include but are not limited to:

- Assisting students with their transition to doctoral student life.
- Meeting with student regularly (recommended 2 times per quarter) throughout the academic school year to provide overall mentoring—including help with goal-setting and review of educational/degree, research and service/professionalism activities.
- Mentoring students on research activities throughout their course of study and assisting students in establishing a dissertation committee and selecting their dissertation chair (not necessarily the faculty advisor) and other committee members.
- Serving as the director of Graduate Research Assistantship (GRA) student duties when applicable.
- Notifying students of relevant School of Public Health, community level, and national professional development events and services and advocating for student participation.
- Providing timely support and guidance to advisees when students are in academic or personal difficulty.

Positive relationships between doctoral students and their advisors are a central factor in successful progress and timely program completion. During the course of study, a student may identify an alternative faculty advisor and may switch advisors if the newly identified faculty advisor agrees to assume the role. A student should discuss any wishes to change their primary advisor with the Community Health Doctoral Program Director for advice and to help facilitate the process.

3.2 Program Director

The faculty advisor is the first point of contact for most student queries but the Community Health PhD Program Director is the first point of contact regarding program-level requirements, procedures and policies, leaves of absence, complaints, and any other program-level administrative matters. Students should feel free to approach the Program Director about anything, but particularly about issues that are specific to the CH program such as coursework.

4.0 OVERVIEW OF DEGREE REQUIREMENTS

Students will take a series of health and research methods **core courses** as well as **elective courses** to form an area of emphasis related to the student's interests and approved by the student's advisor. Upon successful completion of coursework, students must pass a **comprehensive exam** comprised of both written and oral components. Students will **complete and defend a dissertation proposal** before **advancing to candidacy**. Candidates will then design, implement, and analyze a research project. The final product is a **written dissertation with an oral defense** of the dissertation work. In summary, the award of the PhD degree in Community Health from the OHSU-PSU School of public health is the culmination of the following benchmarks:

1. Coursework requirements completion including dissertation credit hours
2. Comprehensive examination
3. Dissertation proposal and defense
4. Advancement to candidacy
5. Doctoral dissertation and defense

5.0 COURSEWORK

5.1 Required and Elective Courses

The PhD program in Community Health includes a total of 108 required credits: 36 required community health core credits, 6 doctoral seminar credits, 20 required methods core credits, at least 19 elective credits (comprised of at least 8 elective community health course credits, at least 6 elective methods credits, at least 5 600-level elective credits), and at least 27 dissertation credits (PHE 603).

Students admitted with a Master's Degree in Public Health (MPH) take will take the required coursework as shown. Students admitted with an undergraduate degree or a graduate degree in a field other than Public Health will be required to take *EPI 612 Introduction to Epidemiology* and *PHE 511 Foundations of Public Health* as electives.

Students must follow the requirements in place upon matriculation. Should program requirements change during a student's tenure, the student may discuss the possibility of adopting newer requirements with the Program Director; however, the allowance of any alterations from the program in place upon matriculation is at the Program Director's discretion.

5.1.1 Elective courses (19 credits)

Students will round out their required course of study with a selection of level community health-relevant courses and methods courses (see below). At least 3 credits of elective courses must be at the 600-level. All electives must be graduate-level courses. Students are encouraged to plan ahead for course availability and timing.

5.1.a Elective Community Health Courses (8 credits, a subset of the 19 credits)

Students will also take at least 8 credits of electives from graduate level courses offered at the OHSU-PSU School of Public Health, or within other departments at OHSU or PSU on topics related to the area of emphasis selected by the student and approved by the student's advisor. These electives must be completed prior to taking the comprehensive exam.

5.1.b. Methods Course Electives (6 credits, a subset of the 19 credits)

In addition to the required methods courses, students must enroll in at least 6 credits of methods electives from graduate level courses offered at the OHSU-PSU School of Public Health or within other departments at OHSU or PSU if approved by the student's faculty advisor and the Program Director.

5.1.c. Other Electives (5 credits, a subset of the 19 credits)

The remainder of the 21 required elective credits may include additional Community Health and/or Methods credits and may also include other credits from courses in other relevant areas.

A breakdown of the coursework requirements is organized into a table on the following page.

Curriculum category	Credit hours
Required courses	60 credits
<i>Community Health Core</i>	36 of 60 credits
HSMP 671 Health Policy	3
HSMP 673 Values & Ethics in Health	3
HSMP 681 Population Health: Policy & Practice Implications	3
PHE 612 Advanced Principle of Health Behavior	3
PHE 622 Health & Social Inequalities	3
PHE 632 Developmental Origins of Health & Disease	3
PHE 626 Teaching and Learning in Health Promotion & Social Work	3
PUBH 600 Essentials of Doctoral Training	3
<i>Select one of the following courses</i>	
ESHH 612 Global & Planetary Health Concepts	3
ESHH 519 Environmental Health in a Changing World	3
<i>Select three of the following courses</i>	
CPH 621 Social Determinants of Health	3
CHP 622 Communicating Public Health Data	3
CPH 631 Social Justice and Public Health	3
CPH 640 Systems Thinking for Public Health	3
PHE 541 Media Advocacy and Community Health	3
PHE 546 Urban and Community Health	3
PHE 555 Decolonizing Public Health Research	3
PHE 510 Special topics	3
PHE 610 Special topics	3
<i>Methods core</i>	20 of 60 credits
BSTA 611 Estimation and Hypothesis Testing for Applied Biostatistics	4
BSTA 612 Linear Models	4
CPH 636 Community Engagement	3
EPI 640 Research and Proposal Design	3
PHE 620 Qualitative Research & Design	3
PHE 634 Social Epidemiology Methods & Theory	3
<i>Doctoral seminar</i>	6 credits
PHE 623 Doctoral Seminar in Health Research	1 x 6
Elective courses	19 credits
Must include at least 3 credits at the 600 level. May include independent research credits with approval of faculty advisor and program director.	
<i>Methods electives</i>	6
<i>Community Health electives</i>	8
<i>Other electives (which may include additional Methods & Comm Health electives)</i>	5

Dissertation	27 credits
Total minimum credits	108

5.1.2 Doctoral Seminar in Community Health

The Doctoral Seminar in Community Health (PHE 623) is required for first- and second-year doctoral students in the School of Community Health Doctoral program, and optional for students thereafter. Students will learn about the critical evaluation of health research, hypothesis generation, publication and review of submitted work, applying for grants, and the development of an independent research program. Weekly readings will involve seminal published peer-reviewed public health articles as well as readings on practical issues related to the conduct of research, ethics, genesis of research questions, and issues related to dissertation development.

5.1.3. Reading and Conference Credits

Students may enroll in up to 3 credits of reading and conference in the Academic Year quarter (excluding summer) either prior to or during the quarter the student takes their comprehensive exam.

5.1.4 Dissertation Credits

The dissertation is the doctoral student's most substantial achievement—a significant work of research built upon an immersion in the academic literature, informed theoretical reasoning, and original research and analysis.

During the research and writing of the dissertation, students will enroll in at least 27 By-Arrangement dissertation credits (PHE 603). Dissertation credits cannot be registered for until after the successful completion of the Comprehensive Exam. A student does not need to have defended the dissertation proposal in order to enroll in dissertation credits. A student may enroll in up to 9 Dissertation Credits to prepare their dissertation proposal. The remainder of the required Dissertation Credits (n=18) must be completed after the student has passed the dissertation proposal defense.

5.2 Program Learning Objectives and Curriculum Map

The table on the next page demonstrates how each of the required courses maps to the 6 Learning Objectives for the PhD program in Community Health.

Program Competencies	Courses Contributing to the Competency	
1. Identify gaps in the field of Community Health by critically analyzing relevant peer-reviewed literature.	PHE 620	Qualitative Research Design (R)*
	PHE 622	Health and Social Inequalities
	PHE 632	Developmental Origins of Health and Disease Epidemiology (R)
	PHE 634	Social Epidemiology Methods & Theory (P)
	PHE 623	Doctoral Seminar (R)
2. Apply appropriate theoretical frameworks to topics relevant to the field of Community Health, including pedagogical theory in the context of teaching.	PHE 612	Advanced Principles Health Behavior (P)
	PHE 620	Qualitative Research Design (R)
	PHE 622	Health & Social Inequalities (R)
	PHE 626	Teaching & Learning in Health Promotion & Social Work (P)
	PHE 634	Social Epidemiology Methods & Theory (P)
	HSMP 671	Health Policy (P)
	HSMP 673	Values and Ethics in Health (P)
3. Utilize pertinent research design, analytic methods, and interpretation of results to address timely research questions in the field of community health.	BSTA 611	Estimation & Hypothesis Testing (R)
	BSTA 612	Linear Models (R)
	CPH 636	Community Engagement (R)
	EPI 640.	Research and Proposal Design
	PHE 620	Qualitative Research Design (P)
	PHE 634	Social Epidemiology Methods & Theory (R)
	HSMP 671	Health Policy (P)
4. Evaluate the impact of social, cultural and contextual factors on health outcomes.	CPH 636	Community Engagement (R)
	ESHH 612	Global & Planetary Health Concepts (R)
	HSMP 681	Population Health: Policy and Practice Implications (P)
	PHE 622	Health & Social Inequalities (P)
	PHE 632	Developmental Origins of Health and Disease Epidemiology (R)
	PHE 634	Social Epidemiology Methods & Theory (P)
	PHE 626	Teaching & Learning in Health Promotion & Social Work (R)
5. Effectively disseminate Community Health knowledge and research findings to public, professional, and student audiences using multiple modes of communication.	PHE 620	Qualitative Research Design (P)
	PHE 623	Doctoral Seminar in Community Health (P)
	PHE 626	Teaching & Learning in Health Promotion & Social Work (P)
	CPH 636	Community Engagement (R)
6. Demonstrate ethical conduct and cultural competence in research design, analysis, dissemination, and critique.	CPH 636	Community Engagement (R)
	HSMP 673	Values and Ethics in Health (P)
	PHE 622	Health & Social Inequalities (R)
	PHE 634	Social Epidemiology Methods & Theory (P)
*(P) Indicates that the identified course is a primary source for the identified learning objective; (R) Indicates the course indicated is a reinforcing source for the identified learning objective. The variation in course credits reflects the options available for elective courses (3 or 4 credit courses). Students must ensure that at least 75% of their total course credits are at the 600 level in order to meet OHSU standards for a PhD program.		

5.3 Proposed Curriculum Plan for Full-time Students

The coursework aspect of the PhD curriculum is shown below with a suggested schedule for full-time students, making up the first three years of the program. During years 4 and beyond, students are expected to be enrolled only in dissertation credits (PHE 603), with a minimum of 27 credits required.

These are suggestions, given that students may take electives that require different timing, may enroll on a part-time basis, or may have other needs that require a different arrangement (e.g., taking *EPI 612 Epidemiology* or *PHE 511 Foundations of Public Health*). It is also possible that the scheduling time for some courses may change over the course of a student's enrollment. Thus, scheduling plans should be made with faculty advisor input and should take prerequisites and the ordering of courses into account.

	YEAR 1		YEAR 2		YEAR 3 (and beyond)	
	Courses and credits	Student actions	Courses and credits	Student actions	Courses	Student actions
Fa	PHE 623 – Doctoral Seminal (1 cr)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> o Attend SPH fall welcome o Meet with advisor o Meet with other PhD students o Attend quarterly potluck 	PHE 623 – Doctoral Seminal (1 cr)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> o Attend SPH fall welcome 	All the courses for Year 3 and beyond are elective, possibly reading and conference, and dissertation credits	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> o Check with advisor, PD to ensure all coursework is complete for comprehensive exams o Take comprehensive exam o Prepare dissertation proposal o Defend dissertation proposal o Conduct dissertation work o Develop 3 publishable / published manuscripts based on dissertation work o Defend dissertation
	PHE 612: Advanced Principles of Health Behavior (3 cr, F/S)		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> o HSMP 681 – Population Health: Policy and Practice Implications (3 cr) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> o Meet with advisor re: research funding 		
	PUBH 600 – Essentials of Doctoral Training (3 cr)		PHE 620 – Qualitative Research Design (3 cr)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> o Meet with other PhD students 		
	EPI 611 – Biostatistics 1 (4 cr)		PHE 622 – Health and Social Inequalities (3 cr)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> o Attend quarterly potluck 		
Wi	PHE 623 – Doctoral Seminal (1 cr)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> o Meet with advisor o Meet with other PhD students o Attend quarterly potluck 	PHE 623 – Doctoral Seminal (1 cr)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> o Meet with advisor re: research funding 		
	HSMP 671 – Health Policy (3 cr)		HSMP 673 – Values and Ethics in Health (3 cr)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> o Meet with other PhD students 		
	BSTA 612 – Linear Models (4 cr)		EPI 640 – Research and Proposal Design (3 cr)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> o Attend quarterly potluck 		
	Elective or selective (3-4 cr)		Elective or selective (3-4 cr)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> o Plan abstract for SPH Research Week 		
Sp	PHE 623 – Doctoral Seminal (1 cr)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> o Meet with advisor; begin discussing funding for future years o Meet with other PhD students o Attend quarterly potluck o Participate in SPH Research Week 	PHE 623 – Doctoral Seminal (1 cr)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> o Meet with advisor re: funding and comprehensive exam timing 		
	CPH 636 – Community-Based Participatory Research (3 cr)		PHE 632 – Developmental Origins of Health and Disease Epidemiology (3 cr)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> o Meet with other PhD students 		
	ESHH 612 – Global & Planetary Concepts (3 cr) OR elective or selective (3-4 cr)		PHE 634 – Social Epi Methods and Theory (3 cr)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> o Attend quarterly potluck 		
	PHE 626 – Teaching and Learning in Health Promotion and Social Work (3 cr)		Elective or selective (3-4 cr)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> o Present at SPH Research Week 		

NOTES – for non-MPH matriculating students: PHE 511 is offered only in the Fall, EPI 612 (with PD Messer) is also offered only in the Fall

5.4 Curricular Exceptions

Under rare circumstances, prior coursework can be transferred into a student's record and substituted for required or elective coursework. These requests for transfer and substitution should be submitted and approved by the time of the student's comprehensive exam. There is no guarantee these requests can be granted.

6.0 COMPREHENSIVE EXAM

The comprehensive exam is designed to test students' mastery of the learning objectives outlined for the PhD program in Community Health and their ability to apply that knowledge to research that demonstrates their readiness to move on to planning their dissertation work. Students must pass the comprehensive exam before they can proceed to writing and defending their dissertation proposal and subsequently advance to doctoral candidacy. The examination process involves both a written and an oral component. Details are described below.

6.1 Timing

The comprehensive exam will be scheduled only after all core required community health courses (36 credits), required methods courses (20 credits), and community health electives (at least 8 credits) have been completed. Methods elective courses (at least 6 credits) may be completed after the comprehensive exam. ***Timing for taking the comprehensive will typically coincide with the Winter term of the third year for full-time students.*** Timing may differ for some students; however, the comprehensive exam must be taken when the university is in regular session (excludes summer session) and the student must be registered during the quarter in which the exam is taken. Students should communicate with the Program Director and tell them they plan to take the comprehensive exam in the term prior to the term in which they will be taking it. Summer term is not an option for taking the exam or submitting forms. Students planning to take the exam in the Fall term should discuss this with the Program Director and file no later than Spring term.

In addition to it taking time for the student, it also takes time for the comprehensive exam committee to prepare the exams, so if a student hopes to take the exam early in a term, they should communicate this with the Program Director early in the prior term so there is sufficient time for the committee to be convened and prepare. Students are strongly encouraged to meet with members of that year's comprehensive exam committee at least one month prior to the scheduled exam to ask any question they may have about preparation and/or what to expect. The Program Director can tell the student(s) who is on the comprehensive exam committee each year. Students are responsible for scheduling both the written and oral portions of their exam with their comprehensive exam committee (see below). Given that faculty have busy schedules, it is advised that students schedule their exams well in advance.

6.2 Comprehensive Committee Composition and Duties

The committee is assembled by the Program Director and will serve as the committee for all doctoral comprehensive exams held during the academic year. The comprehensive exam committee is ideally made up of 3–4 faculty members, although the number of members may vary from year to year.

depending on faculty availability. The comprehensive exam committee is responsible both for writing and grading the comprehensive exams for the year; they also participate in the oral exam component.

6.3 Written Exam Component

The written portion of the exam requires a written response to a series of questions intended to evaluate mastery of the program learning objectives and doctoral coursework. Once students receive the examination questions from the Comprehensive Exam Committee, they have 9 days on a 24-hour clock to complete the exam, working off-campus at a location of their choice. The completed exam should be turned into the Program Director via email by the deadline provided

6.4 Oral Exam Component

The oral component of the exam should be scheduled approximately 1 week (and not exceeding 3 weeks) after the written exam, during the same academic term. The oral exam is in essence a defense of the written exam during which committee members may ask students to clarify portions of their written exam, answer follow-up questions related to their written exam, and otherwise provide evidence of their mastery of the concepts being tested. The oral portion of the comprehensive exam can be conducted in an in-person or remote format.

6.5 Comprehensive Exam Completion

When a student has passed the comprehensive exam, the committee and Doctoral Program Director will meet to evaluate the student's performance and assign a "pass" or "no pass" grade. In very rare cases, and *only* upon the Program Director's discretion and initiation (students may not request this option), students may be asked to revise a portion of their exam prior to receiving their results. Once exam results are finalized, the faculty advisor and Program Director will file a *Report on Comprehensive Exam* form. If a student fails the comprehensive exam, the student may repeat it during the next regular academic term (i.e. excluding summer term), no fewer than 10 weeks after the first attempt and no longer than 1 year after the first attempt. The results of the second attempt are final; if a student fails the second attempt, the student will not be allowed to continue in the doctoral program. Any issues that might result in the need for a longer period allowed between the first and second attempts should be brought to the attention of the Program Director, who will consider them on a case-by-case basis.

7.0 DISSERTATION PROCESS

The dissertation is the doctoral student's most substantial achievement—a significant body of research built upon immersion in the academic literature, informed theoretical reasoning, and original research and analysis, intended for an educated readership of one's peers. A student does not begin the formal dissertation process until they have completed all relevant coursework and successfully passed their comprehensive exam according to program requirements. The dissertation process consists of the key steps below (accompanying required forms shown in parentheses):

- Appointment of the dissertation committee (form: *Appointment of Dissertation Committee*)
- Scheduling defense of completed written proposal (form: *Dissertation Proposal Defense Request*)

- Dissertation proposal defense based upon written documentation and oral examination (form: *Dissertation Proposal Approval*)
- Advancement to candidacy after proposal defense (form: *Advancement to Candidacy*)
- Dissertation defense (form: *Dissertation Defense Approval*)

All forms must be submitted to the Program Director with required signatures.

7.1 Dissertation Committee

The dissertation committee guides the student through the dissertation process. The committee consists of 4-5 faculty, all of whom have relevant academic qualifications to serve on a dissertation committee (i.e. doctorally prepared). The committee is chaired by a core faculty member from the student's PhD program. At least one other faculty member must be an SPH primary or affiliated faculty; the third (and fourth possibly) must bring relevant expertise and be eligible for an SPH appointment.

One member of the committee (the fourth or fifth member) should bring a complementary perspective that will enrich the student's learning and must have topical or methodological expertise relevant to the student's research. This person could be based at PSU, OHSU, a health system, state government, or another university, and should be currently active (if emeritus or retired, justification of the appointment must be provided). This person is recommended by the student and the dissertation chair and the appointment is approved with the rest of the committee. This person reads all drafts and participates in the proposal and final defenses, but does not necessarily engage as heavily in editing, hours of advising, etc. (this will depend upon the individual's interests and time).

Students must complete the Appointment of Dissertation Committee form and obtain the appropriate signatures from faculty and the Program Director to officially appoint their committee. This process is required to ensure that an appropriate committee is convened with members that have experience either mentoring students through a dissertation or extensive research and publication experience. Good academic advice and mentoring will have a profoundly positive effect on the student's progress through the doctoral program, general intellectual development, and career prospects. Careful composition of the dissertation committee is essential to meet students' academic interests and facilitate successful completion of the dissertation. If a PhD student has concerns with due process during the dissertation, they should consult with their Program Director and then the Associate Dean Academic Affairs, as necessary.

The doctoral student's working relationship with the dissertation committee chair and other members is a function of the student's background and experience, the nature of the project, and the expertise of the faculty supervisors. Students work very closely with their committees, seeking guidance and feedback frequently throughout the process of research and writing. The dissertation chair provides considerable oversight and guidance, so careful selection of a chair is vital for the student and will help facilitate completion of the dissertation in a timely manner.

7.2 Dissertation Proposal and Defense

The dissertation proposal is intended to demonstrate the scientific merit and feasibility of a proposed doctoral dissertation research project that, upon completion, will substantially contribute to the Community Health field through three manuscripts that are ready and appropriate to submit for publication to peer-reviewed scientific journals. Through reviews and feedback of the dissertation committee on drafts of the written proposal document, the study design and focus of the research will be optimized before active dissertation research begins. When the dissertation committee is satisfied that the written proposal represents sufficient planning and background research that allows for a meaningful critique and oral defense, the dissertation committee will approve the student to move forward with scheduling the oral dissertation proposal presentation. The public oral defense of the dissertation proposal provides an additional opportunity for critique and suggestions from the dissertation committee as well as other faculty members, graduate students and members of the OHSU-PSU School of Public Health community. Students should meet with their faculty advisor and dissertation committee before beginning the writing process, and iteratively throughout the process to ensure that satisfactory progress is being made, and that the proposed research question and study design will be optimized prior to proposal defense.

The written proposal contains the following sections:

Specific aims and proposed methods for data collection, analysis, and interpretation:

This section must be in the format of the research section of an NIH research proposal (see [PHS 398 Instructions](#), Sections 5.5.2 on Specific Aims and 5.5.3 on Research Strategy), and will include the following sections:

- Title Page: 1 page
- Specific Aims: 1 page
- Research Strategy: 12 pages
- References: unlimited

Please also see <http://deainfo.nci.nih.gov/extra/extdocs/gntapp.pdf>, a helpful guide to writing an NIH grant—including suggestions for what to include in each section.

Status Statement on Human Subjects Protections and IRB status:

This statement should not exceed one page, single-spaced, and should report the status of the IRB application timeline and current status.

Preliminary plan for three manuscripts:

A table mapping each specific research aim to a proposed manuscript title, authorship list/order, and target journal for publication (see example on next page).

Preliminary Plan Example:

Research Aim	Tentative Manuscript Title	Authorship Plan	Potential Journal
1. Evaluate the relationship of measles immunization with measles incidence	The effect of immunization of measles incidence in the Democratic Republic of the Congo	1. Student's name 2. Dr. X 3. Dr. X	<i>Vaccine</i>
2.			
3.			

Oral Dissertation Proposal Presentation

When the doctoral committee is satisfied that that draft proposal represents sufficient planning and background research, students can schedule their defense of the dissertation proposal. The proposal defense is an oral presentation by the PhD student to their dissertation committee. The proposal defense centers around an oral presentation by the student to their committee, followed by questions from the committee. The intent is to determine that the student is adequately prepared to be advanced to candidacy and to complete the dissertation research and writing. The first portion of the defense is an open event. The latter portion is restricted to committee members, and the final discussion with the student. The dissertation proposal defense presentation must take place in the presence of the entire approved dissertation committee, although provisions may be made on a case-by-case basis by the Program Director in cases where faculty members are on sabbatical or are otherwise unavailable. The presentation period as a whole will last approximately 90 minutes, with the student presentation lasting 30 minutes, followed by 15 minutes for public questions, and 45 minutes for the closed Q&A session with the committee and doctoral candidate only and the period of discussion among the committee members. Students are responsible for scheduling the proposal defense.

7.3 Timing and Advancement to Doctoral Candidacy

The dissertation committee and Program Director will recommend the student for advancement to candidacy once the dissertation proposal has been approved.

Institutional Review Board (IRB) Approval

A student cannot complete their dissertation research until Human Subjects Institutional Review Board approval is obtained either at OHSU, at PSU with OHSU ceding oversight, or at another institution with OHSU ceding oversight as appropriate for the research project. In some cases of research with no human subjects, a waiver from the Institutional Review Board may be obtained instead, for qualifying research. The student must work with their advisor and dissertation committee on this, as often a faculty member is required to submit the materials. Students conducting human subjects research must also complete human subjects research training per IRB requirements.

7.4 Written Dissertation Format

It should be noted first that the dissertation must meet the formatting requirements of OHSU and the OHSU library. When/if any of the SPH criteria contradicts those criteria, the student should contact their

dissertation chair to discuss, keeping in mind that the OHSU criteria will always supersede those of the SPH when there is conflict. All OHSU and SPH procedures regarding formatting, submission, and SPH-level deadlines and forms for dissertation submission prior to graduation must be followed. The student is responsible for submission of the final manuscript to the OHSU library per university policy.

The CH dissertation is comprised of the following sections:

- Title page (required, this page does not carry a page number)
- Copyright Notice page (this page does not carry a page number). This page is required if you have registered for copyright; otherwise it is optional but recommended.
- Prefatory pages. The following pages are numbered with lower-case Roman numerals (i, ii, iii, iv, etc.). A page number must be printed on every page. Each of these sections must begin on the top of a new page.
 - Dedication (optional)
 - Acknowledgments (optional)
 - Table of Contents (required)
 - List of Tables (required if tables included in the dissertation)
 - List of Figures (required if figures included in the dissertation)
 - Glossary or List of Abbreviations/Symbols (required if Abbreviations and Symbols are used in the dissertation)
 - Preface (optional)
- Text of the Dissertation, divided into Chapters. Beginning with the first page of Chapter 1, all pages are numbered with Arabic numerals (1, 2, 3, etc.); this pagination continues to the end of the document. A page number must be printed on every page.
 - Chapter 1: Introduction and Research Aims
 - Introduction should be no more than 3 pages in length. This section should provide a cohesive justification for the body of research that makes up the dissertation. Students should look to the Background section of the dissertation proposal for guidance.
 - Research Aims should be no longer than 1 page in length (formatted as they would be for the Specific Aims section of an NIH grant and as they were for the dissertation proposal).
 - Chapter 2: Review of the Literature
 - The literature review should not exceed 30 pages and should address the overarching literature relevant for the body of work covered in the three research papers included in the subsequent three chapters. This section should demonstrate the cohesive nature of the student's work.

- Chapters 3-5 will be written in the form of three discrete manuscripts formatted as if they will be submitted to the American Journal of Public Health, except for reference sections. References for the entire dissertation will be provided in one cohesive terminal reference section. Formatting information for Chapters 3-5 can be found at http://ajph.aphapublications.org/userimages/ContentEditor/1432646399120/authorinstruction_s.pdf Note: References for the entire dissertation will be provided only once, in the Terminal Reference section of the dissertation.
 - Chapter 3: Research Paper #1
 - Chapter 4: Research Paper #2
 - Chapter 5: Research Paper #3
- Chapter 6: Synthesis of Research
 - This section should not exceed 20 pages and should draw conclusions from the body of research as a whole--including overarching themes, strengths and limitations, public health significance of the work, and future research directions.
- Footnotes or endnotes, if used
- Terminal references (references for all sections combined into one reference section, following a consistent way of formatting (e.g. the American Journal of Public Health, http://ajph.aphapublications.org/userimages/ContentEditor/1432646399120/authorinstruction_s.pdf) that is relevant to the student's field or plans for manuscript submission. If OHSU allows separate reference sections for each of the three body papers and the other sections, and the student prefers this approach, that is also acceptable.
- Appendices

7.5 Dissertation Defense and Degree Completion

After completion of the written dissertation, and with the dissertation committee's approval, the doctoral candidate will schedule the oral dissertation defense. A dissertation defense may be scheduled only during the regular academic terms, at least five weeks prior to the end of the term of anticipated graduation. For summer term graduation, deadlines apply to the regular eight-week Summer Session. Although students should be submitting drafts to their committee members in an iterative process of review and revision throughout their writing process, ***the student must deliver a completed final version of the dissertation to all members of the approved committee no fewer than two weeks before the dissertation defense.*** Students are responsible for scheduling the dissertation defense.

The dissertation defense is an oral presentation by the PhD candidate of the completed written dissertation. The oral defense lays out the purpose, implementation, and findings of the dissertation

project, and makes a case for the project's contribution to scholarship in the particular field of study. The presentation is directed mainly to the dissertation committee, who are expected to be present (physically or virtually). The oral dissertation defense is open to the public, and current doctoral students are strongly encouraged to attend (and others interested in the topic and/or wish to support the candidate by their presence). Following the public portion of the defense, the dissertation committee members question the candidate on the significance, limitations and implications of the work and findings. The defense is an open event, except for the committee's deliberations at the conclusion, which are restricted to committee members, and the final discussion with the student, which is restricted to the student and the committee. The presentation period as a whole will last approximately 2 hours, with the student presentation lasting 45 minutes, followed by 15 minutes for public questions, and 60 minutes for the closed Q&A session with the committee and doctoral candidate only and the period of discussion among the committee members.

The dissertation is accepted by the dissertation committee when there is no more than one dissenting vote after the dissertation defense. If there are two or more dissenting votes, the candidate will be given a second opportunity to defend the dissertation. The second defense may take place no sooner than one month and no later than six months after the first defense. If there are two or more dissenting votes at the second defense, the student fails the dissertation defense.

At the completion of the dissertation defense, the Committee members sign the **Dissertation Defense Approval** form, indicating any pending requirements and timing for pending revisions. The student is responsible for timely completion of such revisions and for submission of the final manuscript to the OHSU library.

The defense must be completed no later than the end of Week 6 in the academic quarter in which the candidate wishes to graduate. A defense that involves any PSU faculty who are on 9-month contracts may only be held in the regular academic terms (fall, winter or spring quarter). The final written dissertation is sent to the committee by the student at least two weeks before the scheduled defense. The candidate, with the consent of the committee, informs the PhD Program Director no later than four weeks in advance of the dissertation defense and works with administrative staff to prepare a public announcement that includes the dissertation abstract and information about timing and location of the defense. The dissertation abstract is due to the registrar's office two weeks before the dissertation date.

8.0 FINANCIAL SUPPORT

Different modes of funding, such as graduate research assistantship (GRA) positions or graduate teaching assistantships (GTAs) may be available but vary by year and by faculty funding. While the OHSU-PSU SPH seeks to identify and allocate as many assistantships as possible, it does not guarantee funding for students. Prospective and continuing students should discuss their needs and interest in these opportunities with the Program Director and relevant faculty early and often.