

**University of the Sciences in Philadelphia
Department of Health Policy and Public Health
Policies Regarding Degree Requirements**

**Adopted September 2007
Amended June 2009**

These policies supplement the Policies and Procedures of the College of Graduate Studies (COGS) with regard to rules and requirements that are specific to the Department. They do not supersede those Policies and Procedures, and in the event of any conflict, the Policies and Procedures govern.

I. Degree tracks

A. Enrollment in a track

The Department offers three degree tracks: MS (non-thesis), MPH, and PhD. Students may only be enrolled in one track at any time. Ordinarily, students may not enroll in a degree track until they have completed an undergraduate or first professional degree. Exceptions may be made in the case of formalized integrated undergraduate-graduate degree programs.

B. Transfer between tracks

Transfer between degree tracks may be at the student's initiative or the Department's and is subject to the approval of the applicable program directors. Except in exceptional cases as determined by the faculty, students enrolled in a master's degree must complete that degree before transferring to the doctoral track.

C. Joint degree programs

The Department may maintain joint degree programs with other departments in the University and with other Universities. Each maintains supplementary policies concerning its own specific rules and requirements.

II. Time limits for completing degrees

The Policies and Procedures of the College of Graduate Studies specify time limits for completing degrees, which are five years from date of matriculation for master's degree and eight years for doctoral degrees with a four-year limit for completing didactic coursework. Courses taken prior to matriculation or applied as transfer credits are not considered in calculating these timeframes. The timeframes are tolled when the student is on approved leave-of-absence status but not during semesters when the student is registered in absentia.

III. Transfer credits

A. Pre-matriculation credits taken at USP

Students may take up to 12 credits of didactic graduate-level coursework prior to matriculating, as long as the semester in which those courses were taken was no more than four years prior to the date of matriculation.

B. Credits earned at other universities or in other USP departments

Students may apply up to 12 credits of graduate-level didactic coursework earned at other universities or in other USP departments toward their degree, if the subject matter is sufficiently relevant as determined by the program director. The courses may be taken either prior to matriculating or concurrently. If taken prior, the semester in which the courses were taken must be no more than three years prior to the date of matriculation. Courses taken up to five years prior may be applied in the discretion of the program director. If a course being transferred covers similar material to a required course, the required course may be waived by the program director with an additional elective taken instead.

Credits earned toward a prior completed master's degree may be counted toward the Ph.D. Credits earned toward a prior completed doctoral or master's degree may not be counted toward the M.S. or M.P.H., except for didactic credits beyond the minimum required for the prior degree. Credits earned toward a prior completed bachelor's or first professional degree may not be counted toward any graduate degree, except for didactic credits beyond the minimum required for the degree that are at a graduate level.

C. Transferring between degree tracks or completing a second degree within the Department

Students may transfer between degree tracks. They may also enroll in a second degree after completing a first one, provided they are admitted after submitting an application for admission. Students initially enrolled in the M.S. or M.P.H. are expected to complete their degree before applying for admission to the Ph.D., absent extraordinary circumstances and permission of the program director. Students who complete the Ph.D. are not eligible to enroll in the M.S., absent extraordinary circumstances and permission of the program director, but they may apply for admission to the M.P.H. Students enrolled in the Ph.D. may transfer to the M.S. or M.P.H. before completing the Ph.D., either at their own initiative or at the initiative of the program director.

When students transfer between degree tracks or complete a second degree within the Department, they may count courses that they have already

taken toward the new degree beyond the limits for pre-matriculation and transfer credits described above. The following rules govern the number of courses required for the new degree and the time limits that will apply to completing the new degree. The exact courses that are required for the new degree will be determined by the student's advisor in consultation with the program director.

1. Time limits

Ph.D. after completing M.S. or M.P.H.

Students who enter the doctoral program after completing the M.S. or M.P.H. will have five years to complete the new degree from the date of matriculation, with a two-year limit for completing any additional didactic coursework that is needed. Should a student enter the doctoral program without completing a master's degree, he or she will have eight years from the date of original matriculation in the master's track.

M.S. or M.P.H. before completing Ph.D.

Students who transfer from the doctoral program to a master's program prior to taking the comprehensive examination will have five years to complete the new degree from the date of original matriculation in the Ph.D. Those who transfer after taking the comprehensive examination, whether or not they pass, will have two years from the date of transfer.

M.P.H. after completing Ph.D.

Students who enter the M.P.H. program after completing the Ph.D. will have three years to complete the new degree from the date they matriculate in it.

2. Transfer of credits

M.S. or M.P.H. to Ph.D.

Students who complete either a M.S. in Health Policy or M.P.H. before matriculating in the doctoral program must complete an additional 12 credits of didactic coursework, including all doctoral requirements not previously completed. The master's degree must have been completed no more than three years prior to matriculating in the Ph.D., unless the program director approves an exception.

Ph.D. to M.P.H.

Students who complete a Ph.D. before matriculating in the M.P.H. must complete an additional 12 credits of didactic coursework, including all M.P.H. requirements not previously completed. The

Ph.D. must have been completed no more than three years prior to matriculating in the master's program, unless the program director approves an exception.

Between M.S. and M.P.H. after completing one of them

Students who complete the M.S. or M.P.H. degree before matriculating in the other must complete an additional 12 credits of didactic coursework, including all degree requirements not previously completed. The M.S. or M.P.H. must have been completed no more than three years prior to matriculating in the other, unless the program director approves an exception.

Between M.S. and M.P.H. before completing one of them

Students who transfer between the M.S. and M.P.H. before completing the first degree will have five years from the date of original matriculation in the first degree track.

IV. Requirements applicable to the doctorate

A. Comprehensive examination

The following rules describe the structure of the comprehensive examination. They may be changed by the faculty upon notice of the change at least four months before the examination is administered.

1. Basic requirement

Doctoral students must pass all sections of the comprehensive examination within 14 months from the date they first take the examination, as specified in the COGS Policies and Procedures. Each section is considered separately in terms of grading.

2. Examination structure

The examination has three sections. The first covers general health policy. The second covers research methods. The third covers an area of specialization. Students will be provided with choices for specialization each year, which will be announced approximately four months prior to the examination.

3. Examination administration

The examination is administered on a take-home basis. It is distributed by the start of business on a Friday, and answers are due a week from the following Monday by the close of business. It is administered twice each academic year, once in the spring (May or June) and once in the winter (January or February). Students taking the examination for the first time must do so in the spring. If they fail one or more sections, the second administration is in the

winter. Only sections that have been failed must be retaken. If they fail a section or sections again, the final administration is the following spring.

For students entering the program as of fall 2009 and later

The examination is administered once each academic year in the spring (May or June). If a student fails one or more sections, he or she will have one chance to re-take that section or sections the following spring.

4. Examination rules

Students may consult any material that they wish in completing the examination, including books, articles, class notes, and outlines that they have prepared by themselves or with others prior to the distribution of the questions. However, they may not consult with anyone, whether fellow students or anyone else, once the questions have been distributed. Doing so is considered a form of cheating and can be grounds for receiving a failing grade and for dismissal from the program.

5. Grading

Examination answers are read by at least two graders, who are members of the Department faculty, including adjunct faculty. Occasionally, a USP faculty member from another department may be consulted on grading. A grade of pass, fail or honors is assigned based on the concurrence of the graders. In cases of disagreement, the opinion of a grader who has written a question will be given greater weight than that of the other graders. If concurrence is not reached, the program director may seek the input of an additional grader.

6. Consequences of not passing

Students who do not pass all sections of the examination within 14 months will not be permitted to continue in the doctoral program. They may, in the discretion of the program director, be permitted to transfer to a master's program.

B. Dissertation

1. Basic requirement

To earn a Ph.D., a student must complete a dissertation. This is a major scholarly project that demonstrates mastery of a subject area within health policy and that represents an original contribution to knowledge or understanding of that area. It is described more fully in the COGS Policies and Procedures.

2. Types of projects

Dissertations may involve empirical research or scholarly analysis. Research may be quantitative, qualitative, or based on a case study. The determination of whether a project meets the requirements for original scholarship is made by the student's advisory committee.

3. Research advisor and advisory committee

The rules concerning the student's research advisory and advisory committee are determined by the COGS Policies and Procedures.

4. Formal proposal

As part of the process of completing the dissertation, regardless of the nature of the project, students must complete a formal proposal. It should contain a description of the topic to be studied, a delineation of the research questions and hypotheses to be examined, a thorough review of existing relevant scholarly literature, and a discussion of the methods to be used in conducting the project. The proposal must be approved by the student's advisory committee and must include an abstract of no more than 500 words in length according to the COGS Policies and Procedures.

5. Defense

Students must defend their completed dissertation project orally according to the COGS Policies and Procedures.

C. Research credits

1. Number of credits

Students are required to successfully complete a minimum of 20 credits of HP899 - Doctoral Research in order to earn a Ph.D. according to the COGS Policies and Procedures. Credits are graded as satisfactory/unsatisfactory by the student's research advisor. At least one of these credits must be completed during the semester in which the dissertation defense occurs.

2. Continuing registration

Starting with the semester after completion of the comprehensive examination, students must register for at least one credit of HP899 during every semester in which they are matriculated until the semester in which they defend their dissertation. This includes fall, spring, and summer semesters. Students may substitute registration in absentia for up to one semester each academic year. Students may not register in absentia for two consecutive semesters without approval of their research advisor and program

director. These requirements do not apply while the student is on approved leave of absence status.