

DEPARTMENT OF ENVIRONMENTAL & OCCUPATIONAL HEALTH
COLLEGE OF PUBLIC HEALTH
UNIVERSITY OF SOUTH FLORIDA

GUIDELINES FOR THE PH.D

Mission Statement

The major mission of the Department of Environmental and Occupational Health is to establish a distinguished research program which merits a position of State and National preeminence for its accomplishments. Because of the diversity and special expertise of faculty, the research program has a distinctive character, and potential candidates should inquire about current research areas.

An equally important mission is to create a graduate teaching program in environmental and occupational health that attains recognition as a center of educational excellence. The Ph.D. and MSPH programs will achieve an acknowledged position of prominence in the State.

Guidelines for Acceptance into the Doctoral Program

- Student Background

Student seeking entrance into the program must have a clear career focus. They should have the educational training of sufficient breadth, a record of excellent achievement and an indication of potential (typically GPA of 3.0 and GRE 1100). Ideally the student should present a background of sufficient depth that he or she can function as a mature and self-directed professional in the area of public health. Requirements are described below:

- Education

1. Student should have a master's degree or higher, in public health or a related discipline, such as: health sciences, biological sciences, physical sciences or engineering. Prior research experience is desirable. Students with a bachelor's degree with excellent academic background and research experience may be considered. Students who do not have a prior degree in Public Health must take Epidemiology, Biostatistics and one other core as prerequisites to their doctoral coursework.
2. Faculty Sponsorship and Financial Resources:
The match between student and faculty is considered to be as important as the background of the student alone. There must be a faculty member willing to take the responsibility to provide guidance and supervision for the student before a student can be fully admitted. In addition, there must be financial resources available to support the student's doctoral research. Because of this, not all students who meet the basic criteria for admission will necessarily be admitted.

- Application and Admissions Process

Students applying for the Ph.D. in Public Health must submit their completed applications to the Graduate Admission Office. In addition to the application form, the College of Public Health admissions office will provide a supplementary admissions form, either with the application form or whenever the form is received in the College of Public Health admission office. Applicants to the doctoral program must meet the following minimum criteria in order to be considered for admission. However, the meeting of these criteria, per se, shall not be the only basis for admission.

Applicants must meet the following minimum criteria for consideration:

1. A score of 1100 or better on the GRE and a graduate grade point average of at least B (e.g. 3.0 on 4.0 scale) or better. Exceptional students with a bachelor's degree may be considered.
2. In order to be considered for admission to the Ph.D. programs in the Department of Environmental and Occupational Health, applicants must be prepared to register as a full-time student for at least one academic year. Students are expected to participate in the intellectual life of the department through interaction via seminars, interdisciplinary conferences and other activities. This expectation is of all doctoral students regardless of their status as full or part-time students.

3. Each applicant should submit evidence of written analytical skills to the college of Public Health. This shall be in two forms.
 - a. A project or term paper, a thesis, or a publication on which the student was first author; and
 - b. A detailed statement that describes why the applicant wishes to obtain the Ph.D. degree in public health. This statement must be less than 1000 words in length.
4. The completed application package will include a complete set of transcripts as well as at least two outside letters of recommendation submitted by individuals qualified to judge the applicant, and one letter of recommendation from a departmental faculty member.
5. Steps in the Application Process
 - a. Complete application Process
 - b. Complete supplementary information form and submit with evidence of writing/analytic skills to the College of Public Health Admission Office.
 - c. Have two outside letters of recommendation sent to the College of Public Health Admission Office.
 - d. Review by the Department Admissions Committee:
 - i. Determination of student eligibility.
 - ii. Determination of availability of resources (faculty advisors, research support).
 - iii. Applicants who are passed through these first two steps will be interviewed. This provides the students an opportunity to learn about prospective advisor(s) and to meet with the Department Admission Committee.
 - iv. Letter of Support and agreement to serve as advisor written by an eligible departmental faculty member and placed in the applicants file (serves as third letter of recommendation and obligates faculty member to provide or ensure financial support of students doctoral research).
 - e. Student is notified of acceptance or rejection and availability of advisors for the student. If more than one faculty member has volunteered to be the advisor, the student may schedule an additional meeting if needed to arrive at a final decision.

The final decision is based on:

- f. Qualification experience and References;
- g. Direction and areas of interest;
- h. Available faculty;
- i. Available resources.

Upon acceptance to the doctoral program in Public health, each student shall sign a letter of understanding regarding the five stages in the doctoral degree process:

1. Successful completion of a written plan of study which was approved by their doctoral committee (generally by the end of student's second full semester of study);
2. Successful performance on the comprehensive written and oral examination leading to doctoral candidacy;
3. Preparation and formal defense of a dissertation proposal;
4. Conduct of dissertation proposal;
5. Successful defense of dissertation; and
6. Successful completion of teaching proficiency as outlined by the doctoral committee.

Ph.D. Program

1. Doctoral Committee; Chair, Members through qualifying Examination; then Dissertation Committee

Upon a student's admission, the department chairperson will appoint the faculty sponsor as advisor. The student and Faculty advisor shall meet prior to the beginning of the first semester to identify courses taken during the first semester of study. By the end of the first semester, the doctoral committee must be formed. The Doctoral Committee will advise and approve the student's course of study administer and grade the written and oral qualifying examinations.

The Doctoral Committee will consist of at least four members including the adviser, three of whom must come from the Department of Environmental and Occupational Health. After passing the qualifying examination, the Dissertation Committee will be formed. The Doctoral Committee may continue to serve as Dissertation Committee. The Dissertation Committee will approve the student's plan of research, supervise the research, read and approve the dissertation, and conduct the dissertation defense. The Dissertation Committee will consist of at least four members including the advisor, three of whom must come from the academic area in which the major work for the degree will be done, with at least one member from outside the Department of Environmental and Occupational Health. All the members must be credentialed by the Graduate School.

2. Course of Study

A minimum of 90 semester hours (SH) beyond the bachelor's degree are required. During the first year of study, the student and the Doctoral Committee will agree upon a Planned Program of courses suitable to the student's research interest and which will provide the student the required competencies in the area of specialization. This Planned Program and any subsequent revisions must be filed with the College's Academic Office promptly. The student's course of study will include the following components:

o *Tools of Research*

Before a student becomes eligible to take the doctoral comprehensive qualifying examination, two of the "Tools of Research" selected and approved by the student's Doctoral Committee must be completed. Courses taken to fulfill "Tools of Research" requirements may not be credited toward the 90 SH requirement for the Ph.D. degree. The "tools of Research" requirement is interpreted broadly to allow the inclusion of a wide range of skills competencies relevant to the candidate's area of study. Suggested topics include foreign language, advanced courses in Computer Science, (Bio) Statistics, special practical training complimentary to the student's area of research and other appropriate courses. The Doctoral Committee will state clearly what is required, how it will be met, in what way it is appropriate for the student's course of study, as well as how proficiency/competency will be evaluated.

o *Prerequisites*

A minimum of Biostatistics I, Epidemiology, and one other college core course are required by all students who do not have a master's degree in public health. The doctoral committee or the department may require other prerequisites. These courses are not included in the minimum number of hours a student needs to complete the Ph.D. and are expected to be completed early in the course of study.

o *Seminars*

Doctoral students will be expected to participate in the departments' Interdisciplinary Conferences and shall present at least twice during their course of study. All doctoral students take a minimum of three semester (one credit per semester) of a college wide Advanced Interdisciplinary Seminar in Public Health (PHC 7931).

o *Required Course Work*

The courses and number of credit hours required are defined by the doctoral committee and may include course work from another department or college. There must be a minimum of 13 credits beyond at the 7000 level. Generally, the doctoral degree requires a minimum of 90 credits beyond the bachelor's degree. "Tools of Research" and Public Health Core Courses

are not included in this 90 credit requirement. The doctoral committee shall delineate in the plan of study the number of credits accepted from previous master(s) degree.

Qualifying Examination, Candidacy, and Dissertation Requirements

1. Qualifying Examination

The comprehensive qualifying examination is a means of:

- a. Having students demonstrate their mastery of knowledge and skills relevant to the discipline of study;
- b. Diagnosing knowledge deficiencies; and/or
- c. Fulfilling external requirements (i.e., mandate from College or University.)

The qualifying examination is administered by the Doctoral Committee when the student has met the following minimum conditions:

- d. Successful completion of all or most formal coursework, including the research tools; and
- e. Agreement between the doctoral student and the Doctoral Committee that the student is prepared for the qualifying examination process.

The content of the qualifying examination will be drawn from two broad areas. These two areas are:

- f. The broad field of Public Health with emphasis on Environmental and Occupational Health; and
- g. Understanding and knowledge in the major field of interest.

The comprehensive qualifying examination will have an oral component in addition to the written portion of the examination. The student must successfully complete the written portion of the qualifying examination prior to undertaking the oral portion of the exam. A student who is unsuccessful in the first attempt of the written portion will be given an opportunity to retest the written portion of the examination. A second failure of the written examination or of the oral examination will result in the student's dismissal from the doctoral program.

2. Admission to Candidacy

Students may not be admitted to candidacy until after a Doctoral Committee has been appointed and the Committee has certified that the student has successfully completed the qualifying examination and demonstrated the qualifications necessary to successfully complete the requirements of the degree. Following approval of Admission to Candidacy form, the Dissertation committee is formed and the student may enroll in Dissertation credits.

3. The Proposal, Dissertation, and Oral Defense

a. *The Proposal*

The student, in consultation with the doctoral dissertation committee, will agree upon a dissertation subject and develop a proposal, consisting of at least the following chapter:

- i.* Statements of the problem;
- ii.* Review of Pertinent Literature; and
- iii.* Methods.

The proposal shall be presented in a formal meeting including at least the Dissertation Committee. Before the proposal is presented, committee members shall sign a form indicating that they have read the proposal and approve it for presentation is not necessarily an endorsement of the proposal as a research plan.

b. *Dissertation*

Original research, dealing with a clearly identified contemporary problem in the selected discipline resulting in a direct contribution to the science, should constitute the key element of the dissertation. The formulation of a scientifically sound hypothesis, coupled with appropriate planning and execution of well designed experiments, followed by analysis of data leading to a solution of the problem is expected.

c. *Defense of Dissertation*

Scheduling of the final oral examination (defense of dissertation) should be by mutual agreement of the student and the dissertation committee, and in conformance with the scheduling requirements of the Graduate School. The dissertation defense will include a presentation of the results of the Dissertation Research which is open to interested faculty, students, and guests. The Chair of the examination committee shall be a distinguished scholar who is not a member of the dissertation committee, and is from outside the Department of Environmental and Occupational Health in accordance with College of Public Health Policy. The Dissertation Defense (examination) Committee Chair acts as a representative of the Graduate school to ensure that the Defense is both thorough and fair.

Teaching and Assistantships

1. Teaching

All Ph.D. candidates are required to teach as part of their training. The teaching experiences should include, but not be limited to:

- a. Presentation of seminars
- b. Assisting with class preparation
- c. Giving classroom lectures or presentations
- d. Presentation of research findings at local and/or national meetings.

Students entering the doctoral program with significant teaching experience at the University level may have all or part of this requirement waived or substituted by their committee.

2. Assistantships

The Department has a limited number of assistantships for Ph.D. students. Student should apply through the admissions office of COPH. Teaching and Research Assistants will have assigned duties associated with a particular course or project and the student's performance will be evaluated each semester by their faculty supervisor. Reappointment will depend on continuous satisfactory performance reviews and availability of funding.

Restriction on Release of Publication

See Graduate Catalog for details.

Responsibilities of Students

Students are expected to be familiar with the Graduate Catalog, department and college guidelines and pertinent documents that guide doctoral studies. The student is responsible for assuring appropriate forms are submitted on time. Forms and directions are available on the Web, in the Resource Center, or at the Office of Academic Affairs.