

# PUBLIC HEALTH SCIENCES: SPECIALIZATION IN HEALTH PROMOTION AND BEHAVIORAL SCIENCES (PHD)

## Doctor of Philosophy in Public Health Sciences, specialization in Health Promotion and Behavioral Sciences

Unit: School of Public Health and Information Sciences (<http://louisville.edu/sphis>) (GH)

Department: Health Promotion and Behavioral Sciences (<http://louisville.edu/sphis/departments/health-promotion-behavioral-sciences>)

Program Website (<http://louisville.edu/sphis/academics>)

Academic Plan Code(s): PHSCPHDHP

## Program Information

The PhD in Public Health Sciences, specialization in Health Promotion and Behavioral Sciences program at the University of Louisville, School of Public Health and Information Sciences is designed to prepare students for careers in higher education, upper level management positions in government and private nonprofit health agencies, and research positions with universities, government agencies and in the private sector. In addition to gaining a solid foundation in the theories and concepts of the discipline, students also achieve competency as independent researchers.

Students interested in health equity and social justice will benefit from the multidisciplinary background of our faculty. In our department, students are uniquely trained to approach complex social and public health issues using theories, methods, and strategies from across diverse disciplines. In addition, our faculty possess a breadth of expertise in various designs, methods, approaches, and subject matter areas to support students in their academic and professional pursuits. Located in the heart of a metropolitan area, our hands-on training strengthens the science and practice of public health, equipping our graduates to be leaders in a variety of settings.

Please refer to the Student Handbook for additional information.

## Competencies

By the end of the program, the successful student will be able to:

- *Demonstrate a social justice perspective in considering and being sensitive to issues that influence public health, health policy, and the delivery of health care;*
- *Appraise the role of structural, social, political, behavioral, and psychological determinants in producing and maintaining population health and health inequities;*
- *Apply and critically evaluate multi-level theoretical models of health and health behavior to understanding and intervening in societal, structural, community and organizational influences on public health issues;*
- *Demonstrate expertise in selecting and applying rigorous and ethical research methods to conduct research in the student's cognate area;*
- *Implement pedagogical techniques, with a focus on critical pedagogy, in the process of teaching and learning;*
- *Communicate effectively and clearly both orally and in writing, and present public health issues and research findings in their area of expertise to a variety of audiences; and*

- *Translate evidence into actionable information to develop and advocate for equitable policies and practices.*

It is expected that prior to graduation, students in the program have demonstrated these competencies by completing the curriculum, passing the qualifying exam, successfully defending the dissertation, and participating in collaborative research and service activities.

## Curriculum

The typical progression through the health promotion and behavioral science curriculum is:

- Required and elective coursework of 48 credit hours (years one and two)
- Qualifying examination (year three)
- Candidacy
- Dissertation research and preparation (within four years of entering candidacy)
- Oral examination / dissertation defense

## Faculty Advisor

The department will assign an academic advisor for each doctoral student upon admission. Upon matriculation in the program, each student will meet with his or her assigned advisor and develop a program of study, which will include courses in public health theory and principles, research design and statistics as well as selected cognate courses. The program of study will identify a set of courses for the development of competencies in areas of public health knowledge that are relevant to the student's area of interest. The program of study may be modified as the student's needs change or course availability is altered.

## Admission Requirements

Applicants should have a minimum GPA of 3.0 on a 4.0 scale and, in most cases, should have completed a master's or other graduate degree related to the theme of the doctoral program. Applicants who have a master's degree in a different discipline may be admitted with the stipulation that they complete foundation coursework during their enrollment for the doctoral degree. This coursework is in addition to the outlined curriculum and is negotiated with the student's academic advisor on a case-by-case basis.

- The formal application, curriculum vitae, personal statement, application fee, at least two letters of recommendation, official transcripts of all college work, and official scores on the Graduate Record Examination (GRE) General Test must be submitted to the Graduate School, Graduate Admissions (<http://louisville.edu/graduate/apply>).
- The personal statement should be a two-page essay which discusses the student's background in health promotion, why the student is attracted to the field, and how the degree helps the student reach his or her career goals. The student should also explicitly discuss their research interests. In addition, prior work experience relevant to the health promotion discipline is also considered as a factor in acceptance into the program.
- International students are required to submit TOEFL scores and a foreign credential evaluation of their transcripts. These are required no later than thirty days before the first day of classes of the semester in which the applicant plans to enroll.

For specific information about the degree specialization or the application process, students should contact the Director of the

PhD Program, Dr. Muriel Harris, at [muriel.harris@louisville.edu](mailto:muriel.harris@louisville.edu) or (502) 852-4061, or the Department Chair, Dr. Monica Wendel, at [monica.wendel@louisville.edu](mailto:monica.wendel@louisville.edu) ([Monica.wendel@louisville.edu](mailto:Monica.wendel@louisville.edu)) or 502-852-2305.

## Program Requirements

### Curriculum

Students with a Master of Public Health (MPH) and those with master's degrees from other disciplines may be admitted to the PhD program. Possessing an MPH degree provides evidence of the 12 Foundational Competencies for the PhD. For those students entering from other disciplines, students may be required to complete one or more of the MPH core courses for leveling purposes and to formally assess the 12 Foundational Competencies. The leveling courses include the MPH core courses, and they must be completed prior to beginning courses in the student's PhD degree plan.

The PhD curriculum consists of a minimum of 48 credit hours of course work and a dissertation.

### Coursework

Code	Title	Hours
<b>Foundational Requirements</b>		17
PHPB 701	Theoretical Basis of Health Promotion	
PHPB 703	Health Promotion Research Methods and Design	
PHPB 705	Policy to Advance Health Equity	
PHPB 709	Philosophy of Science & Evaluation Theory	
PHPB 710	Social Justice and Health Equity Research	
PHPB 750	Doctoral Seminar in Health Promotion & Behavioral Sciences	
<b>Methods &amp; Analysis</b>		15
PHST 501	Introduction to Biostatistics for Health Sciences II	
PHPB 711	Qualitative Research Methods in Public Health	
Additional courses in research design, instrumentation, and analysis (9 credit hours)		
<b>Teaching Seminar &amp; Lab</b>		1-3
PHPB 730	(required for all PhD students)	
PHPB 731	(optional for students wishing to gain teaching experience)	
<b>Cognate Area of Study</b>		15
Coursework determined by student and faculty advisor.		
<b>Dissertation</b>		as needed
<b>Minimum Total Hours</b>		48

### Qualifying Examination

Upon completion of all formal course work, students will take a written qualifying exam to demonstrate their ability to synthesize and apply concepts from those courses. Results will be given to students within six weeks of completion of the exam. The exam will be evaluated on a pass/fail basis; students who do not pass the exam on their first attempt will be given time to prepare to sit for the exam one additional time. The retake of the exam must be attempted within 6 months at a regularly scheduled exam date (February, July, or October) following the first attempt at the discretion of the specialization and in consultation with the student. If a student fails to pass on the second attempt, the student will be dropped from the program. Once the qualifying exam is

successfully completed, students will be admitted to candidacy for the doctoral degree.

See Student Handbook for additional information.

### Dissertation

A dissertation, based on original research conducted by the student, is required of a candidate for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy in Public Health Sciences with a specialization in Health Promotion and Behavioral Sciences. The dissertation is to be a scholarly achievement that demonstrates the student's ability to conduct independent research and a thorough understanding of research principles, concepts, and techniques in health promotion. The dissertation must follow the guidelines of the Graduate School (<http://louisville.edu/graduate/current-students/thesis-dissertation-information>).

See Student Handbook for additional information.

#### Dissertation Committee

The student's dissertation research will be guided by, and the final product approved by a Dissertation Committee. The Chair of the Committee, who must come from within the department, will be appointed by the Dean of the School of Public Health and Information Sciences upon the advice of the Chair of the Department of Health Promotion and Behavioral Sciences.

The Dissertation Committee shall consist of at least four members to a maximum of six members. The Chair of the Committee and at least one other committee member must be from the department. At least one of the additional members must be from outside of the department. Students are encouraged to meet with their committee chair regarding prospective committee members who will mentor them throughout this process. A committee member must have a doctoral degree, be credentialed to teach graduate-level courses relevant to the degree, and have recent involvement in research, scholarship, or creative activity within the previous five years. The Dean of Academic Affairs at SPHIS must approve the members to serve on the committee. The Committee will subsequently be approved by the School of Public Health and Information Sciences.

#### Dissertation Proposal

The student will work with the Dissertation Committee and especially with the Chair throughout the process of preparing their Dissertation Proposal. The student will schedule meetings to present their dissertation proposal for approval once it has been reviewed by members of the committee. The final oral defense of the dissertation must be completed within four years of entering candidacy after passing the Qualifying Exam.

#### Dissertation Defense

Once the student has completed work on the dissertation, the student will schedule a date with his/her Dissertation Committee for the final oral examination during which the student will defend the dissertation. The dissertation must be approved by the committee and the Chair of the Department by majority vote before it can be submitted to the Graduate School. The defense is a public event to which members of the University community will be invited as well as those the student worked with on the project.

#### Dissertation Preparation

The dissertation copy must follow the guidelines of the Graduate School (<http://louisville.edu/graduate/current-students/thesis-dissertation-information>).

**Dissertation Submission**

The following steps must be taken to submit the final copy of the dissertation electronically after oral defense and approval of the committee:

1. Final document must be converted to a PDF (following the guidelines as noted above) and sent to the Graduate School and the department's administrative assistant.
2. Submit through the ThinkIR (<https://ir.library.louisville.edu>) repository.
3. The signature page within the electronic version must have the names of your committee members typed under the signature line; the signatures cannot be scanned into the document.
4. Submit a signed signature page on white paper, with original signatures, to the Graduate School.