

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/departments/hpbs/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 foundational coursework during their enrollment for the doctoral degree. This coursework is in addition to the outlined curriculum and does not count towards the credit hours required for the program. Additional coursework is negotiated with the student's academic advisor on a case-by-case basis.

The application, curriculum vitae, personal statement, application fee, three professional or academic letters of recommendation, official transcripts of all college work, and academic writing sample must be submitted through the UofL Graduate School (<https://louisville.edu/graduate/futurestudents/apply-materials/application/>).

International applicants are required to have a foreign credential evaluation for each degree not from an accredited U.S. institution.

The personal statement should be a one- to two-page essay and address the following:

- Discuss your academic and personal background. Explain what attracts you to the field of public health and health promotion.

- Describe your experiences with research, including your role in conducting research and designing research products (i.e., papers, presentations, reports, etc.).
- Discuss your research interests and explain the role health equity and social justice play in framing your research. Describe the type of research you would like to pursue if admitted into the program. Describe any other personal or professional experiences you believe are relevant.
- Explain your long-term career goals and how a PhD in public health sciences will help you reach these goals.

International students for whom English is not their primary language must show English language proficiency by one of the following:

- Test of English as a Foreign Language (TOEFL) score of at least 79 (internet).
- Official IELTS score of at least 6.5 overall band score from the academic module exam.
- Official Duolingo overall score of 105.
- Demonstrate an accredited degree awarded by an acceptable institution which uses English as the primary language of instruction.

For specific information about the degree specialization or the application process, students should contact the HPBS Department Coordinator at sphpbs@louisville.edu.

Application Deadline

Fall semester – March 1 (International applicants); March 31 (Domestic applicants).

Applications received by December 31 will receive first consideration for admission and funding. Those received after December 31 will be considered based on availability of space in the program.

Spring semester - Applications are not accepted.

Summer semester – Applications are not accepted.

Program Requirements

Curriculum

Students with a Master of Public Health (MPH) and those with master's degrees from other disciplines may be considered for admittance to the PhD program. An MPH degree from a CEPH-accredited school or program of public health verifies assessment of the required 12 Foundational Public Health Knowledge (FPHK) Competencies for the PhD. Students with some public health background or a Master of Public Health from a non-CEPH-accredited school or program of public health, if admitted, will be required to take PHPH 523 to verify assessment of the FPHK competencies.

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

Academic Standing

To maintain good academic standing in the PhD in PHS, Specialization in Health Promotion and Behavioral Sciences program, students must maintain a cumulative GPA of 3.0 or higher for all coursework in the program. A student must be in good academic standing in order to receive the degree.

Any PhD in PHS, Specialization in Health Promotion and Behavioral Sciences student with a program cumulative GPA below 3.0 will be placed in probationary status. Any student who remains in probationary status for two consecutive terms may be considered for dismissal from the program.

Coursework

Code	Title	Hours
Foundational Requirements		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 ¹	
Methods & Analysis		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)		
Teaching Seminar & Lab		1-3
PHPB 730	Teaching Seminar in Health Promotion and Behavioral Sciences (required for all PhD students)	
PHPB 731	Teaching Lab in Health Promotion and Behavioral Sciences (optional for students wishing to gain teaching experience)	
Cognate Area of Study		15
Coursework determined by student and faculty advisor.		
Dissertation		as needed
Minimum Total Hours		48

¹ Students are required to register for four semesters of PHPB 750 Doctoral Seminar in Health Promotion & Behavioral Sciences at one-half (.5) credit hour each while pursuing doctoral coursework. The full course is completed over four semesters, with students producing a complete professional portfolio of materials annually.

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. The document is submitted as advised by the Graduate School through the ThinkIR repository. The directions on submission will be provided upon review of the dissertation by the Graduate School.
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, digital/electronic signature page (<http://louisville.edu/graduate/current-students/thesis-dissertation-information/>) can be found on the Graduate School web-site.