



**Department of  
Public Health Sciences**

**PhD Program in Prevention Science and  
Community Health**

**Doctoral Student Handbook  
2024 - 2025**

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## Graduate Programs in Public Health: Mission, Values, and Goals

### Mission

The mission of the Graduate Programs in Public Health is to develop leaders who can generate and translate knowledge into policy and practice to promote health and prevent disease in human populations.

### Values

The values of the Graduate Programs in Public Health support our mission and guide our collective daily activities. They include:

- **Physical and Mental Health and Well-Being:** A fundamental right of every human being.
- **Health Equity:** A commitment to ensure the health of all populations, including the most vulnerable and underserved.
- **The Freedom of Inquiry:** To think, to question and to challenge form the basis for all our educational, research, and service activities.
- **Diversity, Inclusion, and Mutual Respect:** Promote and celebrate individual and collective distinctions among our students, staff, faculty, and community partners.
- **Personal and Professional Integrity:** Ethical behavior guides the activities of our students, staff, faculty, and community partnerships.
- **Community and Organizational Partnerships:** Participatory collaboration with diverse and fully engaged stakeholders to promote health and social change.

### Goals

- To provide engaging educational opportunities preparing leaders to maximize the health and well-being of individuals, communities, and populations.
- To mobilize a diverse student body to address complex public health issues, including issues affecting vulnerable and underserved populations.
- To nurture an inclusive environment in which students are supported as they attain the knowledge, competencies, and values of public health.
- To promote instructional innovation and faculty advancement in teaching.
- To foster an environment in which students and faculty engage and collaborate on rigorous scientific investigations addressing public health issues, with an emphasis on vulnerable and underserved populations.
- To engage with communities, professionals, leaders, and others as partners in improving the health of populations, including the most vulnerable and underserved.
- To develop and maintain infrastructure, resources and technologies that are adequate to support faculty, staff, and students as they work to accomplish the mission of the public health program.

### **University of Miami – Title IX. Notice of Nondiscrimination**

The University of Miami does not discriminate on the basis of sex and prohibits sex discrimination in any education program or activity that it operates, as required by Title IX and its regulations, including admission and employment.

Inquiries about Title IX may be referred to the University of Miami’s Title IX Office, the US Department of Education’s Office for Civil Rights, or both. The University of Miami’s Title IX Coordinator information is as follows:

University’s Title IX Office  
Maria Sevilla, Title IX Coordinator  
6200 San Amaro Drive, Ste. 230 Coral Gables, FL 33146 Telephone: 305-284-8624  
Email: [titleixcoordinator@miami.edu](mailto:titleixcoordinator@miami.edu) Website: [www.miami.edu/titleix](http://www.miami.edu/titleix)

The nondiscrimination policy and grievance procedures can be located at [titleix.miami.edu](http://titleix.miami.edu), under the “Policies and Procedures” tab.

To report information about conduct that may constitute sex discrimination or make a complaint of sex discrimination under Title IX, please contact the Title IX Coordinator or file an online report at [titleix.miami.edu](http://titleix.miami.edu).

### **Program Competencies**

Upon completion of the Doctorate in Prevention Science and Community Health (PSCH) degree, all graduates will be able to:

- Development and implement data collection/management methods and tools needed for prevention science and community health research.
- Apply advanced methods to the measurement and study of population health and the prevention of infectious, noncommunicable, and chronic disease.
- Articulate research questions that advance scientific knowledge and develop a proposal for extramural research funding.
- Design and adapt a preventive intervention based on available etiological research.
- Master principles of designing, conducting, and analyzing data from experimental and quasi-experimental trials of preventive interventions.
- Master techniques for designing and carrying out procedures for translating and implementing evidence-based interventions into practice.
- Apply state-of-the-science statistical methods and manage/manipulate data sets in statistical software such as SPSS, SAS, *Mplus*, and R.
- Conduct prevention science research and be prepared to work collaboratively with scientists and practitioners in other fields.

## Introduction

Welcome to the Doctoral program in Prevention Science and Community Health! As a Doctor of Philosophy (PhD) student in prevention science and community health, you will need to familiarize yourself with procedures and requirements that are set forth by both our Department, the Miller School of Medicine's Office of Graduate Studies, and the University of Miami's Graduate School. This student handbook is meant to serve as an introduction and basic overview of these requirements as well as provide information on communications and logistics to ensure your success as a student. It is important to note that, although this handbook is meant to provide you with basic information and general requirements of the doctoral program, it is not intended to be used in isolation. Rather, this handbook should be used in conjunction with the UM Graduate School bulletin. In this regard, it is also highly recommended that you become familiar with the information that is on our Program website,

<https://graduatestudies.publichealth.med.miami.edu/academic-programs/doctoral-degrees/phd-prevention-science-and-community-health/index.html>, as well as the information on the University of Miami Graduate School's website, located at <https://www.grad.miami.edu>. Many of the required forms (e.g., admission to candidacy, certificate of defense, and formatting of the dissertation) to be completed during your doctoral program can be found on this site. <https://www.grad.miami.edu/policies-and-forms/index.html>.

## Student Responsibility

All graduate students at the University of Miami are subject to the general standards and requirements of the University and its various departments regarding attendance, examinations, payment of fees, and conduct, as well as to the specific requirements of the Graduate School. The graduate student is expected to assume the initiative in completing all requirements at the time specified.

To preserve its ideals of scholarship, conduct, and character, the Graduate School reserves the right and the student by his/her registration concedes the right to require the withdrawal of any student for any reason deemed sufficient by the Graduate School at any time.

It is the responsibility of the student to be informed concerning all regulations and procedures required. In no case will a regulation be waived, or an exception granted, because a student pleads ignorance of the regulation or asserts that he/she was not informed of it by an advisor or other authority. The student should become familiar with the [Academic Bulletin](#), including:

1. The section presenting the requirements for the degree to be undertaken.
2. The offerings and requirements of the major department.
3. The Graduate Student Honor Code.

**All graduate students are required to sign the acknowledgement and receipt form contained in [Appendix A](#) of the Prevention Science and Community Health Student Handbook which provides a web link to the [Prevention Science and Community Health Student Handbook](#), the [Graduate School Honor Code](#) and the [Academic Bulletin](#).**

## Graduate Student Honor Code

The Graduate Programs are committed to fostering an environment that supports the promotion of public health values and is conducive to professionalism and ethical standards for the responsible conduct of science and education. In addition to the values listed on page 3 of this Handbook, graduate students agree to abide by the [Graduate Student Honor Code](#).

The University of Miami expects all graduate students to adhere to the highest standards of ethics and academic integrity. All forms of academic fraud are strictly prohibited. These include but are not limited to

plagiarism and/or cheating (whether it be in an examination, dissertation, thesis, research paper, research project, form of creative expression, experimental data, or any other academic undertaking) submitted for evaluation, presentation, or publication meets these standards.

Plagiarism is explicitly outlawed at the University of Miami Miller School of Medicine, and each student who enters our programs signs a statement acknowledging this fact. **All students will be asked to sign and return the Acknowledgement of Plagiarism Policy located in Appendix B of this Handbook.** Students who are found to have plagiarized may be asked to withdraw from their degree program. Plagiarism is not always easy to define; students who are unsure whether a particular practice is acceptable are urged to discuss the issue with the faculty instructor or mentor.

Additionally, graduate students are expected to respect and appreciate the diversity of the community and to respect the rights of others, be they property, privacy, opinion, or expression. Students found to be in violation of these standards are subject to disciplinary actions by the student's program and/or the Graduate School through the process described in [the Graduate Student Honor Code](#). All graduate students are bound by the rules and regulations of the University of Miami that apply to them.

### Policy on Artificial Intelligence (AI)

The University of Miami encourages the responsible and ethical use of AI tools to enhance learning, productivity, and creativity. While ChatGPT and other Generative Artificial Intelligence (AI) software can be valuable for brainstorming, information retrieval, and content creation, students are reminded of the inherent limitations of such tools. It is crucial to acknowledge that the internal processes generating AI output are not transparent, and biases may exist due to data harvested from unknown online sources. In light of these considerations, the following principles guide the use of AI among graduate students:

- **AI as an Aid, not a Replacement:** AI should assist in thinking, framing problems, and conducting research, serving as a starting point for personal analysis and discovery. Students should not use AI to complete assignments unless given explicit permission by faculty and must not present AI-generated responses as their own work.
- **Transparent Use of AI:** If allowed by faculty, students must openly declare and explain how AI has been used in their work. Undeclared use of AI, including text, images, or code, may be considered plagiarism.
- **Responsible and Ethical Engagement:** Students should engage with AI responsibly, critically evaluating outputs for biases and ethical implications.
- **Student Responsibility for Final Product:** Students bear full responsibility for the accuracy and credibility of AI-generated content. Any mistakes made by the AI tool become the responsibility of the user. Students should verify information, attribute ideas, and adhere to specific guidelines provided by faculty.
- **Guideline Variability/Class Specific Expectations:** The principles outlined apply unless specific guidelines for an assignment or exam are provided by the instructor. Students must be aware of variations in rules governing AI use across classes and disciplines. Staying informed about instructors' expectations and seeking clarification when needed is the student's responsibility. Course policies might fall into one of three categories:
  - Specific uses of AI are encouraged (generating ideas, editing, translating, outlining)
  - Specific uses of AI are allowed if students clearly distinguish between their original work and AI output (highlighting output, tracking changes in AI output)
  - Any use of AI constitutes academic misconduct.

- **Confidential Data Handling:** Students MUST refrain from entering confidential, personal, or patient data (HIPAA) into generative AI tools to avoid potential loss and/or compromise of important information. This precaution aligns with the Responsible and Ethical Engagement described above.

AI is rapidly evolving as a tool. As it evolves, the University will revisit, and update policies related to AI as needed. UM emphasizes the importance of the ethical and responsible use of AI as an integral part of medical education. Non-compliance with these principles may result in a breach of the Academic Integrity Policy and the consequences therein.

### **Graduate Programs Governance and Committee Membership**

The Graduate Programs consist of several faculty and administrative committees that review all elements of the master's and doctoral programs. Committees include the Admissions Committee, the Curriculum Committee, the Graduate Administration and Operations Committee (GAOC) and the Graduate Executive Policy Committee (GEPC).

The Admissions Committees are composed of select voting faculty members and are responsible for reviewing and voting on all graduate program applications for the MPH, MSPH, MS BST, MS CH, MS PSCH, and PhD programs in biostatistics, epidemiology, and prevention science.

The Curriculum Committee is composed of DPHS faculty, program administration staff, and student representatives (master's and doctorate level). The primary mission of the Curriculum Committee is to work cooperatively with faculty and students in its continuous efforts to improve and facilitate the teaching of public health, biostatistics, epidemiology, prevention science, and related fields within the Department of Public Health Sciences, the University of Miami Miller School of Medicine, our accrediting agencies, and the South Florida community.

The Graduate Executive Policy Committee (GEPC) and the Graduate Administration and Operations Committee (GAOC) consist of select faculty members and program administration staff. The GEPC oversees policies, decisions, and procedures of the Admissions Committees, Curriculum Committee, and the Graduate Programs' operations.

### **Photography/Video Release**

During the course of the year, you may be photographed or video-taped at various University sponsored events. With your consent, the photograph or video may be released for use on the Department of Public Health Sciences' webpage, social media pages, brochures, newsletters, or other media. These materials will be used primarily to highlight our Department's student activities and successes. Please acknowledge consent of use of photography on **Appendix C**.

### **Stages in the Doctoral Degree**

After admission to the Doctoral Program, there are two major stages in your program to be completed prior to obtaining your PhD degree. These stages are *Pre-Candidacy* and *Candidacy*. Lack of progress throughout the program without documented reasons may be grounds for program dismissal.

## Pre-Candidacy

As a pre-candidate, your major tasks are to complete the departmental course requirements, and successfully pass the Qualifying Examination (in-class, take-home, oral, and biostatistics) requirements. You must also write a qualifying paper that is suitable for publication in a reputable peer-reviewed journal.

## Candidacy

As a Candidate, your major tasks are to: (1) develop (and have approved by your dissertation committee) a written dissertation proposal that describes your research plan, (2) execute your research plan, (3) successfully present and defend your dissertation to your dissertation committee, and (4) receive your dissertation committee's approval for the dissertation. The dissertation will consist of three publishable manuscripts on a single topic, with an introductory chapter that introduces and connects the three chapters. You are strongly encouraged to submit these papers for publication, with collaboration from your dissertation committee.

In general, the doctoral program takes a total of 4-5 years to complete if you entered the program with a Master of Public Health degree (or other relevant master's degree). The time frame needed to complete the degree largely depends on how soon you complete and pass your qualifying examinations, complete your Dissertation Proposal, and complete your Dissertation. Although this time frame differs for every student, a typical timeline might be: completion of pre-candidacy course work by the end of Year 2 (end of spring semester); completion of the qualifying paper and exam by the end of Year 2 (second summer semester); dissertation committee formation by the end of fall semester Year 3; dissertation proposal end of spring semester Year 3; and completion of the dissertation, including the final oral defense and written document, by the end of Year 4 or the beginning of Year 5.

## Time Limits for Degree Completion

A student must complete the qualifying paper and examination within 3 years from the date of original enrollment. The program must be completed within 8 years from the date of original enrollment.

## Steps for Advancing to Candidacy

The process of transitioning from pre-candidate to candidate is referred to as *advancing to candidacy*. The four primary requirements for advancing to candidacy are: (1) placement with one or more faculty mentors to work on research projects, (2) acquiring the necessary number of Departmental course credits, and (3) successfully submitting the qualifying paper, and (4) passing the Qualifying Examinations.

## Requirement 1: Working with Faculty Mentors

During the first year of the Prevention Science and Community Health (PSCH) PhD program a primary faculty mentor from PSCH Division will be identified through mutual agreement between the student and the PSCH PhD Program Director. Each incoming student will be required to complete three placements during her/his first year of the program, with a desire for each placement being with a different UM faculty member. The first placement will last from August through December, the second from January through May, and the third from May through August, corresponding generally to the semester calendar. Primary faculty mentors do not necessarily have to be housed within the PSCH Division, or even within the Department of Public Health Sciences; **however, it is very important that the student maintain direct ongoing communication with the PSCH PhD Program Director when the primary faculty mentor is from outside the PSCH Division.** In such cases, it is recommended that the student identify a secondary mentor from within the PSCH Division. Upon request by the student and primary faculty mentor, a student may



stay in the same research placement (i.e., “lab”) for the second and/or third placements; however, it is requested that the student work on a different research project or study question for each placement. Following their first year in the program, students will be required to identify a permanent primary faculty mentor. This mentor can be, but does not have to be, a faculty member in the Department of Public Health Sciences.

During each placement, students will be expected to participate in research within the faculty mentor’s research program(s). This research participation can include (but is not limited to) participating in data collection, observing intervention activities (where applicable), preparing human subjects protections protocols, collaborating on statistical analyses, and preparing manuscripts and grant proposals. Placements are intended to immerse students within a variety of research projects, to familiarize them with the research process, and to help them select the research project that they would like to work in for the remainder of their PhD studies. **The student and primary faculty mentor are expected to sign a contract that lists the deliverables and expectations for the rotation period. This contract will also be signed by the PhD Program Director.** Changes in the terms of the contract must be agreed upon by the student and the primary faculty mentor and approved by the PhD Program Director. Disputes between students and faculty mentors will be handled by the PhD Program Director and the Director of Graduate Studies. Disputes must be initiated in writing and will be granted a formal hearing.

### **Requirement 2: Completing the Course Requirements**

As a Pre-Candidate, a total of 59 course credits must be completed. Students must continually maintain a GPA of 3.0 over all courses. A student will be notified that he/she is not making sufficient progress if his/her cumulative GPA falls below 3.00 in any semester or if a single grade below a “C” is obtained in any course. Notification will be given by written letter from the Graduate Programs Office immediately following the close of the deficient semester. The cumulative GPA must be raised to at least a 3.00 by the end of the next semester in which registration occurs or the student will be required to withdraw from the Graduate Program. No more than two summer sessions or one fall/spring semester may pass without registration once a student has been placed on academic probation.

A minimum of 2 biostatistics courses (i.e., EPH 601, EPH 602) at the master’s level are required prior to entering the doctoral program. In certain circumstances, students who do not meet these requirements will have to complete them after being admitted to the doctoral program (which will increase the duration for completing the doctoral program) with a special waiver by the PSCH PhD Program Director. **Pre-requisite coursework completed during the doctoral program (i.e., EPH 601, EPH 602) will not count as accumulated credit toward completion of the PhD degree. Coursework completed in a previously earned degree cannot count for credit towards earning the PhD degree.**

In addition, based on Council on Education for Public Health (CEPH) accreditation requirements, students entering the PSCH PhD program without prior and approved public health training are required to complete EPH 600 Introduction to the Science and Practice of Public Health during their studies. Credits from this course will not count as accumulated credit toward completion of the PhD degree.

### **Coursework requirements for the doctoral program include:**

#### Year 1, Fall

- EPH 617 Introduction to Disease Prevention and Health Promotion (3 credits)
- EPS 622 Community Well-being and Change: Theory and Practice  
(currently substituting EPH 651 Introduction to Research Methods (3 credits)
- EPH 656 Qualitative Research Methods (3 credits)

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EPH 700 Professional Development Seminar Series (1 credit)  
EPH 703 Advanced Statistical Methods I (4 credits)

Year 1, Spring

EPH 626 Health Equity (*currently substituting EPH 625 Ethics in Public Health*) (3 credits)  
EPH 700 Professional Development Seminar Series (1 credit)  
EPH 705 Advanced Statistical Methods II (3 credits)  
EPH 717 Integrating Behavioral Health Theories and Models into Prevention Science (3 credits)  
Elective #1 (3 credits)

Summer Semester

EPH 604 Clinical Trials (3 credits) (Summer A) (*Note: can be completed in Summer A in Year 2*)  
EPH 623 Determinants of Health and Health Disparities Across the Life Course (3 credits) (Summer A)

Year 2, Fall

PSY 633 Structural Equation Modeling (or EPS 673 Intro to Structural Equation Modeling for Multivariable Data; or NUR 679 Applied Advanced Statistics: Structural Equation Modeling (3 credits)  
EPH 700 Professional Development Seminar Series (1 credit)  
EPH 731 Designing and Adapting Preventive Interventions (3 credits)  
Elective #2 (3 credits)  
Elective #3 (3 credits)

Year 2, Spring

PSY 634 Multilevel Modeling  
(*currently substituting BST 650 Longitudinal & Multilevel Data Analysis or equivalent*)  
(3 credits)  
EPH 700 Professional Development Seminar Series (1 credit)  
EPH 732 Introduction to Dissemination and Implementation Science (3 credits)  
EPH 647 Community Based Participatory Research and Social Network Analysis (3 credits)  
EPH 752 Advanced Research Methods (3 credits)

Year 2, Summer

Qualifying Exam takes place during the summer of Year 2.

Year 3, Fall

EPH 830 Doctoral Dissertation (pre-candidacy) or EPH 840 Doctoral Dissertation  
(post-candidacy)  
EPH 701 Innovations in Prevention Science Methodology (1 credit)

Year 3, Spring

EPH 830 Doctoral Dissertation (pre-candidacy) or EPH 840 Doctoral Dissertation  
(post-candidacy)  
EPH 701 Innovations in Prevention Science Methodology (1 credit)

Year 4, Fall

EPH 830 Doctoral Dissertation (pre-candidacy) or EPH 840 Doctoral Dissertation  
(post-candidacy)  
EPH 701 Innovations in Prevention Science Methodology (1 credit)

#### Year 4, Spring

EPH 830 Doctoral Dissertation (pre-candidacy) or EPH 840 Doctoral Dissertation (post-candidacy)

EPH 701 Innovations in Prevention Science Methodology (1 credit)

#### **Electives can include:**

COM 698 Using Communication to Change Health & Environmental Behavior: Theory & Practice

EPS 674 Introduction to Multilevel Modeling

EPH 652 Health Policy

EPH 628 Social Epidemiology

EPH 626 Methods of Environmental Epidemiology

CTI 601 Introduction to Clinical and Translational Research

CTI 602 Writing for Translational and Clinical Science

PhD Courses from DPHS Epidemiology or Biostatistics programs

PhD courses from Community Well-Being, Developmental, Clinical, or Health Psychology programs

Other courses as determined by advisor.

*Note:* Depending on availability or by advice from the PSCH PhD Program Director, some courses may be offered or taken out of sequence.

*Note:* PhD students should not take master's-level elective courses. Our experience is that these courses are not rewarding for PhD students.

*Note:* PhD students cannot use their tuition fellowship to take undergraduate or language courses. Other restrictions in course selection may apply.

All structured courses toward the PhD program must be taken for a letter grade and cannot be taken pass/fail. Research credits at the 800 level (i.e., EPH 830, 840, and 850) and seminar credits (i.e., EPH 700/EPH 701 Professional Development Seminar) are only completed as pass/fail. Independent study credit registrations (i.e., EPH 782 Advanced Independent Study) may be completed with permission of the PSCH PhD Program Director and selected faculty supervisor. Grade assignment will be pass/fail (S/U). The option for letter grade assignment in EPH 782 may be discussed with the faculty mentor and PSCH PhD Program Director, if desired.

#### **Requirement 3: Submitting the Qualifying Paper**

During the first two years of the program, students will be required to write a qualifying paper for publication to a reputable peer-reviewed journal. This paper should address key issues, advances, and problems in the students and faculty mentor's area(s) of interest, and it should demonstrate mastery of the field and a vision for the direction the field is going (or could potentially go). The qualifying paper should be submitted prior to the qualifying exams during the student's second year of the program, unless the deadline is changed by the student's primary faculty mentor and approved by the PSCH PhD Program Director. Qualifying papers will be evaluated by the student's primary faculty mentor for approval. The student's faculty mentor(s) and other students who have worked on the paper should be considered as co-authors. The manuscript does not have to be accepted for publication (to be entered into candidacy or to graduate), but it does have to be deemed of publishable quality by the student's primary faculty mentor.

#### **Requirement 4: Successfully Passing the Qualifying Examinations**

The Qualifying Examinations are traditionally administered in the summer of the second year of the doctoral program, although this time frame is flexible. The exams are only offered once per calendar year. It is recommended that students who plan to take the Qualifying Examinations consult with their primary faculty mentor and Program Director to discuss preparatory coursework and readiness for taking the examination several months in advance of the scheduled examination date.

##### *Qualifying Examination Format and Structure*

In general, the exams are intended to ensure students have sufficient competency in the broad areas of prevention science and community health to be prepared for a career in this field. These broad areas include, for example: prevention science, community health, research and evaluation design, data analysis, statistical methods, intervention development, and other areas related to the field.

The Qualifying Examination is not designed to be a recitation of a collection of facts presented in a specific course, but rather is designed to probe the student's ability to identify important issues when presented with a problem, generate a series of arguments relevant to these issues, and be able to formulate a well-reasoned approach based on the arguments being presented. These exams are also designed to evaluate a student's knowledge of basic and advanced conceptual, methodological, and statistical issues.

There are typically four parts to the PSCH PhD program qualifying examination: (1) an in-class exam, (2) a take-home exam, (3) an oral exam, and (4) a written, in-class biostatistics exam. The four parts of the exam will be graded separately, and the student is expected to pass all four parts of the exam. The in-class written exam typically will occur first, the take-home exam follows the in-class exam, the oral examination is generally held afterwards and within two weeks of the take-home exam, followed by the biostatistics exam, which is usually last.

In-class written examinations are restricted, timed, and will be proctored by examination committee members and/or program administration. Unless specifically stated, students are not permitted to access the internet or any electronic devices (e.g., cell phones, tablets, laptops), other than what is provided by the program for the in-class exam. During the in-class written examination, students are only permitted to exit the exam room for restroom breaks, brief food preparation (students bring their own lunch/snacks), and previously approved accommodations by the relevant university office, as appropriate. Any individual break taken from the exam counts against the total time allotted to complete the exam.

A take-home examination may be included as a second portion of the qualifying examination process. The take-home examination is timed and requires independent work by the student. Students may not consult with other people during the take-home examination, but consultation of literature sources is permitted, and sources must be appropriately cited (per university guidelines). Take-home exams are returned to the program via email submission at a prescribed date and time. Failure to meet the required submission deadline will result in points deducted from the exam score.

The oral exam is designed to be a brief (one- to two-hour) question-and-answer session when PSCH Division and invited faculty members can clarify students' answers to in-class and take-home exams, as well as ask new questions related to the faculty member's area of expertise.

The final portion of the qualifying examination schedule is the Biostatistics exam. This exam will be written and administered at a time and place designated by a faculty member from the Division of Biostatistics

within the Department. Students are generally notified of the biostatistics exam results within one week of completing the last examination.

### *Intention to Take the Qualifying Exams and General Timelines*

All students must notify the PSCH PhD Program Director of their intention to take the exams before the end of the spring term of the year they plan to take the exam. Students who intend to take the exam will then be notified with specific details pertaining to the in-class, take-home, oral, and Biostatistics examinations.

**Note: Students will have only two chances to take the qualifying exams. Students who fail the qualifying exams twice will be dismissed from the program.**

### *Criteria for Qualifying Exam Grades*

After completion of the in-class and take-home examinations, each exam question or set of questions (for “blended” questions) will be read and graded by the instructor (or team of instructors) who wrote the question. Faculty in leadership roles at the Graduate School may choose to recuse themselves from grading the qualifying exams. If they recuse themselves, such faculty will nominate another faculty member who will grade their exam questions. Each instructor or team of instructors will determine if the student’s response is “**correct/satisfactory**” or “**incorrect/unsatisfactory**.” Incorrect and unsatisfactory responses to a question or set of questions may be addressed by members of the exam committee in the oral examination part of the qualifying exams and changed to “correct/satisfactory” at the committee member’s discretion. Failure to answer an exam question or set of questions on the in-class or take-home portions of the exam by a student will be considered as incorrect/unsatisfactory answers and will be counted against the student’s exam score. After the exam questions are reviewed, the Examination Committee will meet to review the exam and approve any conditions for the student to pass the exam. Following this meeting, the following materials will be made available to students to review in the Office of the Graduate Program Administrator: (a) the overall results, and breakdown of results per content area; (b) the requirements or next steps for incorrect and unsatisfactory responses; and (c) a copy of student answers with graders’ comments (if available).

Consistent with a minimum grade point average of 3.0, a student must have received a “correct/satisfactory” grade on at least 82.6% of all questions (or set of related questions) within each of the in-class and take-home exams to receive a **full pass** for that exam. Consistent with a minimum grade of C-, a student must have received a “correct/satisfactory” grade on at least 72.5% of all questions (or set of related questions) or the student will be considered to have **failed** that portion of the exam. If the student received less than 82.6% but at least 72.5% of questions or set of questions graded as “correct/satisfactory,” then a **conditional pass** may be granted for the exam, which would require the student to satisfy a condition in the area(s) where they received the “incorrect/unsatisfactory” grade. Conditions may include, but are not limited to, taking a course for credit, completing exercises in addition to the course for credit, tutorials, independent remedial work guided by an instructor or the examination committee, and/or taking another exam. Any conditions that are imposed must be satisfied before students are admitted to candidacy and can begin working on their dissertation proposal. Furthermore, students should complete the conditions(s) in question before the qualifying exams are offered again. It must be emphasized that a conditional pass must be replaced with a pass before the exam is offered again – or else the conditional pass becomes a **fail**. Failure to meet this deadline will result in retaking the entire examination. Students who receive a conditional pass on their first exam attempt are required to score a

full pass on their second exam attempt. Failure to secure a full pass on the second attempt results in dismissal from the program.

### *Appeals Procedure*

Students may appeal the decision on the results of their exam. Students wishing to do so should submit a formal written request to the Chair of the Division of Prevention Science and Community Health within 30 days of receiving the results of the qualifying examination. If no appeal is filed within 30 days, the student forfeits the right to appeal the qualifying exam result. Appeals will be evaluated by the PSCH Division Examination Committee, by the Division Director, and by the Chair of the Department of Public Health Sciences.

### **Teaching Assistantship**

During Years 2, 3, and 4, students are encouraged to serve as Teaching Assistants for master's and doctorate level courses. Please refer to the Standard Operating Procedures (SOP) for TA Service (PhD Students), for additional information.

### **Formally Advancing to Candidacy**

When a pre-candidate has satisfied all the requirements and is ready to advance to candidacy, the student should complete an **Application for Admission to Candidacy for the PhD Form**, which is available at <https://grad.miami.edu/policies-and-forms/forms/index.html> and submit this application through Dynamic Forms. The Graduate School has strict deadlines for completing the requirements to advance to candidacy, and it is the responsibility of the student to check the website of the Graduate School and/or speak to the Doctoral Program Administrator regarding these deadlines. Per University policy, no student may receive the degree in the same semester or summer session in which he or she is admitted to candidacy.

### **Formation of the Dissertation Committee**

In preparation for the Dissertation, students, with consultation and collaboration from their primary faculty mentor and the PSCH PhD Program Director, will choose a Dissertation Chair. The student, should then, in consultation and collaboration of their Dissertation Chair (and their primary faculty mentor, if needed) choose the remaining dissertation committee members. Upon formation of the Dissertation Committee, the Dissertation Committee Form should be completed and submitted to the Graduate School via Dynamic Forms. This form can be found at <https://grad.miami.edu/policies-and-forms/forms/index.html>. If the composition of the Dissertation Committee changes at any point during the dissertation process, students must resubmit the Committee Composition Change Request Form (through Dynamic Forms) to reflect the revisions.

### **Composition of the Dissertation Committee**

Dissertation committees must have **at least four** members. Other requirements with regards to the composition of the Dissertation Committee Members are as follow:

- 1) The Chair of the Dissertation Committee must have a primary/secondary and Graduate Faculty appointment at the University of Miami (not necessarily in the Department of Public Health Sciences).
- 2) At least two of the committee members must have a Graduate Faculty Appointment in the Department of Public Health Sciences.

- 3) An “outside” member of the Committee can be external to the Department of Public Health Sciences (i.e., elsewhere at UM) or outside the UM. The student must obtain approval from the Dissertation Chair for this member.
- 4) Students are strongly encouraged to have at least one basic researcher (e.g., etiologist, epidemiologist, developmental psychologist) and at least one interventionist, implementation scientist, or community researcher on their dissertation committee.

**Graduate Faculty Membership for Miller School of Medicine, Public Health Sciences**  
<https://www.grad.miami.edu/graduate-education/graduate-faculty/index.html>

### **Eligibility for Service on Dissertation Committees**

Nominations for faculty to engage in dissertation committee service are made by means of the Application for Admission to Candidacy for the PhD, which must be signed by the Graduate Program Director and the PhD Program Director. All nominations must be approved by the Graduate School and are subject to the guidelines of the Graduate School.

### **The Dissertation Proposal**

Following the formation of their dissertation committee, doctoral students are required to satisfactorily develop their dissertation proposal. During the defense of the proposal, the student presents their dissertation proposal to the dissertation committee. It is expected that students will give their presentation within 6 to 12 months of successful completion of the Qualifying Examination. Failure to do so shall result in intensive scrutiny regarding the reasons for lack of timely progression. Students are required to be registered for at least one credit during the term in which they present their proposal.

### **The Written Dissertation Proposal**

The written proposal should include the following elements and should be between 5-10 pages using standard font and format:

- 1) **Summary Abstract** (1 page)
- 2) **General Literature Review**
- 3) **Overall Research Questions and Hypotheses**
- 4) **Integrative Plan for the three manuscripts (i.e., how they will be tied together)**
- 5) **Research Methods (including source of data for secondary analyses)**
- 6) **Data Analytic Plan for each manuscript**
- 7) **References**

While every proposal should contain all the required elements, the particular emphasis, subject matter and page lengths will depend upon the nature of the proposed research.

### **Format and Structure of the Oral Proposal**

The oral presentation and submission of a written dissertation proposal implies prior planning and review by the student’s dissertation chair, as well as consultation with other members of the student’s dissertation committee. Both the student and mentor share responsibility for informing members of the dissertation committee about progress or modifications in the research protocol. The oral proposal defense should proceed only when all committee members indicate that the student is ready to propose.

## The Oral Presentation of the Dissertation Proposal

Although the format and specific content of the oral presentation of the dissertation proposal is up to the Chair and the Committee, the oral presentation of the dissertation proposal should include a statement of research questions and/or hypotheses and the following elements:

- 1) A rationale for the questions, including the public health significance or implications.
- 2) The degree to which the research draws upon appropriate theoretical or conceptual models.
- 3) Adequacy of the study design to address the research questions.
- 4) Data gathering approaches - the degree to which the data gathering approaches address threats to validity of the research (for secondary analyses, this refers to the ability of the available data to answer the research questions proposed).
- 5) Data analysis plan, including implications for inference and generalizability.
- 6) Strengths and limitations of the study.

Following the presentation, the Committee members will have an opportunity to ask questions and then decide whether the student has passed, passed with conditions, or failed the dissertation proposal oral defense. It is expected that no more than two attempts at this stage will be required for the student who expects to achieve a doctoral degree. Upon satisfactorily defending the dissertation proposal, the student can begin carrying out their research plan.

## The Dissertation

After successful development and defense of the dissertation proposal, the student is ready to execute their research plan. This phase generally takes 6 to 12 months. It is expected that the student will meet with his/her Dissertation Chair during this time to ensure the accurate and timely completion of their research plan. Detailed formatting requirements are provided, please see <https://grad.miami.edu/electronic-thesis-and-dissertation/index.html>. Students are strongly encouraged to consult this site often for all stages of their dissertation to ensure all Graduate School requirements are met. Dissertations previously submitted electronically are also available at this site. Please contact the Doctoral Program Administrator for a complete list of student names/dissertation titles available on this site. (Please note that the three manuscripts should appear as chapters in the dissertation, which will be submitted to the Graduate School as a single document.)

## Scheduling the Dissertation Defense

After the Dissertation Chair agrees that the student is ready to defend his/her dissertation and all members of the Dissertation Committee have read the dissertation and provided feedback to the Chair and student (generally within 4 weeks of receipt of the dissertation document), the student can schedule his/her dissertation defense with all committee members. Students are responsible for setting their defense date within the stated Graduate School deadline for the semester they plan to defend. A deadline is set and stated on each semester's Academic Calendar, available at <https://grad.miami.edu/electronic-thesis-and-dissertation/defense-and-submission-deadlines/index.html>.

It is expected that the student e-mails a copy of the dissertation to all Committee members 4-6 weeks prior to the oral defense. After the oral defense date is scheduled, the student is to notify the Doctoral Program Administrator as to the defense date of the dissertation. The student will then submit the Defense Notice Form to the Graduate School. (through Dynamic Forms). A copy of the form is provided at:

<https://grad.miami.edu/policies-and-forms/forms/index.html>. The Doctoral Program Administrator will

Last update: July 30, 2024



e-mail the Department notifying all faculty, students, and staff of the defense of the dissertation. It is the responsibility of the student to work with the Doctoral Program Administrator to secure space for the defense as well as to secure the necessary equipment (e.g., projector), if needed. Please note that dissertation defenses are public events and are open to faculty, students, and members of the public.

### **The Oral Defense of the Dissertation**

In addition to the requirements for the proposal, the oral dissertation defense (usually 1 hour, but can be longer or shorter at the discretion of the Dissertation Chair) should include:

- 1) The results for each of the research questions or aims, including a description of the statistical methods used.
- 2) A discussion of the study findings
- 3) Conclusions
- 4) Limitations of the study
- 5) Recommendations for future research

Following the presentation, as per Graduate School requirements, the Chair will ask non-committee members present to leave the room. At this time, the Committee will have an opportunity to ask questions about the dissertation, the defense, and other related issues. Following the questions, the student will be asked to leave the room to allow the members of the Dissertation Committee to discuss his or her performance. The Committee will decide whether the student has passed or failed the dissertation defense. Following this decision, the Committee will invite the student to return and inform her/him of the Committee's decision. If the student is not successful in defending the dissertation, the Chair and the Committee members will inform the student as to what the next steps are in his/her program of study. If a student is successful, the Certificate of Defense Form must be completed, signed by the dissertation committee members (student circulates electronically to the committee via Dynamic Forms).

### **Completion and Publication of the Dissertation**

There are several steps students must take in the final stretch towards completing the dissertation and getting it published. It is strongly recommended that students visit the Graduate School website at <http://grad.miami.edu/electronic-thesis-and-dissertation/post-defense-essentials/index.html> for more detailed guidance on the parameters for completing the dissertation.

### **Formatting Your Dissertation**

All doctoral dissertations must be formatted according to University of Miami Graduate School requirements. All formatting requirements are available at <https://www.grad.miami.edu/electronic-thesis-and-dissertation/formatting-the-etd/index.html>. This site also includes examples, templates and necessary forms required during the dissertation process. Previously submitted dissertations are listed in the University Dissertation Library (EDT).

### **Publishing Your Dissertation**

Students are strongly encouraged to speak to their Chair and other dissertation members about submitting peer-reviewed manuscripts for publication during their dissertation and immediately following their defense. <http://grad.miami.edu/electronic-thesis-and-dissertation/copyright-and-publishing-information/index.html>

### Deadlines for Completing the Final Requirements

The University of Miami has strict deadlines for each term by which you must have completed all your final requirements, including turning in the correct number of dissertation copies and electronic submission to the Graduate School. These deadlines can be found at <http://grad.miami.edu/electronic-thesis-and-dissertation/defense-and-submission-deadlines/index.html>.

### Additional Requirements for Candidates

#### Attendance in Grand Rounds and Other Lectures

In addition to the required coursework, work with a faculty mentor, successful completion of a qualifying paper, successful completion of the qualifying examinations, successfully defending the dissertation proposal, and successfully defending the dissertation, **doctoral students are required to attend Departmental Grand Rounds**. The Departmental Grand Rounds consists of a series of educational lectures in epidemiology, prevention science, and public health. Speakers at the Grand Rounds include both Department faculty and speakers from other institutions around the country. Students are expected to attend most (i.e., > 50%) of the Department Grand Rounds. Students may also elect to attend other lecture series offered by the Department or other Departments on the medical campus (e.g., Distinguished Lecture Series, Biostatistics Roundtables).

#### Graduate Student Financial Support

The Department of Public Health Sciences has limited resources with respect to student financial support. The University will provide doctoral students with a tuition scholarship during their doctoral program (students must remain in good standing during their studies to receive tuition support). Additionally, students will receive an annual stipend of \$46,000 (effective June 1, 2024) and must work with their faculty mentor to support their stipend funding for the remaining years of their doctoral program. Students are strongly encouraged to work with their faculty mentor to seek their own funding; for example, F31 or F30 dissertation awards through NIH, fellowships through foundations such as the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation, or other training fellowship across campus such as the fellowships from the Developmental Center for AIDS Research.

#### Website Quick Reference Guide

There are many helpful websites that you can visit, not the least of which is our own Department of Public Health Sciences homepage at <http://publichealth.med.miami.edu>. Below are also links to other useful websites that has pertinent information for doctoral students:

University of Miami Tools/Resources: <https://welcome.miami.edu/tools/index.html>

Graduate School website: <http://grad.miami.edu/about-us/welcome-and-overview/index.html>

Miller School of Medicine, Office of Graduate Studies: <http://biomed.med.miami.edu/>

Graduate School Helpful Links and Resources: <http://grad.miami.edu/about-us/resources/index.html>

Doctoral Student and Faculty Forms: <https://grad.miami.edu/policies-and-forms/forms/index.html>

**Appendix A: Acknowledgment of Receipt and Review**

Prevention Science and Community Health Student Handbook, 2024-2025  
<https://graduatestudies.publichealth.med.miami.edu/current-students/course-information/forms-handbooks/index.html>

UM Graduate Academic Bulletin  
<http://bulletin.miami.edu/graduate-academic-programs/>

UM Graduate Honor Code  
[https://doso.studentaffairs.miami.edu/assets/pdf/policies/student\\_rights\\_and\\_responsibilities\\_handbook.pdf#page=10](https://doso.studentaffairs.miami.edu/assets/pdf/policies/student_rights_and_responsibilities_handbook.pdf#page=10)

Acknowledgement Checklist

\_\_\_\_ (initials) I acknowledge receiving the weblink to access the 2024-2025 Department of Public Health Sciences Prevention Science and Community Health (PhD) Student Handbook, the UM Graduate Academic Bulletin and University Graduate Honor Code.

\_\_\_\_ (initials) I understand that it is my responsibility to familiarize myself with the requirements of the University of Miami, the University of Miami Miller School of Medicine, and my graduate program of study.

\_\_\_\_ (initials) I understand that I am required to use the “miami.edu or med.miami.edu” email address to communicate with the University and the program and am urged to check it at least once per day.

\_\_\_\_ (initials) I understand attendance is mandatory for all courses, and I am expected to attend classes as scheduled.

\_\_\_\_ (initials) I understand that I must adhere to all program deadlines, including the Graduate School electronic dissertation (EDT) program deadlines.

\_\_\_\_ (initials) I understand that if I apply for federal financial aid, the award is based on my enrollment and Cost of Attendance (COA), and that I am responsible for understanding the terms and conditions of my individual federal financial aid package.

\_\_\_\_ (initials) I understand that it is my responsibility to apply for graduation through Canelink during my final semester and participate in an exit interview with DPHS Graduate Programs.

PRINT NAME CLEARLY \_\_\_\_\_

SIGNATURE \_\_\_\_\_

DATE \_\_\_\_\_

**PLEASE SIGN APPENDIX A AND EMAIL THE SIGNED FORM TO Heather Rose ([Hrose@med.miami.edu](mailto:Hrose@med.miami.edu)).**

## Appendix B: Acknowledgment of Plagiarism Policy

**Plagiarism is a violation of the scientific community's ethical standards and a violation of the University of Miami's Graduate Student Honor Code.** Plagiarism is a serious offense with serious consequences. Students who plagiarize can be dismissed from the University.

In university courses, we are continually engaged with other people's ideas: we read them in texts, hear them in lecture, discuss them in class, and incorporate them into our own writing. As a result, it is very important that we give credit where it is due. Plagiarism is using others' ideas and words without clearly acknowledging the source of that information.

How Can Students Avoid Plagiarism?

- **Learn what plagiarism is.** Many types of plagiarism exist—from cloning to recycling. [Know the types of plagiarism to avoid them.](#)
- **Understand how to cite your sources.** Confirm which style of citing sources your instructors expect as they have many to choose from. Know the style each instructor prefers. If you have a choice, choose one style and use it consistently.
- **Plan your assignment work.** Summarize your original idea and plan how you intend to express it. Create drafts and outlines, indicate what sources you intend to find, and explain how you intend to use them.
- **Know your subject.** The more familiar you're with the subject, the more likely you are to use your own words. The more sources you look at, the more familiar you'll become with the subject. Be sure to track your sources.
- **Take notes when you review sources.** Good note taking can help organize your thoughts and express someone else's ideas in your own words.
- **Cite your sources.** If you're unsure, err on the side of caution and cite your sources.
- **Be careful to clearly identify someone else's ideas and words.** Citing sources isn't enough. Be clear as to who said what. When it's due, give credit to your sources.

**How to Use SafeAssign to avoid plagiarism?** SafeAssign is a tool available in Blackboard to help promote originality and create opportunities to help students identify how to properly attribute sources rather than paraphrase. SafeAssign is based on a unique text-matching algorithm capable of detecting exact and inexact matching between a paper and source material. Assignments are compared against several databases containing millions of articles dating from the 1990s to the present. After the comparison, a report is generated that details the percentage of text in your paper that matches existing sources. Visit the Blackboard Help page to learn how to create a [SafeAssignment](#).

*I acknowledge receipt of and understand the Plagiarism Policy. I acknowledge that it is my responsibility to learn how to use SafeAssign. I understand that I may be asked to include the SafeAssign report with any assignment I submit during my doctoral studies.*

PRINT NAME CLEARLY \_\_\_\_\_

SIGNATURE \_\_\_\_\_

DATE \_\_\_\_\_

**PLEASE SIGN APPENDIX B AND EMAIL THE SIGNED FORM TO Heather Rose ([Hrose@med.miami.edu](mailto:Hrose@med.miami.edu)).**

**Appendix C: Photography/Video Release Consent**

During the program, you may be photographed or video-taped at various University-sponsored or classroom events. With your consent, the photograph or video may be released for use on the Department of Public Health Sciences' webpage, social medial pages, brochures, newsletters, or other media. These materials will be used primarily to highlight our department's student activities and successes.

Please acknowledge consent of use of photography:

Yes \_\_\_\_ My photograph/video may be reproduced and released for use by the University of Miami's Department of Public Health Sciences.

No \_\_\_\_ My photograph may not be reproduced and released for use by the by the University of Miami's Department of Public Health Sciences.

PRINT NAME CLEARLY \_\_\_\_\_

SIGNATURE \_\_\_\_\_ DATE \_\_\_\_\_

**PLEASE SIGN APPENDIX C AND EMAIL THE SIGNED FORM TO Heather Rose ([Hrose@med.miami.edu](mailto:Hrose@med.miami.edu)).**