

# **Doctor of Public Health (DrPH) Program**

**Department of Health Care Organization and Policy  
UAB School of Public Health**



**2011-2012**

July 2011

Dear DrPH student,

On behalf of the Department of Health Care Organization and Policy and the UAB School of Public Health, welcome to our program! You were selected to be a part of the DrPH in Health Care Organization and Policy (HCOP) because of your unique abilities, skills, and interests. The entire faculty and staff look forward to working with you over the next few years to ensure that you are provided with the tools and resources needed to be successful in impacting the lives of others in public health practice or academia.

You should have received a letter welcoming you to the program and informing you of your advisor. Your advisor is ready and willing to help in the design and direction of your studies. Please make arrangements to meet with your advisor as soon as possible to discuss course planning.

In addition to using the faculty and staff as resources at the start of your program, we hope that this handbook will provide the necessary information related to the program and the department. Please review the guidebook carefully as it provides a review of policies, procedures, and resources.

We welcome you to the program and look forward to working with you! Please do not hesitate to let us know if there is anything that we can do for you.

Sincerely,

Nir Menachemi, PhD, MPH  
Director of DrPH Program

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## Academic calendars

Academic and other calendars may be found on the University's webpage.

<http://main.uab.edu/show.asp?durki=707>

**School of Public Health Academic Calendar and Class Schedule**

<http://www.soph.uab.edu/students/schedule>

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## Introduction

*Each student should read this guidebook carefully and is responsible for understanding and following all policies and procedures contained in it.*

### *Introduction:*

This handbook is designed to assist students in their Doctor of Public Health program in the Department of Health Care Organization and Policy (HCOP) at the UAB School of Public Health. The handbook describes the DrPH program requirements, including coursework, practicum, comprehensive examination, and doctoral dissertation.

### *Goal of the Program:*

The DrPH degree is the highest professional degree in public health. The DrPH Program in HCOP develops leaders and research faculty who have proficiency in data analysis, management, critical thinking, teaching, and translating research into policy and practice. Students will be exposed to complex practical problems facing public health practitioners and policy-makers. This program, housed within the Department of HCOP has two concentrations (1) Public Health Management, and (2) Maternal and Child Health Policy..

## Academic Requirements

### Checklist

Students must complete and document the following minimum requirements in order to earn the degree of Doctor of Public Health:

- 42 course work credit hours
- Written and oral examination
- Practicum
- Dissertation protocol
- Final dissertation
- Public dissertation defense
- Completion of appropriate forms and copies

## **DrPH Competencies**

(Modified from ASPH draft competencies; UIC and UGA DrPH competencies; accepted 1/14/09)

After completing the DrPH program, the DrPH student will be able to:

### **Competency 1 (Communication): Demonstrate the ability to communicate effectively orally and in writing.**

- Demonstrate an understanding of the theoretical elements of effective oral and written communication.
- Organize and present qualitative, quantitative and economic data cogently and persuasively at scientific sessions and to lay audiences.
- Design oral and written communications for varied audiences (community and business leaders, the public, policy makers, public health professionals, the media, and other stakeholders).
- Demonstrate ability to develop a social marketing plan for a new or existing intervention.

### **Competency 2 (Critical/Analytical Thinking): Demonstrate in-depth understanding of the core areas of public health practice, research, and theory.**

- Analyze and critique public health as a system, including specific functions and roles of government and governmental public health agencies and other partners, assessing the system's ability to respond to public health problems and its limitations, and identifying ways to improve it.
- Integrate and apply multidisciplinary theories and research findings to solve a public health problem(s).
- Demonstrate an understanding of the ecological model and how it guides the assessment of, and solutions to, public health issues.

### **Competency 3 (Education): Teach academic and professional audiences.**

- Teach broad overview courses in public health, as well as specialized courses in areas of expertise, in an academic institution.
- Teach continuing education and outreach classes in public health and areas of specialization.

### **Competency 4 (Ethics): Demonstrate an in-depth understanding of the ethical basis for public health research and practice**

- Demonstrate an understanding of the legal and ethical foundations of public health.

### **Competency 5 (Leadership): Demonstrate a vision and philosophy for professional leadership in public health.**

- Apply principles of effective leadership in order to create a shared vision within a public health organization and foster partnerships that maximize achievement of public health goals.

- Apply negotiation, advocacy and other skills to public policy making, demonstrating an understanding of how to influence the process.

**Competency 6 (Management): Demonstrate the knowledge necessary to strategically plan for and manage a public health organization or program.**

- Demonstrate an ability to strategically plan, implement and evaluate agency or organization improvements.
- Demonstrate an understanding of the political, cultural, social and economic factors influencing the development of, and changes in, public health programs, agencies, or interventions as well as strategies to positively affect those factors.
- Apply principles and tools of financial resource management to public health programs.
- Apply principles and tools of human resource management to public health programs.
- Demonstrate an ability to lead and manage individuals or teams in the design, implementation and evaluation of public health programs.
- Access and synthesize information from a variety of sources to make evidenced-based program decisions.

**Competency 7 (Public Health Practice/Community Orientation) : Demonstrate the ability to identify, assess, and improve significant public health problems/issues.**

- Apply measures of population health and illness, including risk factors, in the development of community health improvement initiatives, taking into account appropriate cultural, social, behavioral, and biological factors.
- Develop and apply a logic model, or other systems applications, demonstrating interrelationships among risk and protective factors, as well as between process and outcome objectives, and targets/standards for population health.
- Apply research, evaluation and strategic planning designs to address a public health issue in an area of specialization.

**Competency 8 (Research): Analyze issues and problems in public health using critical evaluation, applied research methodology, and statistical methods.**

- Obtain, interpret and apply appropriate quantitative, qualitative and economic measures to address public health problems.
- Demonstrate in-depth understanding through use of an applied research methodology of interest (quantitative, qualitative or economic research methods) of a public health problem or issue.

*Appendix A provides an overview of the competencies with matching program study components.*

### **DrPH Program Admission Requirements:**

A detailed description of the Doctor of Public Health degree requirements is shown in the School of Public Health on-line catalog and are summarized below.

- An MPH or equivalent degree in public health;
- Applicants with advanced non-public health degrees can be admitted directly into the DrPH program, but must successfully complete the MPH and concentration-specific prerequisite courses.
- Applicants with an MPH or equivalent degree not in their concentration will take the necessary concentration prerequisites only.
- Applicants with only a bachelor's degree but with an exceptional academic record or rich professional experience will be considered. They must be admitted into the MPH program prior to applying to the DrPH program and complete the MPH program before being fully accepted into the DrPH program.
- Experience in public health. Preference to applicants with experience in public health leadership and administration; Applicants must submit GRE scores taken within five years. Both the score and the percentile on each of the verbal, quantitative, and analytical writing sections of the examination will be evaluated. A minimum of 1100 (550 on each of the verbal and quantitative sections) is expected.
- International applicants whose native language is not English or who did not complete a degree at an English-speaking institution must submit a TOEFL with TWE test score. The minimum acceptable score is: (Paper Based) 550, (Computer Based) 213 and (Internet-Based) 79-80.
- Other aspects of an applicant's record, such as educational achievement, professional experience and clarity of career goals are helpful in determining admissibility.



## **DrPH Prerequisites**

Students without an MPH (or other master's degree) must complete the master of public health prerequisite classes (HCO 600, EPI 600, ENH 600, HB 600, BST 600, and PUH 695) prior to matriculation in the DrPH program. Students with non-MPH master's degrees (i.e, MS, MSPH, MHA, etc.), may take the concentration core courses in conjunction with any prerequisites they need. Those with a non-MPH master's degree will waive PUH 695.

Students in the **Public Health Management** concentration will be required to meet concentration-specific prerequisites (or their equivalent as determined by the program director and advisor). The concentration-specific prerequisites for public health management DrPH students are:

- HCO 601: Health Economics
- HCO 603: Public Health Policy
- HCO 670: Social and Ethical Issues in PH
- HCO 620: Health Insurance/Managed Care
- HCO 686: Integrative Policy Analysis

Students in the **Maternal and Child Health Policy** concentration will be required to meet concentration-specific prerequisites (or their equivalent as determined by the program director and advisor). The concentration-specific prerequisites for maternal and child health policy DrPH students are:

- HCO 601: Health Economics
- HCO 605: Fundamentals of MCH I: Issues, Programs and Policies
- HCO 606: Fundamentals of MCH II: Research Methods, Needs & Program Planning
- HCO 618: Management of Complex Health Orgs
- HCO 625: Advanced Leadership in MCH Part I: Introduction to Leadership
- HCO 626: Advanced Leadership in MCH Part II : Collaborative Leadership & Advocacy

Students in the **Outcomes Research** concentration will be required to meet concentration-specific prerequisites (or their equivalent as determined by the program director and advisor). The concentration-specific prerequisites for maternal and child health policy DrPH students are:

- HCO 601: Health Economics
- HCO 670: Social and Ethical Issues in Public
- HCO 720: Health Insurance and Managed Care

For all students, credit hours for the MPH prerequisites and concentration-specific prerequisites do not apply towards the 42 credit hours for the degree program.

University regulations state that doctoral students cannot receive credit toward their doctoral degree for any course that was required in their master's program nor for any course that was needed to complete the credit hours required by the master's program. Courses taken in a master's program that do not fall into one of these two categories and that meet a doctoral program requirement may be considered for use as credit towards the doctoral program. It is the responsibility of the student,

in conjunction with his/her advisor, to assure that all School of Public Health and University requirements which apply to this degree are met.

**DrPH Course Requirements**

The DrPH program must be completed within seven years. Students who have not successfully completed their comprehensive examinations within five years will be subject to dismissal from the program. A minimum of 42 credit hours, exclusive of HCO courses 793; 796-799, are required to complete the degree. Students will complete at least 15 credit hours of analytical or methodological courses; at least 15 hours of concentration-core courses; and at least 12 hours of any 700-level electives (as approved by advisor). Students must also complete the doctoral seminars (HCO 796) comprehensive examination (HCO 797), practicum (HCO 793), dissertation proposal/protocol development (HCO 798), and dissertation research (HCO 799).

***Curriculum Outline for each concentration is as follows:***

<b>Concentration:</b>	<b>Public Health Management</b>	<b>Maternal &amp; Child Health Policy</b>	<b>Outcomes Research</b>
<b>MPH Prerequisites</b> (if student has no MPH). These courses do not count toward degree hours	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• HCO 600 Introduction to Public Health Systems and Population-Based Health Programs               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• EPI 600 (or equivalent) Introduction to Epidemiology</li> <li>• ENH 600 Fundamentals of Environmental Health Sciences                   <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• HB 600 Social and Behavioral Science Core</li> </ul> </li> <li>• BST 600/BST 601 Biostatistics for Public Health</li> </ul> </li> <li>• PUH 695 Integrative Experience (optional)</li> </ul>		
<b>Concentration Prerequisites:</b> (These courses do not count toward degree hours)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• HCO 601: Health Economics</li> <li>• HCO 603: Public Health Policy</li> <li>• HCO 670: Social and Ethical Issues in Public Health</li> <li>• HCO 720: Health Insurance and Managed Care</li> <li>• HCO 686: Integrative Policy Analysis</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• HCO 601: Health Economics</li> <li>• HCO 605: Fundamentals of MCH I</li> <li>• HCO 606: Fundamentals of MCH II</li> <li>• HCO 618: Management of Concepts in Public Health</li> <li>• HCO 625: Advanced Leadership in MCH Part I</li> <li>• HCO 626: Advanced Leadership in MCH Part II</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• HCO 601: Health Economics</li> <li>• HCO 670: Social and Ethical Issues in Public</li> <li>• HCO 720: Health Insurance and Managed Care</li> </ul>
<b>Concentration Core</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• HCO 715: Finance for Health Professionals</li> <li>• HCO 718: Mgt of Concepts in Public Health Programs</li> <li>• AH 715 Research Organizational Theory</li> <li>• AH 706: Strategic Management &amp; Theory</li> <li>• HCO 713: Health Information Technology and Policy</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• HCO 703: Public Health Policy</li> <li>• HCO 708: Reproductive Health</li> <li>• HCO 711: Child Health and Development</li> <li>• HCO 713: Health IT policy &amp; Mgt</li> <li>• HCO 772: Perinatal Health: Issues, Data and Policies</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• HCO 721: Clinical Decision-making &amp; Cost Effectiveness</li> <li>• HCO 722: Cost-Effectiveness Research</li> <li>• HCO 777: Patient-Based Outcomes Measurement</li> <li>• HCO 791: Modeling &amp; Simulation</li> <li>• Elective methods course of 700 as approved by advisor</li> </ul>
<b>Methods Core</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• BST 611: Intermediate Stats I (3)</li> <li>• BST 612: Intermediate Stats II (3)</li> <li>• BST 613: Intermediate Stats III (3)</li> <li>• HCO 787: Empirical Methods for Health Research (3)</li> <li>• HCO 781: Research Methods and Study Design (3)</li> </ul>		
<b>Electives</b>	Electives (12 credit hours required), at the 700-level, may be selected from the previously listed courses, from other School of Public Health courses, or from anywhere within the university with advisor approval.		
<b>Doctoral Seminar</b> (credit hours do not count toward degree hours)	HCO 796: 1 credit hour in each Fall and Spring semester (first two years only)		

**\*Suggested elective methods courses:**

- HCO 721 Clinical Decision Making and Cost-effectiveness Analysis (3)
- HB 714 Survey Research Methods (3)
- AH 707 Research Methods (3)

*Other methodology courses may be selected with permission from advisor.*

**Other required courses:**

- **Required Practicum** (6 credit hours):  
**HCO 793** DrPH Practicum in Health Care Organization and Policy (6 credit hours)  
Doctoral students are required to complete a 6 hour practicum working in a public health agency or organization. Students must have passed their comprehensive exam prior to enrolling in HCO 793.
- **Required Seminar** (1 credit hour each Fall and Spring semester; credit hours do not apply to the DrPH degree)

**HCO 796** Doctoral Seminar in Health Care Organization and Policy (1 credit hr)

Doctoral students must register for this course in the Fall and Spring semesters for two full years.

- **Additional Course Offerings** (credit hours do not apply toward the DrPH degree requirements)  
The university requires that students must be consecutively enrolled for a minimum of 3 credit hours per term. The following courses are offered to assist students in meeting this university requirement and program requirements.

**HCO 797** Directed Readings for DrPH Comprehensive Exam in HCO (3 credit hrs)  
Doctoral students may register for this course in the term in which they prepare for and take their comprehensive examination.

**HCO 798** Dissertation Protocol Development in HCO (3 credit hrs)  
Doctoral students are required to register for this course during the period in which they are preparing their doctoral dissertation protocol.

**HCO 799** Dissertation Research (3-6 credit hrs)  
Doctoral students may register for this course for the terms following the approval of their doctoral proposal. Between 3 and 6 credits will be given per term, depending on the amount of time the student spends on the research.

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### **Summary of Credit Hour Requirements:**

Concentration core: 15

Methods core: 15

Electives: 12

**Total Number of Hours:** 42 plus doctoral practicum, seminar and dissertation research hours  
(total # of hours varies by student)

## **Advising and Student Oversight**

### **Advising prior to Comprehensive Examination**

Upon acceptance into the doctoral program, the Director of the DrPH Program will assign each student a Faculty Advisor, based on similarity in research interests. Changes in Faculty Advisor may be made at any time upon the request of either the student or the advisor. The initial or subsequent Faculty Advisor must agree to the selection and an intra-departmental change of status form must be completed.

### **The DrPH Policy Committee (DPC)**

The Department Chair will appoint a Director of the DrPH Program and maintain a Doctoral Policy Committee (DPC) comprised of the Director of the DrPH Program, selected faculty members, and the department's program coordinator. The DPC will assist the Director of the DrPH Program to administer and complete tasks necessary for the successful conduct of the program.

DPC activities will include the following:

#### **Program Development:**

- Develop or review specific educational objectives for the DrPH program that will be cross-listed with required courses and used as the basis for the development of new courses, the revision of current courses, the revision of DrPH program course requirements, the development of comprehensive examination questions, the development of student recruitment materials, and the annual program review (Objectives will be reviewed annually by the DPC and updated as necessary.),
- Maintain, update, and revise a departmental DrPH Program Policy and Procedures Manual,
- Prepare and submit necessary documents for EPC approval in regard to any curricular changes,
- Schedule and conduct, in conjunction with the annual doctoral student review, a review of the program based on developed objectives, and
- Assist with marketing of the program

### **Student Admission and Review**

- Distribute all DrPH applications for DPC review,
- Schedule interviews for students considered eligible for admission,
- Advise the Director of the DrPH Program regarding admission and advisor selection decisions,
- Schedule and conduct an annual review of all doctoral students (current and new), including a review of each student's DrPH Planning and Review Form (Appendix A: to be completed/updated by advisor prior to the review),

## **Comprehensive Examination**

### **Student Requests for Comprehensive Examination**

When the doctoral student has completed the 42 hours of required courses and the student and his/her advisor determines the student is prepared to take the comprehensive examination, he/she will **submit a request for an examination** to the DrPH Program Director. The faculty advisor must be in support of this request. The faculty advisor and student should have reviewed the student's record prior to making a recommendation to take the examination. The program coordinator and program director will conduct a second review of the student's academic record and determine if the student's request should be approved. If the student's request is approved, the comprehensive examination will be prepared for the student. If the student's request is denied, a new request cannot be made for 30 days or until the academic deficiencies identified have been redressed. A student must be registered for at least three hours of graduate work during the term in which the comprehensive examination is taken. The course HCO 798, Directed Readings for DrPH Comprehensive Exam in HCO, has been developed for this purpose.

### **Comprehensive Examination**

The purpose of the comprehensive examination is to evaluate the student's ability to synthesize information related to general public health and research methodology and to discuss with a faculty committee. The student will be provided with a list of general topic areas on which to focus; however, he or she will be expected to be familiar with a wide range of topics on public health, health care organization and policy, as well as research methods.

The program director will organize and administer the examination; however, a committee will be responsible for the development and grading of the examination. The student will be graded pass/no pass on each section and have two opportunities to successfully pass each section of the examination. If the student does not pass the second time, he or she will be dismissed from the program.

### **Day 1**

Part I: General Public Health (8 hours for completion)

- 3 questions
  - Student may specify their area of interest and one question will be written on this topic of specialization.
  - Faculty will write 2 additional questions, focusing on general public health issues.

### **Day 2**

Part II: Research Methodology (8 hours for completion)

- 3 questions
  - Questions will be designed to assess the student's knowledge of relevant statistical methods, their understanding of research design, and their ability to interpret and explain empirical results of quantitative analyses.
  - Faculty will prepare the appropriate questions one of which may ask students to critically appraise the methodology of a published article relevant to public health or health care organization and policy.

### **Day 3**

Part III: Oral examination

- The 3<sup>rd</sup> component of the comprehensive examination is not necessarily contiguous with previous days.
  - A faculty committee will review Parts I and II and meet with the student to discuss his or her answers of Part I and Part II.
  - Students will know his or her grade soon after completion of the oral examination.

## **Practicum**

The DrPH is a professional degree designed to enhance an individual's public health skills to an advanced level, allowing graduates to pursue careers as practicing public health professionals in leadership positions. The Council on Education for Public Health (CEPH), our accrediting agency, requires that each DrPH student be able to demonstrate the application and achievement of the DrPH competencies through a practicum experience in addition to course work, qualifying examinations, written and oral proposal of original research protocol, and a public final defense of the dissertation research. The practicum will enhance the overall preparation and experience of the DrPH students allowing them to gain specific high-level skills related to competencies. The practicum will be discipline-specific and individualized, allowing students to work in collaboration with an academic practicum advisor and a field mentor.

Detailed information about the practicum requirements is available in the document entitled "*UAB School of Public Health Practicum Policy for DrPH Student*" obtainable from the program coordinator or program director.

# Dissertation

*Working closely with the HCOP program coordinator is very important when completing the dissertation protocol and defense. Deadlines are critical!*

## Dissertation Advisor and Committee

After the student has passed the comprehensive examination, they will select a Dissertation Advisor and along with this advisor, a Dissertation Committee. The student may choose his/her current Faculty Advisor or another faculty member. The Dissertation Advisor must be a HCOP department faculty member. Rare exceptions of a Dissertation Advisor outside of the HCOP Department will be considered on a case by case basis. The Dissertation Advisor must agree to the selection and, from that point forward, will assume the role of Academic Advisor. The Dissertation Advisor will serve as the chair of the Dissertation Committee.

The Dissertation Committee will be composed of a minimum of five graduate faculty members. Two of the members should be from outside the Department of HCOP. Each member should be able to bring some relevant insight and expertise to guide the student. The Dean and the Associate Dean will be ex officio members of the Dissertation Committee.

The Dissertation Committee may have members in addition to the required five and these additional members need not meet the above criteria. One member of the Dissertation Committee must be a methodologist with expertise relevant to the dissertation topic area, e.g. biostatistician, epidemiologist, econometrician, qualitative methodologist, etc. The chair of the Dissertation Committee and the DrPH Program Director must approve the appointment of all committee members. Further, the Dissertation Advisor will submit a completed "School of Public Health Appointment of Dissertation Committee Approval Request" to the Associate Dean. Changes in the Dissertation Committee may only be made in exceptional circumstances. The request for such changes must be submitted by the Dissertation Advisor to the Director of the DrPH Program and the Associate Dean, using the "Adjustment to Committee" form. These forms can be found at <http://www.soph.uab.edu/students/studentforms>.

## Dissertation Protocol

The dissertation must be based on original research relevant to public health. Doctoral students may register for HCO 797 during the period in which they are preparing their doctoral dissertation protocol.

The doctoral candidate must submit a draft dissertation protocol including a time-frame to his/her Dissertation Advisor. The Dissertation Advisor will guide the student in preparing the final protocol. The student should present the dissertation protocol to students and faculty of the HCO Department for feedback and comment prior to completion of the final protocol. When the protocol is completed to the satisfaction of the Dissertation Advisor, he/she will schedule a Dissertation Committee meeting at which the student will defend her/his protocol. The student must send a memorandum along with a copy of the protocol to each member of the Dissertation Committee at least 10 days prior to the scheduled defense. A copy of the memo must be forwarded to the Associate Dean.

**The student must bring a written application for IRB human subjects approval to the protocol committee meeting.** A majority of the members of the Dissertation Committee must agree to accept the protocol. If the majority of the Dissertation Committee does not accept the protocol, it must be revised with the guidance of the Dissertation Advisor and another defense of the protocol must be held. If only minor revisions are required and the Dissertation Committee agrees, the Dissertation Advisor may accept the protocol on behalf of the Dissertation Committee after the minor revisions have been completed. Once the protocol has been accepted and appropriate human subjects review board (IRB) approval is obtained, the student may proceed with his/her research. If a student decides to change his/her dissertation research topic, a new dissertation protocol must be prepared and submitted to the Dissertation Committee for their review and acceptance before the student may start on the new research topic.

### **Candidacy**

Acceptance of a dissertation protocol makes the student eligible for admission to candidacy. An “Application for Admission to Candidacy for the Degree of Doctor of Public Health” form and an “Admission to Candidacy Research Compliance Verification” form, found at <http://www.soph.uab.edu/students/studentforms> should be completed by the Dissertation Committee at the meeting in which the proposal is approved. The completed application is submitted to the Associate Dean. A student must be in good academic standing and apply for candidacy at least two terms before the expected graduation.

### **Dissertation**

Students may register for HCO 799 during the terms following the approval of their doctoral proposal. Between 3 and 9 credits will be given per term, depending upon the amount of time the student spends on research.

The Dissertation Advisor will guide the candidate during her/his dissertation research and the preparation of the dissertation. The ongoing involvement of the other members of the Dissertation Committee is highly encouraged. With the approval of the dissertation committee, students may choose to prepare their dissertation in one of two formats: one, the traditional dissertation option, and two, the publication or preprint/reprint option. The requirements for each format are outlined in the SOPH DrPH Dissertation Guidelines found at <http://www.soph.uab.edu/media/osas%20forms/DrPHManual.pdf>. When the dissertation is completed to the satisfaction of the Dissertation Advisor, it will be circulated to the other members of the Dissertation Committee. The Dissertation Committee may also select an additional reviewer from outside the university and request him/her to review the dissertation and prepare a written response for the Dissertation Committee. Faculty can request up to two weeks between the distribution of the dissertation and its defense.

After the Dissertation Committee members have reviewed the dissertation and, if applicable, the response from the outside reviewer, the Dissertation Advisor will poll the committee to see if there is consensus that a defense should be scheduled. If the majority is not in favor of scheduling the defense, the Dissertation Advisor will guide the student in revising the dissertation. If the majority is



in favor, the Dissertation Advisor will schedule a dissertation defense, at which time the student will orally present his/her dissertation and answer questions.

The dissertation defense will be open to the public and scheduled at a time that encourages attendance. The defense must be held no later than 30 days before the date of graduation. No later than two weeks prior to the defense, a memorandum and copies of the completed dissertation will be sent to each Dissertation Committee member and an announcement will be placed in the UAB Reporter and sent to each department in the School of Public Health for posting. A copy of the memorandum should be forwarded to the Associate Dean for Academic Services. Immediately after the defense, the Dissertation Committee will meet in private to determine if the dissertation is Accepted, Accepted with Revision (Minor or Major), or Rejected. The Dissertation Committee must unanimously accept the dissertation in order for the candidate to be recommended for a doctoral degree. The acceptance of the dissertation after Minor Revision will be delegated to the Dissertation Advisor. The acceptance of the dissertation after Major Revision must be approved by the full Dissertation Committee after another meeting with the student. In the event the dissertation is rejected by the majority of the Dissertation Committee, the student will be terminated from the program.

The student must request the “Doctor of Public Health Dissertation Approval Forms” at least 10 days prior to the final defense date. The forms can be requested on-line at <http://www.soph.uab.edu/students/studentforms> and must be picked up by the student from the Graduate School, and taken to the final defense. The “Doctor of Public Health Dissertation Approval Forms” will be signed by all members of the Dissertation Committee at the completion of a successful defense. Signed forms will be returned to the Associate Dean for Academic Affairs through Pamela Williams for processing to the Graduate School.

### **Dissertation Copies and Forms**

Deadline dates for the DrPH program (last day for final defense and for submission of final version of dissertation) are published on the UAB Graduate School’s website at <http://main.uab.edu/Sites/gradschool/students/current/deadlines/>. Students should work closely with the Graduate School as described below.

Copies of the dissertation are submitted to the UAB Graduate School. One error-free, unbound copy (on plain paper) of the dissertation must be submitted to the Graduate School on or before the due date listed for submission of the final version of dissertation. This copy should be approved by the dissertation committee chair. It should be prepared according to the guidelines stated in the ***DrPH Dissertation Guidelines***, which is available on the UAB SOPH School web site at <http://www.soph.uab.edu/graduation/graduationforms/drph>. The student must meet with the Graduate School representative to get appropriate guidance and approval for the dissertation format. The Graduate School sends the copy to a reader to assure compliance with all formatting standards and to assure that the document is error free. The Graduate School will return the edited copy to the student for corrections. The forms (listed below) will be completed at this time. A corrected copy (on plain paper) must be submitted to the Office of Student and Academic Services along with the edited copy returned by the reader. The Office or the reader will check the document one final time.

After making any necessary changes, the candidate must submit to the Office of Student and Academic Services two original copies of the dissertation on 100% rag bond paper. These copies will be bound and placed in the appropriate UAB library. The student may also submit additional copies to be bound for personal use. The student must pay all binding, microfilm, and copyright (optional) fees. The student must submit three original copies of the Abstract of Dissertation, a Survey of Earned Doctorates, and a Microfilm Copyright Form prior to being cleared for the awarding of the degree.

### **Award of Degree**

Upon approval of the Associate Dean for Academic Affairs at the School of Public Health and the Graduate School and payment of outstanding financial obligations to the university, the candidate will receive the degree of Doctor of Public Health (DrPH). Diplomas are issued at the end of each term. Degrees are formally awarded at commencement exercises in December and May.

## **Student Policies and Procedures**

### **Academic Performance**

For a student to maintain good academic standing, a grade point average of at least 3.2 and overall satisfactory performance on pass/no pass courses is required. Satisfactory performance on pass/no pass courses is defined as the earning a P grade in all course graded as P or NP.

Students are **STRONGLY** encouraged to complete all course work for the degree within 4 years of matriculation. The School of Public Health allows a maximum of seven years from initial matriculation to complete a DrPH degree (course work plus all other requirements). Credits older than seven years cannot be counted toward a doctoral degree. In general, retention in the school is contingent on the faculty's belief that the student is likely to complete the program in a timely fashion. A student must complete the degree requirements within specified time limits or otherwise exhibit satisfactory progress in their academic program to avoid the risk of being dismissed from the program.

### **Academic Probation and Dismissal for the Program**

Adequate academic performance as a doctoral student is essential. The following policies pertain to the academic requirements of the DrPH program in HCOP. These policies are in addition to the policies of the UAB Graduate School and/or the School of Public Health.

Students are not permitted to earn a grade of “C” or “F” in more than one course as a doctoral student at UAB. Upon earning the second “C” or “F” grade in any course as a doctoral student, dismissal from the program will occur immediately.

Students earning less than a “B” grade in any HCO class will be required to retake that class and earn at least a “B” grade in that course.

In addition to maintaining a 3.2 GPA overall, students must maintain a minimum 3.0 grade point average in each semester as a doctoral student to remain in good academic standing. Those students whose grade point averages fall below this level will be placed on academic probation.

Students earning any grade of NP (not pass), regardless of grade point average, will be placed on academic probation.

Students placed on academic probation will be given a “remediation plan” which will be drafted by the program director and the student’s advisor. The remediation plan will outline how the student can come off academic probation by addressing the deficiencies in their academic record. Students placed on probation in any term prior to graduation must re-establish good academic standing by earning necessary grades in a sufficient number of hours within one semester or face academic dismissal from the program.

Note: During a probation period, students should not receive "I" or "N" grades. Also, a student's academic advisor can petition, in writing, the academic dean for an extension of the probationary period.

Failure to come off academic probation within the specified time period outlined in the remediation plan (usually 1 semester) may result in dismissal from the program.

### **Readmission after Academic Withdrawal**

Students dismissed for failing to meet scholastic or other degree requirements are considered withdrawn for academic reasons and will be considered for readmission only with a written recommendation from the faculty responsible for the program. A written statement from the student's advisor and department chair justifying a readmission decision should support the student's written petition for readmission. The statement should clearly set forth conditions that the student must meet in order to establish good academic standing and complete the degree requirements within the required time limits for the degree.

### **Grading System, Pass/No Pass, Incomplete and No Grades Reported**

Grading in the School of Public Health is based on a 4.0 scale. The grade of A is used to indicate superior performance; B, for adequate performance; C, for minimally adequate performance. Performance below C is recorded as an F and negatively affects the student’s total quality point rating. Some classes are designated as pass/no pass courses, for which a grade of P (passing) signifies satisfactory work and the grade of NP (not passing) indicates unsatisfactory work. Temporary notations used by the school are N for no grade reported, I for incomplete. The letter N denotes late or no submission of a grade by the instructor. An “I” may be requested by a student and submitted at the instructor's discretion, to indicate that a student has performed satisfactorily in the course but due to unforeseen circumstances has been unable to complete requirements. Students requesting consideration of an I grade must discuss with the instructor and agree upon a

plan and a schedule for completing course requirements and complete a "Request for Incomplete Grade Form". If no permanent grade is reported by the end of the following term, an F will be automatically assigned to replace the I or N. Extension of I grades may be granted only upon written request of the instructor to the Associate Dean for Academic Affairs.

### **Cumulative Credits and Grade Point Average**

Semester Hours Earned: The student's "semester hours earned" are increased by:

1. earning a grade of C or better in a course for which the student was registered on a regular (letter grade) basis, or
2. obtaining the P grade in a course taken on a pass/no pass basis

Semester Hours Attempted: The student's "semester hours attempted" are increased by:

1. receiving an A, B, C or F in a course for which the student was registered on a regular basis, or
2. receiving an NP grade in a course taken on a pass/no pass basis.

Quality Points: Four quality points are awarded for each semester hour for which the student receives a grade of A, three quality points are awarded for each semester hour in which a B is earned, and two quality points are awarded for each semester hour in which a C is earned. No quality points are earned for P grades.

Grade Point Average: The grade point average (GPA) is determined by dividing the total quality points awarded by the semester hours attempted. The transcript will show cumulative GPA's for students who have completed previous graduate work at UAB and those students who are enrolled in dual programs; however, to determine the student's current academic status the GPA for each program will be calculated separately by each program.

### **Request for "I" Incomplete Grade**

The UAB Incomplete Grade Policy states that a temporary grade notation of "I" for incomplete may be requested by the student prior to the end of the term and submitted at the course master's discretion due to unforeseen circumstances that effect the student's ability to complete course requirements. Students requesting consideration of an "I" grade must discuss with the course instructor, and agree upon a plan and a schedule for, completion of course requirements. It is the student's responsibility to initiate this discussion, assure completion of the "I" request form and return it to the Office of Student and Academic Services. If no permanent grade is reported by the end of the subsequent term, an "F" will be automatically assigned to replace the "I". Extension of "I" grades may be granted only upon written request of the course instructor to the Associate Dean for Academic Affairs.

### **Transfer of Credit**

This policy pertains to transfer of credit from other universities, course work taken in other graduate degree programs or course work taken at the UAB School of Public Health as a non-degree seeking student.

Previously earned graduate credit (up to 12 semester hours) that has not been applied toward another degree is eligible for transfer into the student's current degree program if the following criteria are met:

- An official transcript showing the course work must be on file.
- Course content information must be provided to determine comparability.
- The course(s) must be at the graduate level.
- The course(s) must not have been used to complete another degree.
- No grades below "B" will be acceptable.

All transfers must be initiated by the student through the Office of Student and Academic Services and require the approval of the advisor, department chair, and academic dean. Transfer of credit, including non-degree credit, cannot take place until one term of course work toward a degree has been completed and/or until probationary status has been removed. Once the transfer of credit has been accepted, it will NOT be included in the grade point average (GPA) calculation in the student's current program.

### **Course Waiver**

A course waiver indicates that a course was completed, most likely as part of another degree, but it is felt by the student in consultation with his/her advisor that the student has sufficient knowledge in a particular area and is not required to complete a course that would be redundant. In the case of "core" courses, the core instructor must determine if the student can waive the course. A waiver request must be accompanied by a written explanation for the request as well as a copy of a syllabus or course description. Receiving a waiver of a required class does not remove the obligation to earn sufficient credit hours as required for the degree. The deficit in credit hours due to course waivers must be made up by determining course options in consultation with the advisor.

### **Procedure for Grade Appeal**

The only legitimate bases for appealing a grade assigned for School of Public Health courses are:

- a belief that an error was made in the determination of the grade; and
- a belief that a grade was arrived at unfairly or on the basis of inconsistent application among students of the stated evaluation standards.

Should a student believe that either of these circumstances applied and that an appeal is warranted, the following procedures are to be followed:

1. Clarification should be sought from the course instructor in an attempt to resolve the disagreement without further appeal.
2. If the matter cannot be resolved in consultation with the course instructor, the student may submit a written appeal to the Academic Dean requesting consideration of the appeal. This request should include a description of the basis for the appeal and the failed attempt to resolve it with the instructor. Upon receipt of such a request, the Academic Dean will bear responsibility to solicit information relevant to the situation from the student and the course instructor, and on the basis of that information to make a determination for or against the appeal. If in the judgment of the Academic Dean there is a legitimate basis for the appeal, the chair of the course instructor's department will ensure that the assigned grade is appropriately changed.

3. If the Academic Dean determines that there is an insufficient basis for a grade change and rules against the appeal, the student may submit a final written appeal to the Academic Dean requesting him or her to convene a panel of three faculty and one student to consider the appeal and make a recommendation to him or her on its disposition. Similarly, if the Academic Dean rules for the appeal, the Instructor may appeal the decision by going through the same process. Based on the recommendation of the panel, the Dean will issue a decision. This decision will be final.
4. Appeals of grades in courses taken outside the School of Public Health will be handled according to the policies and procedures of the schools within which the courses reside. Final disposition of grade appeals for courses in Graduate School programs resides with the Dean of the Graduate School

### **UAB School of Public Health Honor Code**

As a student in the School of Public Health, you are subject to the SOPH Honor Code (found at <http://images.main.uab.edu/isoph/OSAS/StudentHandbookJune2007.pdf>). You are responsible to understand the contents of the Honor Code and to abide by it. Violations of the Honor Code will potentially result in immediate dismissal from the program.

### **Changes and additions to this handbook and to the UAB School of Public Health Student Handbook**

The UAB School of Public Health Department of HCOP reserves the right to change the policies, curricula, or any other matter in this handbook without prior notices. Students will be notified of major changes as soon as possible after they are decided. In addition, students are encouraged to review the UAB School of Public Health Student Handbook and the UAB Graduate School webpage for changes.

**Appendix A: Program Components and Competencies:**

	Program Components								
	MPH Prerequisites	Concentration Prerequisites	Methods Requirements	Concentration Core	Electives	Doctoral Seminar	Practicum	Directed Readings	Dissertation Research
<b>Competency 1</b> (Communication)						X		X	X
<b>Competency 2</b> (Critical/Analytical Thinking)	X	X	X		X	X			
<b>Competency 3</b> (Education)					X	X			
<b>Competency 4</b> (Ethics)	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
<b>Competency 5</b> (Leadership)		X		X					X
<b>Competency 6</b> (Management)				X	X				X
<b>Competency 7</b> (Public Health Practice/Community Orientation)	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
<b>Competency 8</b> (Research)		X	X		X	X			

Upon completion of the program, DrPH students are expected to be competent in these areas. X's indicate study component areas that will focus on the competencies. However, due to the nature of public health studies, the competencies will be integrated across the components and courses.