Boston University School of Public Health
Department of Epidemiology

PhD Program Guidelines
2018-2019
About the School of Public Health

SPH Mission
To improve the health of local, national, and international populations, particularly the disadvantaged, underserved, and vulnerable, through excellence and innovation in education, research, and service.

SPH Values
Our values drive what we do and how we do it. We are deeply committed to igniting positive change in the world. We seek to create a respectful, collaborative, diverse, and inclusive community within the School of Public Health (SPH), and to promote justice, human rights, and equity within and across our local and global communities. We are bold in our pursuit of knowledge that matters, creative in our pursuit of solutions, and innovative in our education. In all we do, it is our engagement with people, communities, and institutions in the world beyond our academic walls that leads to success.

Accreditation
Boston University is accredited by the New England Association of Schools and Colleges (NEASC). The School of Public Health is accredited by the Council on Education for Public Health (CEPH).

About This Guide
This guide is intended to be a description of the guidelines in effect for the PhD program in Epidemiology for the 2018/2019 academic year. Students matriculating in this academic year will be responsible for the curriculum requirements described within the 2018-2019 SPH Bulletin throughout their academic tenure at the Boston University School of Public Health (BUSPH).

Boston University and the School of Public Health reserve the right to change the policies, procedures, curricula, or any other matter and to cancel programs and courses with appropriate notice. This guide is not intended to be a contractual agreement nor a guarantee of courses or programs described herein.

Important Dates throughout the Academic Year
Boston University School of Public Health maintains its own academic calendar distinct from the Charles River Campus. It is important that students always refer to the BUSPH registration packets, academic calendar, and websites for SPH-specific information. That said, SPH aligns its schedule with the Charles River Campus schedule, particularly for holidays, holiday replacement days, Intersession, and Spring Break.
Doctoral students are directed to the SPH Student Resources Page, www.bu.edu/sph/students/resources for forms, academic calendar, class meeting dates, registration information, and events calendars. The Doctoral Student Graduation Calendar is on page 28.

The Doctoral Student Organization

Doctoral students are encouraged to become involved in the Doctoral Student Organization, http://www.bu.edu/sph/students/student-services/student-organizations/doctoral-student-organization/.

This interdepartmental association is geared specifically towards PhD and DrPH students at BUSPH. All past and present doctoral students are welcome and encouraged to participate.

What are the goals of the Doctoral Student Organization?

1. Foster interdepartmental interaction and collaboration
2. Promote professional development through research presentations and discussions
3. Have fun and network by holding various social events
Department of Epidemiology

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Dear PhD Candidate:

Welcome to Boston University School of Public Health’s Epidemiology Doctoral Program. You are joining the ranks of our bright, talented, and hardworking PhD students and will, soon enough, join our alumni as leaders in our fine discipline of epidemiology. Over the next four years, you will be immersed in epidemiology theory, methods, and practice, through coursework and the dissertation process. Our goal, as your teachers and mentors, is to provide you with an epidemiology skillset in your chosen substantive area that will serve as your foundation for independent research and public health leadership. Toward that end, we offer an array of courses on epidemiologic principles, study designs, analytic methods, and substantive areas such as infectious diseases, reproduction, cancer and cardiovascular disease, AIDS, genetic, environmental, and drug epidemiology.

Our faculty members are active researchers, who bring a breadth of experience to the classroom and to dissertation advisory committees. In addition to our own research projects, we collaborate with researchers in other departments of the School of Public Health, departments within the Boston University Medical Center, the State government, other academic institutions, and the private sector. Some particular areas of interest among faculty members are reproductive, perinatal and pediatric epidemiology, the impact of environmental contaminants upon health, genetic epidemiology, tuberculosis, cancer epidemiology, and cardiovascular disease epidemiology. In addition, two groups that specialize in drug epidemiology are intimately linked to the department: the Slone Epidemiology Center and the Boston Collaborative Drug Surveillance Center. We also have close collaborations with investigators at the local Veterans Administration. These many projects and collaborations open your doors for many learning opportunities and for rich and robust data resources for dissertation work.

By virtue of your acceptance into our program, you too bring a background that will enrich us, the classroom, your fellow doctoral candidates, and our learning community. We look forward to getting to know you better. Please contact Dr. Sherri Stuver, the Director of the Epidemiology Doctoral Program, at 617-358-3870 or sstuver@bu.edu, for further information about our program as you plan your academic career here.

Sincerely,

Martha M. Werler, DSc, MPH
Department Chair and Professor of Epidemiology
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Program Overview

These guidelines direct students through their doctoral studies in the Department of Epidemiology at BUSPH. The guidelines address requirements — such as coursework, the qualifying examination, and the doctoral dissertation — as well as processes needed to meet these requirements and recommendations for how to meet them.

Goal of the Epidemiology Doctoral Program

The goal of the doctoral program is to educate candidates to become independent, productive, and creative research scientists in the field of epidemiology.

Competencies

Upon completing the requirements for the PhD in epidemiology, graduates will be able to:

- Formulate research hypotheses that can be evaluated through empirical epidemiologic investigation;
- Critically evaluate the advantages and disadvantages of epidemiologic study designs applied to particular etiologic associations;
- Analyze and interpret epidemiologic studies using appropriate methods;
- Explain the theoretical underpinnings of epidemiology, including new and traditional study designs;
- Demonstrate understanding of sources of bias and approaches to evaluating and controlling bias;
- Demonstrate proficiency in data collection, data analysis, and written summaries of statistical analyses;
- Demonstrate expertise in at least one substantive area of epidemiology and apply that expertise to preparation of the dissertation proposal; and,
- Perform all the steps of conducting a hypothesis-driven epidemiologic study, from developing hypotheses, to designing, analyzing, and interpreting results, to writing up findings in the form of a publication-quality manuscript; as demonstrated by the PhD dissertation, which requires three manuscripts judged to be suitable for publication.
## Competency Assessment Map

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Competency</th>
<th>Course</th>
<th>Assessment</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Formulate research hypotheses that can be evaluated through empirical</td>
<td>EP854: Advanced Epidemiology</td>
<td>Exams: The first exam in this course covers various aspects of study design including how to ask a causal question. The material for the course covers the difference between causal and predictive hypotheses and the material is covered on the first exam. The exam assesses the students' ability to formulate an appropriate epidemiologic hypothesis.</td>
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<td>2. Critically evaluate the advantages and disadvantages of epidemiologic</td>
<td>EP855: Advanced Epidemiology Seminar: Issues in Study Design</td>
<td>Paper: Students research and write a 5-10 page paper on a topic that addresses methodological questions. The questions are proposed by the students and approved by the instructor as addressing a component of epidemiologic theory. Students must be able to articulate the implications and application of their chosen methodologic questions with respect to the design and conduct of epidemiology research studies.</td>
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<td>study designs applied to particular etiologic associations.</td>
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<td>Final Exam: Students are given a final exam in which they select one of two questions and write for two hours on that question. The final exam includes several subparts that deal with different aspects of epidemiological study design. The exam requires students to evaluate different epidemiological study designs.</td>
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<td>3. Analyze and interpret epidemiologic studies using appropriate methods.</td>
<td>EP854: Advanced Epidemiology</td>
<td>Problem Sets: Understanding and application of the competency is covered in homework 1 when students analyze data using counterfactual types, homework 2 when they analyze data on effect modification, and homework 3 when they analyze data on misclassification and p-values.</td>
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<td></td>
<td>EP855: Advanced Epidemiology Seminar: Issues in Study Design</td>
<td>Paper: Students research and write a 5-10 page paper on a topic that addresses methodological questions. The questions are proposed by the students and approved by the instructor as addressing a component of epidemiologic theory. Students must be able to analyze and apply information from published epidemiologic studies that is relevant to the methodologic question addressed in their paper.</td>
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<td>Competency</td>
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<tr>
<td>4. Explain the theoretical underpinnings of epidemiology, including new</td>
<td>EP854: Advanced Epidemiology</td>
<td>Problem Sets: Most problem sets in the class address this competency. For example, in homework 1 has students use an applied example from the counterfactual theory framework. These assessments evaluate a student’s comprehension of foundational and evolving theories within epidemiology.</td>
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<tr>
<td>and traditional study designs.</td>
<td></td>
<td>Paper: Students research and write a 5-10 page paper on a topic that addresses methodological questions. The questions are proposed by the students and approved by the instructor as addressing a component of epidemiologic theory. Students must be able to demonstrate their understanding of aspects of epidemiologic theory fundamental to the discipline.</td>
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<td></td>
<td>EP855: Advanced Epidemiology Seminar: Issues in Study Design</td>
<td>Final Project: The final project has students using their own data to conduct a causal analysis. As part of their write up, the students discuss the theoretical underpinnings of the methods and the limitations of the approach.</td>
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<td></td>
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<td>Exams: Each quiz is focused on some aspect of bias in epidemiologic research. Quiz 1 covers confounding, quiz 2 covers DAGs and selection bias, and quiz 3 covers misclassification. The final exam reviews all of these concepts. Through these assessments, the students must demonstrate their understanding of bias and how to evaluate and control it.</td>
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<tr>
<td>5. Demonstrate understanding of sources of bias and approaches to</td>
<td></td>
<td>Final Project: The final project has students analyze a dataset that they have access to, in order to ask a causal question using the methods practiced in class (e.g., marginal structural models, mediation analysis, instrumental variables, regression discontinuity, propensity score, etc.). They then write up and interpret their findings. The final project assesses the students' ability to analyze and interpret epidemiologic data using appropriate methods.</td>
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<td>evaluating and controlling bias.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Competency</td>
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<tr>
<td>6. Demonstrate proficiency in data collection, data analysis, and written summaries of statistical analyses.</td>
<td>EP855: Advanced Epidemiology Seminar: Issues in Study Design</td>
<td>Paper: Students research and write a 5-10 page paper on a topic that addresses methodological questions. The questions are proposed by the students and approved by the instructor as addressing a component of epidemiologic theory. Students must conduct analysis and be able to explain how the methodologic topic of their paper is affected by, evaluates, and/or controls for bias.</td>
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<td></td>
<td>EP860: Novel Analytical Methods for Epidemiology</td>
<td>Final Project: Students implement one of the methods to control sources of bias using a dataset that they have access to in order to answer a causal question. Through this assessment, students must not only demonstrate their understanding of biases in epidemiologic research, but also their application of the methods to evaluate and control bias.</td>
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<td></td>
<td>EP860: Novel Analytical Methods for Epidemiology</td>
<td>Homework Assignments: Each session in the course introduces the students to an applied example of using novel data analysis methods in SAS. In each assignment, students demonstrate their ability to analyze epidemiologic data and provide a written discussion of the analytic approach and the results.</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
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<td>Final Project: Students must demonstrate their mastery of data analysis using the novel methods presented. Students then write up their results, describing the methods and their limitations. Students demonstrate their ability to analyze epidemiologic data and provide a written discussion of the analytic approach and the results.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Competency</td>
<td>Course</td>
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<td>7. Demonstrate expertise in at least one substantive area of epidemiology and apply that expertise to preparation of the dissertation proposal.</td>
<td>Dissertation proposal</td>
<td>Proposal: Students must submit a 6,000-word proposal that describes the three dissertation studies to be conducted. The proposal addresses the competency through the student's presentation of the epidemiologic rationale for the study, the biological mechanism(s) that underlie the exposure-disease relationship, and a critical review of epidemiologic and other studies that set the stage for the dissertation. With the proposal, the student articulates why the hypotheses are important and how the proposed studies and analytic strategies will evaluate those hypotheses.</td>
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<td>8. Perform all the steps of conducting a hypothesis-driven epidemiologic study, from developing hypotheses, to designing, analyzing, and interpreting results, to writing up findings in the form of a publication-quality manuscript; as demonstrated by the PhD dissertation, which requires three manuscripts judged to be suitable for publication.</td>
<td>Dissertation</td>
<td>Dissertation: This competency is addressed through the written submission and oral defense of the dissertation.</td>
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</table>
As required by the School, doctoral students must complete an annual report in which they assess their mastery of the doctoral program competencies. The intent is for this document to serve as a springboard for discussion with a student’s advisor, about course selection, dissertation progress, and professional development.

**Admission**

In addition to meeting general admission requirements of the School of Public Health (see the Boston University School of Public Health website [bu.edu/sph/admissions](http://bu.edu/sph/admissions)), applicants should have a post-baccalaureate degree in epidemiology or another health-related discipline (an MPH, MS, or equivalent degree) with adequate introductory preparation in epidemiology and statistics. Adequate introductory preparation might include two courses in epidemiologic methods and one course in biostatistics, for example, but is ultimately judged by the admissions committee. Post-baccalaureate applicants without a Master’s degree will be considered for admission if they have a strong academic record and relevant research experience.

All applicants are required to submit the results of a Graduate Record Exam (GRE) or its equivalent completed in the preceding five years.

**Doctoral Program Supervision: The Epidemiology Doctoral Committee**

The Epidemiology Doctoral Committee (EDC) oversees the doctoral program in epidemiology. The EDC is a committee of the department faculty. The members of the EDC and the Director of the Epidemiology Doctoral Program ("program director"), who chairs the EDC, are appointed by the Chair of the Department of Epidemiology. The EDC implements the program guidelines described herein.

These guidelines have been reviewed and approved by the department faculty and by the Education Committee of the Boston University School of Public Health. All EDC decisions concerning individual students are final. The decisions are reported to the department faculty.

The EDC delegates authority to other persons for certain functions (such as the dissertation committee for supervising a student’s doctoral dissertation), but retains the final authority in approving or disapproving a student’s doctoral studies. The EDC is responsible for accepting students into the doctoral program, approving members of the student’s dissertation committee, approving outside review of the dissertation, approving the final dissertation, certifying that a student has completed the degree requirements, and if necessary, dismissing students from the doctoral program.

**Advisor**

Each student entering the epidemiology doctoral program is assigned a pre-dissertation academic advisor by the EDC. The academic advisor is a member of the department’s regular or adjunct faculty. A student may request a change in academic advisors by contacting the EDC program director. A student may request a particular academic advisor with that faculty member's explicit consent. The student, not the academic advisor, bears all responsibility for achieving and documenting the student's administrative requirements and deadlines. When the EDC approves the student’s dissertation committee, the chair of that committee becomes the student's dissertation and academic advisor.
**Doctoral Student Progress File**

The Doctoral Student Progress File is an important set of documents that demonstrate the progress of the student through the doctoral program. All students will be responsible for understanding the contents of their own file and familiarizing themselves with the rules outlined below.

When a student enters the program, the program director creates the Progress File. The file is available for inspection by the student and members of the doctoral program committee. Initially, the file contains the student's name, the date of entry into the program, and the name of the assigned academic advisor. It is the student's responsibility to make additions to the Progress File and guarantee that the program director has received the appropriate information. Additions may be made in person or by email.

**Student Responsibilities**

Students must submit the following information and materials to their Progress File:

- Copies of the School’s annual Doctoral Progress Report Form;
- Notification of change of academic advisor, including the name of the new advisor and the date of the change;
- Copies of transcripts and other required documentation showing completion of the credit requirements;
- A copy of the certification of the completion of training in the Responsible Conduct of Research;
- A copy of the dissertation concept letter to the program director documenting the formation and membership of the dissertation committee;
- A copy of the dissertation proposal and committee member statements;
- Copies of all dissertation progress reports prepared for the presentation day;
- A copy of an announcement of the dissertation defense.

**Program Director Responsibilities**

The doctoral program director must maintain the following materials in all Progress Files

- The program director’s written statements of the passage of the qualifying examinations;
- The program director's written statement of approval of the proposed dissertation research and formation of the dissertation committee;
- The program director’s written statement of approval of the dissertation proposal;
- The program director’s written statements of approval of the annual progress report;
- The dissertation committee chair’s written approval indicating the dissertation committee's unanimous approval of the dissertation;
- Any correspondence pertaining to potential or actual disapproval of the dissertation.
Education Requirements

Coursework

Boston University requires that no doctoral student receive a grade below B- in more than one full-semester course. The second such grade results in dismissal and is not subject to petition.

The EDC has established the following requirements and recommendations for coursework and academic credit:

1. The student must earn at least 32 credits at the Boston University School of Public Health, or the equivalent in approved transfer credits (see Item 7 below), beyond any credits required for other degrees. None of the coursework credits may be for pass/fail courses.

2. At least 24 of the 32 credits must be earned in courses offered by the BUSPH Epidemiology or Biostatistics departments. The grade for these courses must be B or higher. If any epidemiology or biostatistics course is retaken to bring the grade up to B or higher, the credits for the second enrollment will not count toward the required credits.

3. The following courses are required:
   - Advanced Epidemiology (EP854)
   - Advanced Epidemiology Seminar: Issues in Study Design (EP855)
   - Novel Analytical Methods for Epidemiology (EP860)

4. It is recommended that the remaining credits of coursework in the Epidemiology and Biostatistics departments originate from the following courses:
   - Intermediate Epidemiology (EP813)
   - A Guided Epidemiology Study (EP817)
   - Perspectives in Epidemiology Studies (EP820)
   - Applications of Intermediate Epidemiology (EP850)
   - Design and Conduct of Cohort Studies (EP857) and of Case-control studies (EP858)
   - Quantitative Bias Analysis Methods for Epidemiologic Research (EP861)
   - Social Network Analysis for Public Health Research (PH729)
   - Logistic Regression and Survival Analysis (BS820)
   - Categorical Data Analysis (BS821)
   - Applied Statistics in Clinical Trials I (BS851)
   - Statistical Methods for Epidemiology (BS852)
   - Bayesian Modeling for Biomedical Research & Public Health (BS855)
   - Analysis of Correlated Data (BS857)

5. These courses should be complemented by at least one course in a substantive area, such as cancer epidemiology, reproductive epidemiology, or infectious disease epidemiology.
6. Consistent with the BUSPH non-degree student policy, students who completed up to eight credits from the courses listed in Items 3 and 4 above as a non-degree student may count the credits towards their 32-credit doctoral degree.

7. A maximum of four of the 32 credits may be transferred from other institutions, including short courses and summer courses. Requests for permission to transfer credits must be made to the EDC program director. Requests to transfer credits earned before entering the doctoral program must be made during the first semester. Requests to transfer credits earned while in the doctoral program must be made before taking the course. Transferred credits must be at the graduate level. Transferred credits must have been earned no more than five years before the date of the transfer request and must not have been used to fulfill the requirements for another degree. Credits may not be transferred for courses judged by the EDC to be equivalent to the courses listed in Item 3 above, to replace recommended courses in Item 4 above, or to be redundant with any other course work applied to the degree requirements. Although credits for courses taken at the Boston University Charles River campus are considered transfer credits by the School of Public Health, they may count (with the program director’s approval) toward the 32 credits without counting toward the maximum of 4 transfer credits.

8. A doctoral student may take up to four credits of directed study/research without special permission. If a student wishes to do another directed study or research after having completed four credits, the student must write a short (1-2 paragraphs) letter to the program director requesting permission to do so. The letter should describe what the student will do for his/her directed work, the faculty member who will supervise the student, and the number of credits requested. The EDC will review the request and decide whether or not the student will receive credit for it.

9. Doctoral students who have completed their coursework requirements must register for 2-credit continuing student status for each fall and spring semester until they complete the doctoral program.

10. Post-baccalaureate students without a Master’s degree must complete the 32 credits of coursework required for the MS in Epidemiology degree, before beginning the 32 credits required for the PhD degree.

**Doctoral Seminars**

Students are required to attend the monthly doctoral seminars conducted throughout the academic year. An important purpose of the seminars is for doctoral students to present their dissertation research. These presentations can represent work from any point in the dissertation process, either planned or in progress, and provide an excellent forum for sharing your research with fellow student and faculty colleagues.

Other topics covered in the doctoral seminars may include: professional conduct, grant writing, networking, etc. In addition to the mandatory attendance at the monthly seminars, every doctoral student is expected to give a dissertation research presentation at least once during their time in the program.
Responsible Conduct of Research Training

Each doctoral student is required to complete the Boston University training program in the responsible conduct of research, which consists of an online preparation and four live workshop sessions. This training program should be completed as early as possible, preferably during the first year of study.
The purpose of the epidemiology doctoral qualifying examination is to test proficiency in the principles and methods of epidemiology and biostatistics by questions designed to test the student’s ability to apply concepts. The content of the examination is methodologic. It is intended to require the student to demonstrate proficiency in principles and methods that a person with a doctoral degree in epidemiology should be expected to have mastered. For example, the students may be asked to discuss the ramifications of different methodological choices. The biostatistics section of the examination focuses on the practical application of biostatistics for an epidemiologist. It includes manipulating computer output to perform basic calculations for epidemiologic purposes. The content of these sections is not confined exclusively to material covered in courses offered in the department’s curriculum. The qualifying examination requirement is met once both parts are passed.

Timing of the Qualifying Exams

Each section of the doctoral qualifying examination is offered once a year. The epidemiology section is offered in July and the biostatistics section is offered in October. Before these examination dates, the EDC director will contact students to determine who intends to take each section of the examination. Each student who intends to take either section of the examination, whether or not he or she has taken that section previously, must notify the examination coordinator in writing no later than one month before the examination date. Students may withdraw their notice without penalty up to the time they receive the examination.

The epidemiology section of the exam is at the end of the second year of training, after the required courses have been completed (EP854, EP855, EP860). The biostatistics section of the exam is taken in the fall of either the second or third year of training. Any exceptions to these conditions must be petitioned in writing to the EDC.

Procedures

The examination consists of an epidemiology section and a biostatistics section. Both sections are closed-note and closed-book. Students may use a hand-held, unprogrammed calculator, scratch paper (provided), pen, pencil, and a word processor. No other computing tool or memory aid will be allowed or provided.

Each section of the examination will have three questions. Students will have six hours to complete a section. By the end of the six hours, the student must submit answers to only two of the three questions in each section. Students will be given a copy of the examination and of their answers when they submit their answers. Students will receive a pass/fail grade from the program director. A passing grade requires an average of 70 points from each grader over the two submitted answers, and that all grades are above 60. A student may be offered the
opportunity to take an oral examination to clarify her/his grade. The decision to offer this opportunity is made at the discretion of the examiners and before unblinding the examination. The oral examination will be scheduled as soon as possible after the written examination and will be administered by the original examiners. The questions on the oral examination may be different from the questions on the written examination. The examiners will reach a consensus pass/fail grade immediately after the oral examination. Students may elect not to take an oral examination if it is offered. The grade assigned to students who elect not to take an oral examination will be a fail.

Failing the Qualifying Exam

Students who fail either section of the qualifying examination on their initial attempt may take that section again at a subsequent offering without requesting permission to do so. Students who fail one section of the qualifying examination need not retake the section that they passed.

In virtually all cases, students may not take the qualifying examination a third time. Failing either section of the examination twice results in dismissal from the program. However, a student who fails twice may petition the EDC in writing to take the examination a third time. The petition must be addressed to the EDC program director and delivered no more than one month after the student receives notice that they failed a section of the examination for a second time. The student must petition to take the examination the next time it is offered. The petition must describe extraordinary circumstances that led directly to the two failures and that reasonably can be expected to be overcome in a third attempt. If the EDC grants the petition, it may be conditional on successful completion of a course of preparatory action on the student's part. Under no circumstances may a student take a section of the examination a fourth time.
Dissertation

The doctoral dissertation is a written report of the student’s independent and original research in epidemiology. Dissertation research should not be so far advanced at the time of submission of the dissertation concept letter that EDC input could not be incorporated into the design, analysis, or presentation of the research. Students begin by briefly proposing their dissertation topic in a dissertation concept letter. If approved, the concept letter is followed by a more formal written proposal. The doctoral dissertation itself consists of three manuscripts of publishable quality research that address a common theme. The dissertation must comply with the formatting requirements specified by Boston University. The dissertation ordinarily comprises an introduction, at least three chapters presenting the original research, a discussion or conclusion, bibliography, and appendices as appropriate. The research presented in the chapters must meet the current standards of publication quality in refereed journals such as American Journal of Epidemiology, American Journal of Public Health, Annals of Epidemiology, Epidemiology, International Journal of Epidemiology, Journal of the American Medical Association, and New England Journal of Medicine. It is understood that the dissertation papers may be longer and have more tables and figures than permitted in published papers.

Submission Deadlines of Dissertation Concept Letter or Dissertation Proposal

There are four deadlines per year for submitting the dissertation concept letter or the dissertation proposal to the EDC:

- September 15
- December 15
- March 15
- June 15

Students who wish to submit a dissertation concept letter or a dissertation proposal must send it to the EDC program director (email is preferable) by the deadline. The program director circulates the submission to all members of the EDC for comment and discussion at the next EDC meeting. No later than 60 days following the submission deadline, the EDC program director will send the student a letter of approval or disapproval (by email).

Presentation Requirement

All doctoral students who have passed both sections of the qualifying examination are required to make a short oral presentation on the status of their dissertation at an annual Epidemiology Doctoral Student Presentation Day. The primary purpose of this presentation is to give EDC members and other department faculty an update of their dissertation progress. Doctoral students will also receive brief verbal feedback about their dissertation work, but the primary route for
feedback regarding the dissertation is through the student’s committee and outside readers. The presentation should briefly describe the student’s status and progress. Students who cannot attend the presentation day must nonetheless submit a one-page written summary and a set of PowerPoint slides that describe their status and progress on their dissertation. Students who are defending their dissertation during the Spring semester are excused from this presentation and written report.

This presentation serves as an annual formal assessment of the student’s progress on his/her dissertation. The EDC members review the student’s presentation and send him/her a written evaluation that may include expected goals for the coming year. If the EDC members conclude that the student has not shown adequate progress on the dissertation, they may place the student on probation (see Section 5, Grading Standards, Probation, and Dismissal) or ask for more frequent progress reports.

**Dissertation Concept Letter**

By the second submission deadline following the notice of passing both sections of the qualifying examination, the student is expected to submit a dissertation concept letter to the EDC. The purpose of this letter is to briefly describe the student’s dissertation plans and dissertation committee so that EDC members can review it before the student invests the effort of developing an entire proposal. The letter should be no longer than three pages (one inch margins, single spaced with one line separating paragraphs, and no less than 11 point font). It should begin with an introductory paragraph that presents the dissertation topic and its importance. The introduction should be followed by three sections pertaining to each of the three chapters. Each section should contain a research aim (which should clearly address the hypothesis), a description of the data source that will be used, including information about the sample size, a brief statement of the analytic plan, and a description of the role of the student in completing the aim. The letter should address the feasibility of the dissertation and expected timeline for completion. The letter should conclude with the nomination of the members of the dissertation committee, including a nomination of its chair.

The chair of the dissertation committee must be a faculty member with a primary or secondary appointment in the Department of Epidemiology at Boston University. The chair must be approved by the EDC, which will consider whether the proposed chair has a potential conflict of interest (e.g., the chair has an interest, aside from the student’s interest, in the pace of dissertation progress). The chair becomes the student’s academic advisor during the dissertation phase of the doctoral program. The committee in whole will consist of a minimum of three persons; at least one of the committee members must have a primary appointment in the Department of Epidemiology. A typical committee would consist of an epidemiologist from the department serving as chair, a second member of the department’s faculty or a biostatistician (recommended for students with particularly sophisticated analytic plans, but not required for all students), and a person with substantive expertise related to the topic of the research. For proposed committee members who are not on the department’s regular or adjunct faculty, a brief statement must be given to the EDC of their areas of expertise as they pertain to the dissertation research. The dissertation concept letter must state that each member of the committee has agreed to serve on it and has approved the description of the proposed research.

The doctoral program in epidemiology requires that students have some experience collecting or working with primary data. If the student will not be collecting or working with primary data for the dissertation, the letter must contain a statement that describes his or her experience with
primary data in some other setting either before or during the course of doctoral study. Validation studies or medical record abstractions are acceptable as primary data collection for a dissertation. Experience working with primary data could include data editing and cross-checking.

The program director circulates the dissertation concept letter to the EDC for comment. No more than 60 days after the submission deadline, the program director either approves or disapproves in writing. Disapproval is accompanied by recommendations for improving the proposed research and/or the composition of the dissertation committee. Following approval, the student must begin to work with the dissertation committee to develop the dissertation proposal.

Dissertation Proposal

By the second submission deadline following notice of approval of the dissertation concept letter, the student must submit a dissertation proposal and cover letter(s) with written statement(s) and signatures of its approval from all members of the dissertation committee to the program director. The program director distributes the proposal to the EDC members for comment. No more than 60 days after the submission deadline, the program director notifies the student whether the proposal was approved or disapproved. Disapproval is accompanied by recommendations for improving the proposal for resubmission. After the dissertation proposal has been approved, the student should begin work on the dissertation under the supervision of the dissertation committee.

It is impossible to establish guidelines that anticipate the content of every dissertation proposal. In general, the proposal should be logically organized to present the proposed dissertation research. If the proposal addresses a common disease to be studied by three different designs in different populations, then that disease should be discussed in an introductory background section and background on the population and design should be reviewed in the sections devoted to each study. If the proposal addresses three different hypotheses to be examined in a common population, then that population should be addressed in a common introductory section and then the hypotheses reviewed in the sections devoted to each study. In short, the organization should allow complete presentation while avoiding repetition. The dissertation proposal should be brief, and must be no more than 6000 words long, not including the title page, abstract, or bibliography. Students should use one inch margins and no less than 11 point font). Failure to adhere to these requirements will result in the proposal being returned without review. The EDC recommends that the proposal address four main topics:

- Abstract
- Specific aims and hypotheses of the dissertation
- Background literature review and rationale
- Study design and methods

The goals and recommended page allocation for each section are presented below. Recommended page allocations are given as a guide to the emphasis that should be placed on each section relative to the others. The word limit above (6000 words) is the limit of the allowed length. There is no page limit.

1. Abstract (recommended at most one paragraph): Summarize the overall aim of the dissertation, the hypotheses that will be tested, the samples, study designs, and statistical
analyses that will be used to test these hypotheses. It is recommended that you write the abstract last.

2. Specific aims and hypotheses of the dissertation (recommended at most two pages): The specific aims should concisely state the datasets and methods that will be used to test the hypotheses. It should be very clear to the reader that by accomplishing the specific aim, the dissertation will provide evidence that addresses the hypotheses. The hypotheses should guide the review of the literature, selection of variables, analyses, and interpretation of results. The hypotheses should state the exposure-disease associations that will be tested in each study.

3. Background literature review and rationale (recommended at most four pages): The literature review should do several things. It should present the epidemiologic rationale for the study, the biological mechanism(s) that underlie the exposure-disease relationship, and a critical review of epidemiologic and other studies that set the stage for the dissertation. At the end of the literature review, the reader should understand why the hypotheses are important, and how they will advance knowledge about your topic. Sub-headings for sections of your literature review are helpful.

4. Study design and methods (recommended at most four pages for each dissertation paper): For each dissertation paper, repeat the aim and hypothesis, then briefly describe a) the dataset and sample that will be used, b) the study design (and rationale, if necessary), c) how the independent and dependent variables and potential confounders will be measured, d) plans for analyses, and e) statistical power calculations. Address the validity and quality of the data, and how these are assessed. When presenting plans for analyses, address how the analyses will test the hypotheses proposed for that study. Generally, avoid proposing analyses that are unrelated to your hypotheses, but if such analyses are planned, explain why. Most importantly, the analytic plan should always include descriptive analyses, crude analyses, and stratified analyses. Plans for modeling should only be proposed after completing these three. The student should describe his or her role in the data collection. For dissertation projects involving secondary data, the student also must confirm that the primary study has IRB approval and that the student is included as study personnel on the IRB protocol. End this section with the limitations of the proposed study methods.

Students are encouraged to read the approved proposals (and concept letters) of their student colleagues. These proposals (and concept letters) provide a template for successful submissions. The EDC cannot, however, provide copies of approved proposals (or concept letters) to other students, as each student’s submissions to the EDC are confidential. Students should ask other students directly to read their work.

Change of Dissertation Paper or Committee Members

If one of the student’s dissertation papers changes substantially from that described in the dissertation proposal and approved by the EDC, the student must send a short description (1-2 pages) of the hypothesis, rationale, and methods of the new dissertation paper to the EDC for review and approval. A dissertation paper is considered substantially different if it addresses a different research question or employs a different dataset from that described in the dissertation proposal. This proposed change must be accompanied by a letter from the dissertation chair that
approves the proposed change on behalf of the dissertation committee. A student may propose a change in dissertation committee membership by the same process, except no letter of approval is required from the chair of the committee if it is the chair whose membership is changing. The EDC will review the proposed change and may approve or disapprove it. The decision will be sent to the student with a copy to the chair of the dissertation committee. If the proposed change is not approved, the letter will contain an explanation and suggest revisions that may be approved.

Dissertation Preparation

It is impossible to establish guidelines that anticipate the content of every dissertation. In general, the dissertation should be logically organized to present the research findings. If the dissertation addresses a common disease to be studied by three different designs in different populations, then that disease should be discussed in an introductory background chapter and background on the population and design should be reviewed in the chapters devoted to each study. If the dissertation addresses three different hypotheses to be examined in a common population, then that population should be addressed in a common introductory chapter and then the hypotheses reviewed in the chapters devoted to each study. In short, the organization should allow complete presentation while avoiding repetition. The dissertation must be prepared in accordance with the Boston University requirements (bu.edu/library/guide/theses/). The EDC strongly recommends that students begin preparation of their dissertation by writing a detailed outline and reviewing it with all members of their committee.

If the student works with someone who is not on the dissertation committee, the committee members must be informed and the individual’s contribution must be acknowledged in the dissertation.

Review Preceding the Dissertation Defense

In order to optimize the feedback to a student from researchers with experience in the field of the dissertation research, each student must have her or his dissertation research reviewed by readers from outside their approved committee before the dissertation defense. Students have two options for review. The student and the committee should choose one of the options, based on their preference for feedback earlier or later in the process, their preference for the nature of the process and its educational benefit, timing of the expected defense, and the convenience of scheduling one option or the other.

Option #1: Convene a Review Meeting

The student may schedule a two hour review meeting in the semester before the semester of their defense. To schedule the review meeting, the student’s chair should notify the program director of the intention to schedule the meeting and propose a date in the semester before the semester of the defense and at least twelve weeks before the anticipated defense date. Attendees should include, at a minimum, the student, the approved committee (members may attend by teleconference), and at least two reviewers nominated to the program director by the chair with the notice of scheduling the review meeting. The EDC will approve or disapprove the nominations of the two reviewers within approximately two weeks. If disapproved, alternative reviewers will be suggested to the chair. The student should send their dissertation hypothesis, aims, introduction, methods, results, and preliminary inferences to the reviewers at least fourteen
days before the review meeting. These can be presented as an annotated outline with tables and figures, or as an early start-to-finish draft of the dissertation. At the review meeting, the student will present the progress of the dissertation research, focusing on methodologic obstacles and inferential challenges. The student should prepare handouts to guide the discussion.

The handouts should summarize the aims, methods, results, and preliminary inferences, and should include a list of questions and obstacles for each study that should be part of the focus of the review meeting. The reviewers and committee will provide feedback at the review meeting to direct the student as he or she completes the dissertation. The student and chair of the committee should note important directions suggested by the reviewers and committee during the meeting. It would be helpful for the student to record the meeting.

After the meeting, the student should summarize the meeting results, review the summary with the chair, and distribute the summary to the committee and external reviewers to ensure the summary corresponds with their view of the review meeting results. Ultimately, the chair should require that the student address the results of the review meeting as he or she completes the dissertation. The review meeting is a less formal presentation of the dissertation than the defense (e.g., students are encouraged to use handouts rather than project slides) and it is anticipated that the directions can be incorporated into the draft final dissertation without delaying the defense. Reviewers may be invited to join the student’s committee, but are not obliged to join or to be so invited.

The draft final dissertation is delivered to the program director at least four weeks before the defense date by the chair of the committee. The dissertation committee should only allow the dissertation to be submitted once they agree it is complete and ready for defense, including formatting per the Boston University requirements (bu.edu/library/guide/theses). Upon receipt of the dissertation, the program director will announce to the department faculty that the student’s dissertation has been received from the dissertation committee. Any member of the department faculty may review and comment on the dissertation between the time of this announcement and the time of the student’s defense.

**Option #2: Review of the Draft Final Dissertation**

The dissertation committee chair recruits one or two readers who are not on the student’s dissertation committee to review the final draft of the dissertation. The reader(s) must be approved by the EDC and the chair may nominate them for consideration by the EDC at any time. They may be faculty members at Boston University or researchers outside of Boston University whose research is relevant to the student’s dissertation. They should not be directly involved in the student’s research or work, so as to avoid any conflict of interest or appearance of a conflict of interest.

The draft final dissertation must be prepared at least eight weeks before the defense date. At that time, the dissertation is delivered to both the outside reader(s) and the program director by the chair of the committee. The dissertation committee should only allow the dissertation to be submitted for review by the outside reader(s) once they agree it is complete and ready for defense, including formatting per the Boston University requirements (bu.edu/library/guide/theses). Upon receipt of the dissertation, the program director will announce to the department faculty that the student’s dissertation has been received from the dissertation committee. Any member of the department faculty may review and comment on the dissertation between the time of this announcement and the time of the student’s defense. The outside reader(s) must be given a minimum of four weeks to review the dissertation, allowing at least four weeks for the student to make modifications before the defense in response to their
comments. Their role is to ensure that the methods and results are scientifically sound. They should review the complete dissertation, prepared according to the Boston University Guidelines, with the goal that, at a minimum, the manuscripts are acceptable for publication in the epidemiology journals listed below* (aside from word length and number of tables and figures). They should not review the dissertation according to how they would have performed these studies.

The outside reader(s) will give the dissertation one of the following three recommendations: 1) approve as is; 2) approve, accompanied by suggested revisions; 3) disapprove, accompanied by reasons. The reader(s) should send their recommendations and comments to the dissertation chair. The student should discuss the comments, if any, from the outside reader(s) with the dissertation committee chair. Any unresolved disagreements among the student, dissertation committee chair, and reader(s) must be brought to the program director by the dissertation committee chair for resolution. The chair of the dissertation committee cannot sign the dissertation approval page until the reader’s concerns have been addressed to the satisfaction of the dissertation committee chair.


**Dissertation Defense**

The dissertation defense is an oral presentation of the dissertation work, to which all interested persons are invited. The defense date can be scheduled once the program director has received the written dissertation, with the understanding that the defense may be rescheduled pending comments from the faculty or outside readers (as applicable). The dissertation defense date, time, and location will be announced to all faculty in the department. At a minimum, the student and the dissertation committee must attend the defense. The defense begins with an introduction of the student and committee by the chair of the dissertation committee. The student presents the dissertation for approximately one hour. All questions are reserved until after the presentation. The student then receives questions in this order: outside readers or reviewers (if present), committee members, department faculty, and other persons in attendance. After the defense, the dissertation committee votes to approve or disapprove the dissertation.

Dates included in the Doctoral Student Graduation Calendar (please see below) represent the absolute deadlines (in each semester) for holding a dissertation defense. When scheduling their dissertation defense, students should allow sufficient time for making any final revisions recommended by their doctoral dissertation committee prior to the absolute deadline for submitting the approved dissertation to the Mugar Memorial Library.

The doctoral candidate and all dissertation committee members must participate in the dissertation defense on the selected defense date. Both the doctoral candidate and the dissertation committee chair must be available on the selected defense date to appear in person at the defense, which must be held on the BU Medical Campus. Other committee members should appear in person for the defense; however, if they cannot, they may make arrangements to participate in the defense remotely. It is important to review the formatting of the dissertation approval page with Brendan McDermodt, Thesis & Dissertation Coordinator, Mugar Memorial Library, Room 306 (brendan@bu.edu) before it is signed by the dissertation committee members.
Students must notify the doctoral program director of the dissertation defense date no later than 30 days prior to the defense. Within one week after the dissertation defense, the dissertation committee chair must send written notification of the outcome of the defense to the doctoral program director.

**Dissertation Submission to Mugar Memorial Library**

Dissertations are submitted to the Mugar Library electronically via ProQuest ETD Administrator. Review the final draft of your dissertation as early as possible with Brendan McDermott, Thesis & Dissertation Coordinator, Mugar Memorial Library, Room 306.

The dissertation must be in PDF format with embedded fonts and no password restrictions; otherwise the system will not accept the upload. The library has produced a guide and a series of videos to describe the process.

The signed approval page will be uploaded separately from the dissertation as an administrative document. The approval page (page IV) in the uploaded dissertation should remain blank. The original page should be delivered to Brendan McDermott.

The dissertation fee can be sent directly to Brendan McDermott in Mugar Library, Room 306. Checks should be made payable to Boston University.

Upon submission, dissertations are made publicly available via OpenBU and ProQuest. In limited cases, it may be necessary to delay publication of the dissertation work. Reasons for an embargo include:

- The work contains sensitive material that cannot be published safely.
- The work contains copyrighted material you do not have permission to publish.
- A patent will be filed.
- There is a plan to publish with a publisher who will not consider openly available work.

To place an embargo on the dissertation work, a letter must be uploaded when the dissertation is uploaded. The letter must include:

- The reason for the delay
- The length requested
- Contact info
- Signatures from both the student and the advisor.

Questions regarding submission can be directed to Brendan McDermott or Nikki Longe.

**Publication of Dissertation Papers**

It is the expectation of the EDC that students publish the results from their dissertation research. Most dissertations utilize data that have been obtained from an existing epidemiologic study. These data represent significant time and effort by the Principal Investigators and research staff engaged in the conduct of the study. As such, students have a professional responsibility to publish their dissertation papers. Moreover, epidemiologic researchers hold an ethical obligation to the study participants to communicate the public health relevance and implications based on the data voluntarily contributed by these individuals.
If after one year following graduation a student has failed to make sufficient progress toward the publication of his/her dissertation papers, the Principal Investigator of the study from which the dissertation data were obtained may take charge of publishing the papers.

**Doctoral Student Graduation Calendar**

**Graduation Application** ([http://www.bu.edu/sph/students/resources/courses-and-academic-resources/forms/](http://www.bu.edu/sph/students/resources/courses-and-academic-resources/forms/))

**Deadlines**
- 9/10/2018 (for January 2019 Award)
- 1/10/2019 (for May 2019 Award)
- 8/10/2019 (for September 2019 Award)

**Dissertation Defense Deadlines**
- 11/30/2018 (for January 2019 Award)
- 4/15/2019 (for May 2019 Award)
- 8/15/2019 (for September 2019 Award)

**Dissertation Submission to Mugar Library Deadlines**
- 12/15/2018 (for January 2019 Award)
- 4/30/2019 (for May 2019 Award)
- 8/31/2019 (for September 2019 Award)

**BU Doctoral Exit Survey**

In an effort to improve the quality of graduate education at BU, the University asks PhD candidates to complete a brief survey. PhD candidates will receive an email with a link to the survey after they begin the dissertation submission process. Graduates are given the option to decline the survey (on page 2), but they must take action on the survey before the dissertation submission process can be completed. Responses are anonymous as is the decision to complete or decline to complete the survey.

Upon completion of the Boston University Doctoral Exit Survey, you will be redirected to the National Science Foundation’s Survey of Earned Doctorates. The University asks that you take action on both the BU and the NSF surveys.

Questions about the BU Doctoral Exit Survey can be directed to Nikki Longe.
In addition to the selected academic policies listed below, all students must adhere to all Boston University School of Public Health academic policies, available at bu.edu/sph/students/resources/policies/, and the University’s Administrative Policies, available at bu.edu/lifebook.

**Compliance Requirements for All Boston University Students**

All Boston University students must meet Boston University Compliance Requirements, outlined at http://www.bu.edu/reg/registration/requirements/. These compliance requirements are for payment, health and immunizations, motor vehicle regulations, documenting local address and telephone contact number of emergencies. Students may verify their compliance status on the Student Link. Students not in compliance are blocked from registration or updating their status in any way.

**Registration Requirements**

All doctoral students at Boston University School of Public Health, regardless of citizenship or immigration status, must register each fall and spring semester during their doctoral program until they officially graduate.

International students holding F-1 or J-1 non-immigrant status and who are in residence at Boston University must meet the requirements of their visa. Full-time enrollment is achieved by registration for 12 or more credits of academic coursework, or by registration in Continuing Study with additional full-time certification (“Certified Full-time”) coding by the SPH Registrar. International students must check in at the Boston University International Students and Scholars Office (ISSO) when they first arrive at Boston University and then complete “Semester Verification” in each subsequent semester to ensure that they remain in lawful status. Students who are not full-time by virtue of academic course load (12 credits or more) or who are not certified full time by enrolling in continuing study will be considered in violation of their immigration status. Students who violate their status are subject to the penalties prescribed in relevant immigration laws.

Students who are permanent residents or United States citizens must meet the requirements of their program and must register for either coursework or Continuing Study each fall and spring semester.

**Leaves of Absence**

A student may request a leave of absence of up to two semesters by writing a letter to the Doctoral Program Director and the BUSPH Registrar. Longer leaves of absence may be approved under compelling circumstances.
International students must have approval of ISSO to take a leave of absence and must work with ISSO when they are ready to return to their studies.

Students on leave of absence are not entitled to be advised officially by their advisors during a leave of absence, nor do they have library privileges. It has been possible for students on leave to maintain their ACS accounts.

**Boston University Information Regarding Academic Honesty**

Academic honesty is essential for students to attain the competencies the University and School expect of graduates, and any action by a student that subverts these goals seriously undermines the integrity of the educational programs at the School. Students at the Boston University School of Public Health are expected to adhere to the highest standards of academic honesty.

Academic misconduct is any intentional act or omission by a student which misrepresents his or her academic achievements, or attempts to misrepresent these achievements. While not an exhaustive list, the following acts constitute academic misconduct:

- **Cheating on examinations:** The use or attempted use of any unauthorized books, notes or other materials in order to enhance the student’s performance in the examination, copying or attempting to copy from another student’s examination, permitting another student to copy from an examination or otherwise assisting another student during an examination, or any other violation of the examination’s stated or commonly understood ground rules.

- **Plagiarism:** Any representation of the work of another as his or her own constitutes plagiarism. This includes copying or substantially restating the work of another person without the use of quotation marks or other indication that the words of another have been copied, the use of any written or oral work from which the student has obtained ideas or data without acknowledging that person’s contribution.

- **Submitting the same work in more than one course without the consent of all the instructors.**

- **Misrepresentation or falsification of data.**

- **Allowing another student to represent your work as his or her own.**

- **Violating the rules of an examination or assignment.**

Charges of academic misconduct will be brought to the attention of the Associate Dean for Education, who will review all such cases and decide upon the appropriate action. A student who is found guilty of academic misconduct may be subject to disciplinary action, up to and including dismissal from the School.

The academic misconduct policy is available at: [bu.edu/sph/students/resources/policies/academic-misconduct/](bu.edu/sph/students/resources/policies/academic-misconduct/)

**Grading Standards, Probation, and Dismissal**

**Grading Standards**

All SPH degree candidates must earn a minimum 3.0 GPA each semester to be in good academic standing. All SPH degree candidates must have a minimum 3.0 GPA at SPH to graduate. If any
specifically required course is retaken to bring the grade up to B or higher, the credits for the second enrollment will not count toward the required credits.

**Repeating a class due to failure to attain the minimum grade requirement**

Students who do not meet a minimum grade requirement must register for the course, or its curricular equivalent, for a second time in the next semester the course is offered. Students may earn a grade higher than the minimum grade in a repeated course — they are eligible to be graded with the whole range of grades, as described on the SPH Grading Policy at bu.edu/sph/students/resources/policies/.

In all cases, a student must repeat the course in which he or she did not attain the minimum grade no later than one year from the initial registration, unless they are given specific written permission of the program director to exceed this timeframe. Students who do not repeat the course within one year and do not seek permission to do so may be subject to academic dismissal.

Please see the BUSPH Grading Policy at bu.edu/sph/students/resources/policies/ for the full grading policy.

**Probation**

A student may be placed on probation if his/her overall GPA falls below 3.0. A student also may be placed on probation if he or she has failed to make adequate progress in the program over a length of time; this will occur if the student has been in the doctoral program for four years and has not taken the qualifying exams; if the student has not submitted a dissertation concept letter within two submission deadlines of passing the qualifying exams; if the student has not submitted a dissertation proposal within two submission deadlines of receiving notice that their concept letter has been approved; or, if the student has not shown adequate progress on his/her dissertation based on annual presentations at Epidemiology Doctoral Student Presentation Day, other progress reports required of the student by the EDC, or a report of the dissertation committee chair to the EDC program director. In addition, the EDC may assess a student’s progress at any time, and may place the student on probation if the EDC determines that the student has not made adequate progress toward meeting graduation requirements.

When a student is placed on probation, the EDC director sends the student a letter specifying the reason(s) for probation, precisely what is required to be removed from probation, and the deadline by which the requirement(s) must be met. After the student has fulfilled the relevant requirement(s), he/she must write a letter to the EDC director that describes these steps. The EDC director will respond in writing with a determination of whether the student has met the requirements and is removed from probationary status, has not met the requirements and will remain on probation, or that the matter has been referred to the EDC for further action.

**Dismissal**

A student who is on probation for not making adequate progress will be dismissed from the doctoral program if he/she does not demonstrate substantial progress during the specified probationary period, or does not meet the requirement(s) of probation by the deadline specified by the doctoral committee.

A student who fails one or both sections of the qualifying examination two times will be dismissed unless he/she successfully petitions the doctoral committee for a third attempt to
complete that exam. Dismissal may also occur as a result of committing an act of academic dishonesty, as defined in the School's policy on Academic Honesty.

All decisions regarding probation and dismissal will be made by the doctoral committee. The decision of the doctoral committee is final.

**Questions and Concerns**

Students should raise questions or concerns about procedural aspects of the epidemiology doctoral qualifying examination with the EDC program director, who may resolve it or refer it to the EDC as a whole. Students should address questions or concerns about other procedural aspects of the doctoral program in epidemiology initially with their academic advisor. If the advisor does not resolve the question or concern, it may be referred to the EDC program director, who may refer it to the EDC as a whole. Questions or concerns not resolved by the EDC are referred to the department faculty as a whole, or to other administrative sections of the BUSPH depending on the nature of the question or concern.

**Program Time Limits**

It is a policy of Boston University that all requirements for a doctoral degree must be completed within seven years of entering the doctoral program. This overall time limit is extended to nine years for students entering the Epidemiology Doctoral Program without a post-baccalaureate degree. A typical program might consist of the following: two years for the course work and qualifying examinations and two years for the dissertation research. Any extensions of the overall time limit must be requested in writing to the program director, with documentation of the extraordinary circumstances creating the delay and a date by which the requirements will be met. The request must be reviewed and approved by the EDC. A student who does not meet the time limits established by the program may be dismissed from the program without a degree.

**International Students**

**International Students and Scholars Office (ISSO)**

The ISSO provides professional expertise on immigration and employment issues to students, faculty, and staff at Boston University.

ISSO Office Hours:
Monday, Tuesday, Thursday, and Friday: 9:00AM - 5:00PM
Wednesday: 12:00PM - 5:00PM

Contact Information:
888 Commonwealth Avenue, 2nd Floor
Boston, MA 02215
Phone: (617) 353-3565
Fax: (617) 358-1170
Email: isso@bu.edu

The School of Public Health’s ISSO liaison is Sylvia (Sam) Lynch.
Students who have any questions regarding their required registration or necessary documents for travel or study should contact the ISSO. If students must visit the office in person, they may take the BU BUS; 888 Commonwealth Avenue is located opposite the C6 – Buick Street and Commonwealth Avenue stop on the BU Shuttle Outbound to the Charles River Campus.

**Maintaining Visa Status**

To remain lawfully in the United States during their doctoral studies, international students must obey the laws regulating F-1 and J-1 visa status. These regulations include, but are not limited to, registering for a fulltime course of study (whether by taking 12 or more credits or via registering for Continuing Study during all fall and spring semesters), limiting travel outside the U.S. to no more than 5 months at a time, and maintaining a current and valid I-20. For a complete discussion of these requirements, please visit the ISSO website:

Students on an F-1 visa: [bu.edu/isso/students/current/f1/status/index.html](http://bu.edu/isso/students/current/f1/status/index.html)

Students on a J-1 visa: [bu.edu/isso/students/current/j1/status/index.html](http://bu.edu/isso/students/current/j1/status/index.html)

**Completing the Dissertation**

Regardless of when they participate in graduation ceremonies, international students officially complete their doctoral studies when they submit the final version of their dissertation and when Boston University certifies that they have successfully completed all degree requirements. Please note that all students who will complete and submit their dissertation during the summer must be registered as continuing students during the summer semester to maintain lawful F-1 status. Otherwise, students must register in every fall and spring semester.
Section 6

Student Resources and Professional Development

Disability Services

Students requiring disability services or accommodations are encouraged to meet with Mary Murphy-Phillips, Director of Student and Educational Services, who is the BUSPH liaison to the Boston University Office of Disability Services. Mary may be reached at 617-638-5059, in her office on Talbot 2 Center, or via e-mail at mcmurph@bu.edu. Please refer to the School of Public Health Student Resources (bu.edu/sph/students/student-services/student-resources/) and to the Office of Disability Services website bu.edu/disability for more information.

Student Health And Behavioral Medicine

BUSPH students have several options for health and medical care, as outlined in the School of Public Health Student Handbook (bu.edu/sph/students/resources/student-handbook/). Students should always refer to their insurance brochure and policy for coverage options, benefits and any restrictions.

IN AN EMERGENCY YOU SHOULD GO TO THE CLOSEST HOSPITAL EMERGENCY ROOM.

Communications

There are several ways to stay in touch with faculty and other students and to be informed about events and opportunities at BUSPH.

The SPH website: bu.edu/sph.

The Student Handbook: bu.edu/sph/students/resources/student-handbook/

BUSPH Bulletin: Available in Registrar’s Office, Talbot 210 Center

Professional Associations

In addition to skills gained through classes, the several recommended research meeting series, and PhD Program student meetings, students benefit greatly from joining professional associations. These associations offer students opportunities to meet people working in public health, learn about job opportunities, understand trends in the field, and polish communication and presentation skills. Students are strongly encouraged to become active in the following organizations and are welcome to discuss their interest in other associations with the PhD
Program Director and their advisor. These organizations generally welcome student members at a reduced cost.

American Public Health Association (APHA) - apha.org
American College of Epidemiology (ACE) - acepidemiology.org
Gerontological Society of America (GSA) - geron.org
International Society for Environmental Epidemiology (ISEE) - iseepi.org
International Society for Pharmacoepidemiology - pharmacoepi.org/
Massachusetts Public Health Association (MPHA) - mphaweb.org
Society for Epidemiology Research (SER) - epiresearch.org
Society for Pediatric Epidemiology Research (SPER) - sper.org