



Boston University School of Public Health Doctor of Public Health Program



DrPH Program Guidelines

2025 - 2026

<https://www.bu.edu/sph/students/sph-student-dashboard/my-academic-program/drph/>

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DrPH Program Contacts

DrPH Program Director

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Associate Professor

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To schedule a Zoom meeting with me: <https://calendly.com/jessicaleibler>

DrPH Program Administrator

Caitlin Brand, MPH

Director of On Campus Educational Programs

Office: Talbot 122FW

(617) 358-1610; drph@bu.edu or caitb@bu.edu

We endeavor to respond to all student emails, calls, and messages within 24 hours. Please ping us again if you do not receive a response in this timeframe. For quickest response and for informal and short communication, please use Slack. All students are included on the program Slack page.

Boston University Policy Statement

Boston University and the Boston University School of Public Health reserve the right to change the policies, curricula, or any other matter in this handbook without prior notice. Students will be notified of major changes as soon as practicable once decided.

Contact Information

	Office & Contact Info
Course Materials	Online: Course information, assignments, and syllabi are often posted on a course webpage at learn.bu.edu . Course Readers and Textbooks are available for purchase through Barnes & Noble bookstore located at 660 Beacon Street, Kenmore Square, Boston University
Career Services	Office of Career Services: www.bu.edu/sph/careers/ Talbot Building 2 nd Floor East
Financial Assistance	Office of Student Financial Services: www.bumc.bu.edu/osfs/contact-us/ Email: osfs-sph@bu.edu Phone: 617-358-6550
Housing	Office of Housing Resources: www.bumc.bu.edu/ohr/ Email: OHR@bu.edu
Library Resources	Alumni Medical Library: medlib.bu.edu L Building, 12 th Floor Phone: 617-358-4810 Boston University Library Network: www.bu.edu/library

Parking and Transportation	Office of Parking and Transportation Services: www.bumc.bu.edu/parking/ 710 Albany Street Phone: 617-638-4915
Registration Information	Registrar's Office: www.bu.edu/sph/students/advising-and-registration/ Talbot 2 nd Floor Central Email: sphreg@bu.edu Phone: 617-358-3434 Compliance, Registration and Unofficial transcripts are available at https://student.bu.edu/
Student Health Behavioral Medicine	Student Health Services: www.bu.edu/shs/ 881 Commonwealth Avenue 617-353-3575
Student Services	Office of Graduate Student Life: www.bu.edu/sph/students/student-services/ Talbot 2 nd Floor East Email: sphgsl@bu.edu Phone: 617-358-1750
Disability and Access Services	Office of Disability and Access Services: bu.edu/disability Email: access@bu.edu Phone: 617-353-3658
International Students And Scholars Office (ISSO)	Contact Information: //www.bu.edu/isso/ 888 Commonwealth Avenue, 2 nd Floor Boston, MA 02215 Email: isso@bu.edu Advisor-on-Call: https://www.bu.edu/isso/contact/isso-advisor-on-call-for-student/
Additional Student Resources	Academic Support: https://www.bu.edu/sph/students/student-services/student-resources/academic-support/ SPH Courses and Bulletin: https://www.bu.edu/academics/sph/courses/

Important Dates throughout the Academic Year

Boston University School of Public Health (BUSPH), like other schools & programs on the Medical Campus, 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.

Academic calendar: <https://www.bu.edu/sph/students/advising-and-registration/academic-calendar/>

Academic class dates: <https://www.bu.edu/sph/students/advising-and-registration/academic-calendar/course-meeting-dates/>

Graduation and dissertation deadlines: <https://www.bu.edu/sph/students/advising-and-registration/graduation/graduation-procedures-for-ms-doctoral-students/>

Doctoral Graduation Calendar Deadlines			
Graduation Award Date	January 2026	May 2026	August 2026
Graduation Application submitted to Registrar by	June 1, 2025	Nov 1, 2025	March 1, 2026
Dissertation Abstract and Form to DrPH@bu.edu	At least 30 days prior to defense		
Dissertation Defense held by	Nov 15, 2025	April 15, 2026	July 15, 2026
Dissertation submitted to Library by	Nov 30, 2025	April 30, 2026	July 31, 2026

Withdrawal and tuition refund schedule: <https://www.bu.edu/reg/calendars/refund/>. A withdrawal means dropping ALL classes at the University. Students must complete a withdrawal form (forms are available online at <https://www.bu.edu/sph/students/advising-and-registration/policies-and-procedures/forms/>).

Withdrawal and Tuition Refund Schedule	
Prior to first day of class	100% refund of tuition and fees
During the first two weeks of the semester	80% refund of tuition only
During the third week of the semester	60% refund of tuition only
During the fourth week of the semester	40% refund of tuition only
During the fifth week of the semester	20% refund of tuition only
After the fifth week of the semester	0% refund

Boston University Policy on Religious Holidays

The BU School of Public Health, in scheduling classes on religious or government holidays, intends that students observing these holidays be given ample opportunity to make up work.

Emergency Cancellation Information

In the event of an emergency or class cancellation, email messages will also be sent to faculty, staff and students in the event of closings. Do not rely on information about the Charles River Campus or Boston University; the Boston University Medical Campus has different closing policies from the Charles River Campus. Instructors are required to reschedule cancelled classes; students will be notified by the instructor of make-up dates for any cancelled classes.

September 2025

Dear DrPH Students:

Welcome to the DrPH program at the Boston University School of Public Health (BUSPH)! You are joining an accomplished group of public health practitioners who are pursuing doctoral studies to enhance their leadership, management, research and policy skills. Our students tackle key challenges in public health with intellect, expertise, and commitment, and we have every confidence that you will do the same. We are thrilled to have you join our DrPH community.

As we move towards the fall semester, please plan to meet with your assigned academic advisor in the coming weeks to discuss your courses and activities for the coming year. I also encourage you to get to know SPH faculty and to take time to engage with faculty whose work overlaps with your interests and may be a resource for dissertation projects and support. Caitlin Brand, our program administrator, is also a key resource as you navigate the coming years, especially around course registration, finances, and program requirements and deadlines. I am, of course, also eager to support you as you move forward through our program and I look forward to getting to know each of you.

The DrPH Student Guidebook was developed to help you navigate your doctoral program. Please review the guidebook carefully as it provides key information about the program's policies, procedures and resources. We will also keep an updated version of all forms on the DrPH student website:

<https://www.bu.edu/sph/students/sph-student-dashboard/my-academic-program/drph/>

The next several semesters will be extremely busy ones, but I encourage you to take advantage of the strong commitment of BUSPH to an activist public health agenda with regular seminars, presentations, podcasts, and activities. There is also a wide array of cultural, historic, and artistic attractions that make Boston a unique and beautiful city and BU a special and impactful university.

I am delighted that you have decided to join our program. The faculty and staff at BUSPH are committed to making this the best practice-focused DrPH program in the world. Welcome to the DrPH Program!

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "JH Leibler".

Jessica H. Leibler, DrPH, MS
Director, DrPH Program
Associate Professor of Environmental Health

Section 1: Introduction and Program Overview

Purpose of this Handbook

This handbook is designed to assist students as they navigate their Doctor of Public Health studies at the Boston University School of Public Health (BUSPH). It comprehensively discusses the DrPH requirements, addresses the processes that need to be followed to meet the requirements, and provides reference links for more information to be found online. All students in the program are responsible for understanding the program requirements outlined here.

To supplement this handbook, there is an internal student website which can be found here:

<https://www.bu.edu/sph/education/degrees-and-programs/doctor-of-public-health-drph/drph/>.

Please note: This Handbook presents requirements for students matriculating in the program in Fall 2025. Additionally, the Handbook includes recent modifications to the comprehensive exam, dissertation proposal, and dissertation that are available to all students in the DrPH program, regardless of year of matriculation. Standing students may opt to abide by program specifications outlined in the version of the Handbook from their semester of matriculation, if preferable. Students should consult with Dr. Leibler if they are unsure of the requirements applicable to them.

Goal of the DrPH Program

The BUSPH DrPH Program trains public health professionals to assess and analyze public health problems and to develop, implement, and evaluate public health programs and policies, both domestically and internationally. The focus of this program is to prepare experienced professionals for advanced practice and leadership positions in public health. The practice-oriented nature of the DrPH Program fits ideally with the BUSPH mission, which is to train professionals who are equipped to meet the service and health needs of disadvantaged, underserved, and vulnerable populations in the United States and abroad. The practice of public health is a broad, multidisciplinary undertaking incorporating the contributions of many academic disciplines into the analysis of solutions to public health problems. Public health leaders require an understanding of the organizational, social, behavioral, legal, and bureaucratic complexities involved in resolving public health problems. This program's goal is to provide DrPH students with the interdisciplinary expertise needed to address current public health challenges.

DrPH Foundational Competencies

The DrPH is the professional doctoral degree in public health, designed to produce transformative academic and practice leaders with expertise in evidence-based public health practice and research. Students will address their skills aligned with program competences during the spring leadership seminar, the practicum, and during the dissertation process.

Leadership, Management, and Government Competencies
Propose strategies for health improvement and elimination of health inequities by organizing partners, including researchers, practitioners, community leaders and others.

Communicate public health science to diverse audiences, including individuals at all levels of health literacy, for purposes of influencing behavior and policies.
Integrate knowledge, approaches, methods, values and potential contributions from multiple professions and systems in addressing public health problems.
Create a strategic plan.
Facilitate shared decision making through negotiation and consensus-building methods.
Create organizational change strategies.
Propose strategies to promote inclusion within public health programs, policies and systems.
Assess one's own strengths and weaknesses in leadership capacities, including cultural proficiency.
Propose human, fiscal and other resources to achieve a strategic goal.
Cultivate new resources and revenue streams to achieve a strategic goal.
Apply relevant ethical, legal, and human rights principles to difficult and controversial public health decision-making.
Apply lean management tools and techniques to resolve operational problems and enact sustainable change.
Data and Analysis Competencies
Explain qualitative, quantitative, mixed methods and policy analysis research and evaluation methods to address health issues at multiple (individual, group, organization, community and population) levels.
Design a qualitative, quantitative, mixed methods, policy analysis or evaluation project to address a public health issue.
Explain the use and limitations of surveillance systems and national surveys in assessing, monitoring and evaluating policies and programs and to address a population's health.
Develop a fully integrated evaluation of a program or policy that incorporates a plan for both outcome and process evaluation.
Policy and Programs
Design a system-level intervention to address a public health issue.
Integrate community-informed knowledge such as cultural values and practices in the design of public health policies and programs.
Integrate scientific information, legal and regulatory approaches, ethical frameworks and varied parties' interests in policy development and analysis.
Propose interprofessional/ intersectoral team approaches to improving public health.
Develop evidence-based strategies for changing health law and policy.
Develop financial and business plans for health programs and services.
Education and Workforce Development Competencies
Assess an audience's knowledge and learning needs.
Deliver training or educational experiences that promote learning in academic, organizational or community settings.
Use best practice modalities in pedagogical practices.

Advising

For the first semester in the DrPH program, entering students will be advised by program leadership regarding course selection and academic progress. During the second semester, students will develop a detailed, individualized mentorship plan and will engage with SPH faculty and external professionals as

they enhance their personal mentorship and academic networks. These networks will support the student into dissertation work and beyond.

Dissertation Chairs and Committees

Students are advised to begin considering dissertation topics and reaching out to potential faculty dissertation mentors within Year 1 of the program to form strong relationships at SPH. It is important that DrPH students cultivate the skills to conduct outreach and collaborate effectively with faculty as these skills are integral to future success as public health leaders. Students are individually responsible for identifying a Dissertation Chair, who serves as their primary mentor during their dissertation process (which begins after the practicum and comprehensive exam, typically starting in Year 2). With the Chair, the student can discuss potential topics, funding opportunities, project feasibility, approvals, location of residency during the dissertation, and any specific visa issues for international students. The student and Chair will work together to identify a suitable dissertation topic, considering feasibility and mutual interests. With the Chair's support, the student will identify a Dissertation Committee of two additional SPH faculty members as well as one external member (total committee: Chair, 2 additional SPH faculty members, 1 external member = 4 individuals). The Chair and Committee must be identified, and the topic agreed upon before a student can submit the Dissertation Outline (further details provided later in this document).

Please note: While the student leads independent research for the dissertation, the process is a collaborative one with the Dissertation Chair. The student is ultimately responsible for identifying a project for which an SPH faculty member is willing to engage as Chair.

The DrPH Committee

The DrPH Committee is chaired by the DrPH Program Director and includes a representative from each of the six departments and key staff from SPH Admissions, the Registrar's Office, Graduate Student Life and the Career & Practicum Office. The DrPH Committee serves two main functions: 1) engaging in creative thinking about the evolution of DrPH education at SPH; and 2) supporting and advising on enrollment, marketing and admissions. Faculty representatives are appointed by department chairs and serve a two-year term, renewable once.

DrPH Program Requirements and Timeline

The curriculum and program requirements described in this handbook apply to students matriculating in Fall 2025 and are generally completed in the order listed here. **The 48-credit DrPH program must be completed within 7 years, but students are strongly encouraged to plan to complete the program in 3-4 years so as to maintain steady progress and cost-effectiveness.** The timeline and dates presented here are firm deadlines. Students who fall behind the program deadlines may face academic probation and dismissal from the program.

A quick overview of the program timeline is provided below for reference.

Coursework	• Completion of PH700: Foundations of Public Health within the first semester of matriculation • Completion of 40 required degree credits and 8 elective credits (48 total credits) • Note: Coursework to be completed within 3 years for all students
Practicum	• 150+ hours on-site and completion of program deliverables (learning contract, self-assessment, supervisor review) • Note: Practicum to be completed within 2 years of matriculation (usually Summer after Y1 or Y2)
Comprehensive Exam	• After completion of coursework, students prepare and sit for the Comprehensive Exam • Students register for continuing student status • Note: To be completed within 3 years of matriculation; full-time students take the exam after 3 full-time semesters (Y2)
Responsible Conduct of Research (RCR) Training	• Training with online sessions and live workshops, if needed by funding source (NIH, NSF, etc) • Note: To be completed within the first two years from matriculation, if needed - depends on the nature of planned research
Dissertation Preparation	• Identify Dissertation Chair (SPH faculty member) • Select Dissertation Committee members • Develop and submit Dissertation Summary • Note: Dissertation Summary to be submitted within 3 months of Comprehensive Exam
Dissertation Proposal	• Completion of written dissertation proposal (10-15 pages) • Oral proposal presentation to Dissertation Committee • Note: To be completed within 3 months of the Summary
Dissertation Defense	• Completion of dissertation expected within 4-5 years of matriculation • Completion of written dissertation + oral defense • Note: Must be completed within 7 years
Dissertation Approval	• Final approval from Dissertation Committee and collection of signatures • Library submission of dissertation
Graduation	• Commencement and Awards Ceremonies • Celebration!

Section 2: DrPH Coursework

DrPH Prerequisites

Students who have not completed a Master of Public Health degree may be asked to complete prerequisite courses to gain public health competencies necessary for the DrPH coursework. Students will be informed of any prerequisites when they are admitted to the program and these requirements must be completed within the first year of matriculation. All students are expected to demonstrate current competency in biostatistics and epidemiology to keep pace with the required methods courses. Additional training is not required if you have passed a course in these topics within the past 5 years of matriculation or use related skills regularly in a professional context.

DrPH Course Requirements

(40 required credits + 8 electives = 48 credits total)

Please note: The program may substitute or adjust course requirements as needed due to course availability in a given semester or year. The DrPH program leadership will work with students 1:1 to develop a course plan that fits their needs and course availability in the event of scheduling conflicts or class cancellations.

- PH 700: Foundations of Public Health (0)
- PH 842: Research Theory and Design (2)
- PH 844: Introduction to Qualitative Analysis for Public Health and Health Services Research (2)
- PH 851: Needs Assessment (4)
- PH 853: Strategic Planning and Communications (4)
- PH 854: Program and Policy Evaluation (4)
- PH 856: Law and Ethics for Public Health Leaders (2)
- PH 857: Health Economics and Financial Management for Public Health (4)
- PH 859: Cases in Public Health Management (2)
- PH 867: Evidence-Based Policy and Budgeting (4)
- PH 871: Communication Skills for Public Health Leaders (1)
- PH 872: Mentorship and Coaching in Public Health Leadership (1)
- PH 873: Data-Driven Decision-Making for Public Health Leaders (1)
- PH 874: Public Health Practice within Political Contexts (1)
- PM 835: Lean Management in Healthcare (4)
- PM 839: Implementation Science: Linking Research to Practice (4)
- PH 986: Doctorate of Public Health Practicum (0)*

* Students must register for the 0-credit practicum to complete the requirement.

Approved Elective Courses

In addition to the core course requirements, students will complete 8 credits of electives in one or more of the following areas: statistics, research design, and methods; management and finance; law, policy, and advocacy.

All students are encouraged to take an intermediate-level biostatistics course to support their dissertation research activities, unless such an approach does not fit dissertation plans OR they have already taken such a course during master's training. These courses are *italicized* below. Students who have not taken an intermediate biostatistics course may consult Dr. Leibler to identify a course best suited to their professional goals.

Students will consult with their advisor to help them choose elective courses that will be most instrumental to achieving competencies students do not already possess and may need for completion of their dissertation. In certain cases, students may petition to substitute another course to fulfil their elective requirements with written approval from the DrPH Program Director, using the Course Substitution Form found here: <https://www.bu.edu/sph/students/advising-and-registration/forms/>. (typical offerings are coded as S=spring, U=summer, F=fall)

Preapproved Statistics,* Research Design, and Research Methods*** Electives:**

- *BS 723 Introduction to Statistical Applications in SAS** (4) S, U, F
- *BS 728 Public Health Surveillance, A Methods Based Approach** (4) F
- *BS 730 Introduction to Statistical Applications in R** (4) S, F
- *BS 805 Intermediate Programming in SAS for Applied Linear Models** (4) S, F
- *BS 810 Meta-Analysis for Public Health & Medical Research** (4) F
- *BS 852 Biostatistical Methods for Observational Studies**** (4) S, F
- EH 757 Environmental Epidemiology*** (4) S
- EH 811 Intro GIS for Public Health*** (4) F
- EH 866 Risk Assessment Methods*** (4) F
- EH 872 Environmental Data and Exposure Modeling*** (4) S
- EP 813 Intermediate Epidemiology*** (4) S
- EP 850 Applications of Intermediate Epidemiology*** (4) S
- EP 854 Advanced Epidemiology*** (4) F
- EP 857 Design and Conduct of Cohort Studies** (2) F
- EP 858 Design and Conduct of Case-Control Studies** (2) F
- MC 759 Perinatal and Child Health Epidemiology*** (4) F
- PH 843 Quantitative Methods for Health and Social Policy Research*** (2) F
- PM 822 Advanced Quantitative Methods for Health and Social Policy Research*** (4) S
- PM 828 Advanced Qualitative Methods** (4) S
- SB 818 Qualitative Research Methods*** (4) S, U, F

Preapproved Management and Finance Electives

- GH 773 Financial Management for Health Programs (4) S, F
- GH 806 Using Digital Technologies to Improve Health Outcomes (4) S

- GH 805 Controversies in Global Control & Eradication of Infectious Diseases (2) S, F
- GH 854 From Data to Dashboards: Building Excel Skills to Support Health Program Decisions (2) S, U, F
- GH 881 Global Reproductive and Perinatal Health (4) S
- GH 887 Planning and Managing MCH Programs in Developing Countries (4) F
- MC 800 Preventing Mental Health Concerns: A Life Course Perspective (2) S
- MC 802 Implementing Community Health Initiatives: A Field-Based Course in Leadership and Consultation (4) F
- PM 734 Principles and Practices in Non-Profit Health Care Accounting (4) S, F
- PM 736 Human Resource Management in Public Health (4) S, F
- PM 755 Health Care Delivery Systems: Issues and Innovations (4) S, F
- PM 807 Introduction to Cost Effectiveness Analysis (2) F
- PM 827 Strategic Management of Healthcare Organizations (4) S, F
- PM 832 Operations Management in Healthcare (4) S, F
- PM 834 Planning and Regulating to Fix Health Care (4) F

Preapproved Health Law, Policy, and Advocacy Electives

- GH 795 Global AIDS Epidemic: Social and Economic Determinants, Impact, and Responses (4) F
- GH 888 Seminar on Global Health Policy Issues (2) S
- LW 830 Health Insurance and the Affordable Care Act (4) S
- LW 850 Public Health Law (4) S
- MC 763 Maternal and Child Health Policy Making (2) S
- MC 785 Reproductive Health Advocacy: From Rights to Justice (2) S
- MC 840 Gender, Intersectionality and Health Policy (4) S
- PM 785 Mental Health Advocacy (2) S
- PM 804 Digital Disruption In Health: The Effects Of Health Information Technologies On Policies, Delivery (2) S, F
- PM 833 Health Economics (4) S, F
- PM 840 Analysis of Current Health Policy Issues (4) S, F
- PM 851 Organizing and Advocacy for Health Policy Change (4) F
- SB 860 Strategies for Public Health Advocacy (4) S, F

Typical Course Cycle: Full Time Students

Full time students typically take three semesters of full-time classes (16 credits) during Year 1 and the first semester of Year 2 to complete 48 credits for the program. Full-time students complete their practicum in the summer after Year 1. Full-time students sit for their comprehensive exam at the end of Year 2. The dissertation proposal begins in the Fall of Year 3, with the outline, proposal, and oral proposal presentation completed before the end of Year 3. Full-time students work on their dissertation research from Years 3-5, typically completing the program within 1-1.5 years following their oral proposal presentation.

YEAR 1: 31-37 credit hours

Semester	Course Title	Credit Hours
Fall:	PH 700 Foundations of Public Health (online)	(0)
	PH 842 Research Theory and Design	(2)
	PH 844 Introduction to Qualitative Analysis for Public Health	(2)
	PH 851 Needs Assessment	(4)
	PH 857 Health Economics and Financial Management for Public Health	(4)
	Electives	(4-6)
Spring:	PH 853 Strategic Planning and Communications	(4)
	PH 856 Law and Ethics for Public Health Leaders	(2)
	PM 839 Implementation Science	(4)
	PH 867 Evidence-Based Budgeting and Policy	(4)
	PH 871 Communication Skills for Public Health Leaders	(1)
	PH 872 Mentorship and Coaching in Public Health Leadership	(1)
	PH 873 Data-Driven Decision-Making for Public Health Leaders	(1)
Summer:	PH986 Public Health Leadership Practicum	(0)

YEAR 2: 13-17 credit hours (followed by Continuing Study in Spring Semester)

Semester	Course Title	Credit Hours
Fall:	PH 854 Program and Policy Evaluation	(4)
	PH 859 Cases in Public Health Management	(2)
	PM 835 Lean Management	(4)
	PH 874 Public Health Practice within Political Contexts	(1)
	Electives	(0-4)
Spring:	PH 990 Continuing Study* (payment for equivalent of 2 credits)	(0)
	Comprehensive Examination	
	Dissertation Summary	
	Dissertation Proposal	

YEAR 3-4:

PH 990 Continuing Study*
Dissertation Research
Final Dissertation Defense

*Note: Students who have completed their coursework must submit a [Continuing Student Status Form](https://www.bu.edu/sph/students/advising-and-registration/policies-and-procedures/forms/) (available at <https://www.bu.edu/sph/students/advising-and-registration/policies-and-procedures/forms/>) to the SPH Registrar, who will register them for PH 990 automatically every fall and spring semester until they graduate. This zero-credit course is equivalent to the cost of 2 credits and allows students to maintain active student status.

Course Cycle: Part Time Students

Part-time students typically take 8-10 credits per semester of coursework during Years 1-3 of the program to reach 48 credits required for the program. *Of note, part-time student status usually requires multiple classes per semester, not a single course per semester, and students may need to modify their work schedules to accommodate the pace of the program.* Part-time students typically complete the practicum in the summer following Year 2. Part-time students complete courses in the Fall of Year 3 and take the comprehensive exam and submit their dissertation outline in the spring semester of Year 3. Dissertation proposal and oral presentation activities occur in the Spring of Year 3 and/or Fall of Year 4. Part-time students typically complete their dissertation within 5 years of matriculation.

YEAR 1: 20-22 credit hours

Semester	Course Title	Credit Hours
Fall:	PH 700 Foundations of Public Health (online)	(0)
	PH 851 Needs Assessment	(4)
	PH 857 Health Economics and Financial Management for Public Health	(4)
	PH 871 Communication Skills for Public Health Leaders	(1)
	Electives	(0-2)
Spring:	PH 853 Managing and Implementing Public Health Programs	(4)
	PH 856 Health Law and Ethics for Public Health Leaders	(2)
	PM 839 Implementation Science: Linking Research to Practice	(4)
	PH 871 Communication Skills for Public Health Leaders	(1)
	PH 873 Data-Driven Decision-Making for Public Health Leaders	(1)

YEAR 2: 17-20 credit hours

Semester	Course Title	Credit Hours
Fall:	PH 842 Research Theory and Design	(2)
	PH 844 Introduction to Qualitative Analysis for Public Health and Health Services Research	(2)
	PH 854 Program and Policy Evaluation	(4)
	Electives	(0-2)

Spring:	PH 867 Evidence-Based Budgeting and Policy	(4)
	PM 835 Lean Management in Healthcare	(4)
	PH 872 Mentorship and Coaching in Public Health Leadership	(1)
	Electives	(0-2)
Summer:	PH 986 DrPH Practicum	(0)
YEAR 3:	5-11 credit hours	
Semester	Course Title	Credit Hours
Fall:	PH 859 Cases in Public Health Management	(2)
	PH 874 Public Health Practice within Political Contexts	(1)
	Electives	(0-8)
Spring:	Any Remaining Elective Coursework (or PH 990 Continuing Study*)	(0-8)
	<i>Upon completion of academic coursework and practicum</i>	
	Comprehensive Examination	
	Dissertation Summary	
YEAR 4-5:	PH 990 Continuing Study*	
	Dissertation Research	
	Final Dissertation Defense	

*Note: Students who have completed their coursework must submit a [Continuing Student Status Form](https://www.bu.edu/sph/students/advising-and-registration/policies-and-procedures/forms/) (available at <https://www.bu.edu/sph/students/advising-and-registration/policies-and-procedures/forms/>) to the SPH Registrar, who will register them for PH 990 automatically every fall and spring semester until they graduate. This zero-credit course is equivalent to the cost of 2 credits and allows students to maintain active student status.

Transfer Credit and Course Waiver

In certain cases, students may request to transfer or waive courses for an elective or required course. The full policy can be found here: <https://www.bu.edu/academics/sph/policies/transfer-credit-and-course-waiver/>, with key items outlined below. There is a maximum number of 8 credits that can be taken outside of BUSPH to count towards the DrPH degree. This includes courses taken at other schools within Boston University.

- Prior to enrolling in a course outside of BUSPH, the student must have a conversation the DrPH Program Director regarding the learning outcomes and relevancy of the desired course
- The student must gain written approval for the course from the DrPH Program Director by using the Transfer Credit/Waiver request form found here: <https://www.bu.edu/sph/students/advising-and-registration/policies-and-procedures/forms/>
- The student must provide the SPH Registrar with the completed Request for Transfer Credit or Course Waiver Form, along with a course description, syllabus, reading list, official transcript, and any other materials requested by the department designee or the SPH Registrar
- The course must be approved by the SPH Registrar for degree credit
- BUSPH tuition support are intended to cover the 48 DrPH course credits and can only be applied to Boston University courses after they are approved as transfer credit. BUSPH scholarships cannot be used outside of Boston University.

Registration and Continuing Study Status

All DrPH students who have completed their required coursework (including the practicum) must apply for continuing student status by submitting a [Continuing Student Status Form](#) to the SPH Registrar. Upon receipt of this form, the SPH Registrar will automatically register continuing DrPH students for PH 990 (a zero-credit course equivalent in tuition cost to 2 credits) each fall and spring semester until they graduate. This requirement applies to students who are preparing to take the comprehensive exam and all students who have reached the dissertation stage of their academic careers. Failure to apply for continuing student status upon completion of all required coursework may result in dismissal from the DrPH Program. To note: students who are BU employees will not receive tuition remission for continuing studies credits due to University policy.

Students do not need to submit this form each semester, only if they are making changes to their status (e.g., taking a leave of absence or returning from one).

Responsible Conduct of Research Training

DrPH degree candidates at BUSPH that receive funding from an NIH National Institutes of Health training grant or an NSF National Science Foundation research grant must complete advanced responsible conduct of research (RCR) training within 2 years of matriculation. DrPH students that do not receive NIH or NSF funding are not required to complete this training. For more information: <https://www.bu.edu/researchsupport/compliance/responsible-conduct-of-research/training-programs/rcr-for-doctoral-or-postdoctoral-researchers/>

1. RCR via the Collaborative Institutional Training Initiative (CITI) (online)
 - a. CITI RCR includes three online modules (Data Management, Authorship and Publication, and Research Misconduct and Whistleblowing).
2. RCR Course (ENG EK 800; in-person)
 - a. The RCR course is a 1 credit, non-tuition bearing course (ENG EK 800) open to all PhD students and postdoctoral scholars. This 10-week course will meet once weekly for 50-minute sessions and fulfills the new National Science Foundation requirements as well as existing National Institutes of Health requirements.

Section 3: DrPH Practicum

Practicum Overview

The DrPH public health practicum provides an opportunity for students to apply key elements of policy, management, and program analysis to an advanced-level collaboration with public health practitioners. The practicum emphasizes the linkages between practice and research and highlights their integrated value through the application of rigorous public health science towards public health practice. Upon selection of a practicum, students must select the 5 foundational program competencies that will serve as the foundation for their practicum in consultation with the Program Director. *Students must select a minimum one of the DrPH leadership-oriented competencies (1, 4-7, 9, 10, or 13) to demonstrate engagement with at least of these key leadership domains during the practicum.*

- Full-time students are expected to complete the practicum in the first summer of their academic studies. Part-time students may complete it during their second summer or over a longer period of time. Students must complete at least one semester of coursework before completing their practicum. The practicum must be completed within the first two years of matriculation for all students.
- All students must complete the practicum prior to taking the comprehensive exam.
- Students must register for PH986 to receive credit for this degree requirement, which is graded as Pass/Fail
- Students must submit a learning contract prior to beginning their practicum hours, a final self-assessment, supervisor's review, and brief written summary at the end of the practicum.
- The practicum has a minimum requirement of 150 on-site hours (usually 4 consecutive weeks for full-time students). Students may spend significantly more than 150 hours on their practicum activities; if this is the case, please identify and complete program deliverables at 150 hours.
- Students may find BUSPH Career and Practicum Office useful in identifying a practicum: <https://www.bu.edu/sph/careers/>. They are also welcome to use their own network or that of their advisor in identifying a placement.
- Students may conduct paid or unpaid practica. We encourage students to engage in paid activities if possible, although limitations on work hours for international students may complicate efforts to receive payment.

Choice of Organization and Field Supervisor

Students are encouraged to choose an organization or institution that will provide them with a set of experiences that will broaden their exposure to public health practice settings and enhance their skill set. Students should not choose the organization they are currently working with. For example, a student currently working with civil society organizations implementing community services should consider working with an international NGO, a donor, or a UN organization. A student working with direct service delivery might consider an organization conducting large-scale economic analysis, and a student working in HIV/AIDS might consider working in a completely different area, such as non-communicable diseases or maternal and child health. Additionally, students may choose an organization they have identified (in consultation with their academic advisor and the DrPH Program Director), choose from the opportunities available through the DrPH Program and the SPH Career and Practice office, or work with the DrPH Program Director to identify a suitable opportunity.

Students must also identify a field supervisor who is an advanced-level public health practitioner capable of providing substantive contact, mentorship, and access to leadership during the practicum experience. Field supervisors may take a variety of approaches to mentoring DrPH candidates, including reserving time for weekly on-on-one meetings, facilitating access to high-level organizational meetings, and providing opportunities for on-the-job shadowing. The mentoring activities that the field supervisor and DrPH candidate agree to must be reflected in the candidate's practicum learning contract.

Students may complete their practicum in any country and setting of their choosing but are strongly advised to strategically investigate skills and settings that will advance their own career objectives and/or position them well to continue with a dissertation.

Students may find the [DrPH Practicum Description for Site Supervisors](#) helpful to send to prospective field supervisors.

Practicum Learning Contract

When students have identified a practicum site, know the name and contact information for their field supervisor, they will draft the learning contract. A copy can be found [here](#).

The practicum learning contract should include the details of the practicum experience, including

1. Learning objectives (see description below) that describe the specific competencies that they hope to enhance during the practicum and how working in the practicum will address them
2. A description of practicum experience tasks, responsibilities, deliverables, and expectations. For example:
 - conducting an impact evaluation of a program that they implement in multiple centers throughout a large urban center
 - undertaking a cost-effectiveness study of a program that the organization wants to scale up but is unsure if it is worth it
 - developing a quality improvement plan applying lean management principle to some operational component of the organization
 - analyzing current guidelines for care in the country and determining if, and how they should be revised based on the current state of the art
 - proposing a revised implementation program based on a recent evaluation
3. A detailed timeline describing the schedule of hours they will commit to the practicum, a date for the midpoint review, and approximate range/s of time devoted to particular practicum tasks or responsibilities

All of this information should be put into the learning contract which must be signed by the Program Director and field supervisor. Once finalized, students must email a copy of their practicum learning contract to DrPH@bu.edu. Students should also provide their field supervisor a copy of the learning contract, requirements, and the competencies worksheet and the field supervisor evaluation form that they will complete at the end of the practicum.

Tips for Writing Learning Objectives

Learning objectives form the basis of the Learning Contract and represent measurable statements of the results the student wishes to achieve. A learning objective is a concise statement of a change in competency, skill, knowledge, or understanding the student plans to gain. They give insight to why the student is doing the practicum. It is important to define the level of mastery that will be obtained when defining the outcome, e.g., identifying an issue vs. analyzing the issue, listing problems vs. evaluating problems. The methods and activities should then describe the detail of the student's work and how the learning objectives will be obtained.

Linking the Practicum to DrPH Competencies

In conjunction with a field supervisor and their advisor, students will compare their leadership competencies at the time they initiate the practicum to the broader, pre-identified set of such competencies they completed in the DrPH Leadership Seminar and listed in this Guidebook. Reviewing and reassessing competencies allows the student to think of the upcoming practicum in terms of objectives, activities, resources and outcomes. Based on this comparison they will develop a list of the competencies they wish to develop/enhance in their practicum and include those in the learning contract. Students must choose five DrPH competencies to address during their practicum, at least one of which must be related to leadership and management.

Practicum Deliverables for the DrPH Program

In addition to project-specific deliverables agreed upon by the student and site supervisor, students will ensure completion of the following:

- 1. Final Practicum Summary and Leadership Self-Assessment:** Students must submit a [self-assessment form](#) and written summary (2 double-spaced pages) outlining their accomplishments during the practicum, including activities, deliverables, and key collaborators. Students will reflect on how their field experience and classroom preparation have impacted their assessment of the selected leadership competencies. This must include a description of how students met their leadership competency learning objectives through specific deliverables, ongoing projects, and/or responsibilities. **This form is due within one month following the completion of the practicum.**
- 2. Field Supervisor Evaluation:** Students must have their field supervisor complete a [final written evaluation](#) and email to DrPH@bu.edu

DrPH Practicum Assessment Rubric

Criterion	Meets Expectations (Pass)	Does Not Meet Expectations (Fail)
1. Identification and Description of Products	Clearly identifies all practice-based products developed during the practicum (e.g., briefs, reports, evaluations, toolkits). Provides sufficient description of each deliverable to demonstrate scope and relevance.	Products are missing, vague, or inadequately described.
2. Alignment with 5 Selected DrPH Competencies	Explicitly maps each product to the s 5 selected DrPH competencies. Provides a clear explanation of how the product demonstrates achievement of each competency.	Competencies not mapped, incomplete, or links between products and competencies are superficial or absent.
3. Context and Role	Provides clear description of the public health issue or organizational needs addressed. Explains their role in developing the product(s) and identifies the intended audience or use.	Context missing or unclear. Student role is vague, or audience/use not specified.
4. Reflection on Impact and Leadership Growth	Thoughtfully reflects on how the products contributed to the host site, community, or population. Discusses personal growth in leadership, scholarship, and practice.	Minimal or generic reflection. No clear evidence of impact on organization/community or of student's leadership development.
5. Reflection on High-Level Collaborations	Provides specific examples of collaborations with public health practitioners or leaders. Describes lessons learned in navigating partnerships, communication, or decision-making.	Little or no discussion of collaboration. No examples provided.

For International Students: Curricular Practical Training (CPT) Guidance

[Curricular Practical Training](#) or CPT, is a type of work authorization during a student's program of study. This type of work authorization must be required for academic credit or as a requirement to complete the program of study. Please keep in mind that this practical training authorization is also for unpaid practical training requirements that are required for program completion including off-campus dissertation research. As CPT is directly tied to course registration, you must first be registered in the appropriate practical training course for the terms during which you are requesting authorization. This course is [SPH PH 986](#).

Please keep in mind that all off-campus work and practical training opportunities require authorization and endorsement from the International Students & Scholars Office (ISSO) first. Working without authorization would result in termination of your immigration record for unauthorized employment. The ISSO recommends that you first familiarize yourself with our related [Curricular Practical Training](#) ISSO

webpage as it outlines this type of training in great detail. Included on this page are the criteria that you must meet to be eligible as well as instructions on how to apply for CPT.

After determining your eligibility and finding a practicum or dissertation research experience that is required for your program, you must send your [ISSO advisor](#) your [most recent I-94](#), offer letter, and [CPT Acknowledgement form](#) completed and signed by your department's internship coordinator or advisor. The specifics for what should be included on the offer letter can be found under section 3 of the CPT Acknowledgement form. The ISSO requires a processing time of 10 business days for CPT authorization requests.

DrPH Practicum Checklist

This checklist is meant to help you complete deliverables for the practicum. Copies of all forms mentioned below can be found linked below, at the end of this Guidebook, or on the [DrPH Website](#).

1. _____ Identify Practicum Site and Field Supervisor (Year 1-2)
2. _____ Determine role/s and deliverables for the practicum
3. _____ Draft learning objectives and learning contract details
4. _____ Send learning contract to Dr. Leibler jleibler@bu.edu and drph@bu.edu for approval
5. _____ Submit completed [Add/Drop form](#) for PH986 to DrPH@bu.edu
6. _____ Complete at least 150 hours of practicum work
7. _____ Deliver final products/deliverables to practicum site
8. _____ Submit the completed [Field Supervisor Practicum Evaluation](#) and [Final Practicum Leadership Self-Assessment](#) within one month of completion of the practicum

Section 4: DrPH Comprehensive Examination

Upon successful completion of coursework and practicum, each student will take a comprehensive exam that will require the student to address a real-world public health problem using knowledge and skills acquired in the classroom. Students must complete their Comprehensive Exam within 3 years of matriculation to demonstrate adequate progress in the program.

Each student will address a real-life public health scenario and respond to a series of questions in a written format. Students will have 4 hours to complete the exam and can select either a business day or a weekend day to sit for the exam, in coordination with the Program Director. The exam must be scheduled at least 30 days in advance with the Program Director. Exams will be graded by faculty members of the DrPH Committee.

The exam is open book and open note, but students may not collaborate with each other, anyone else, or use generative AI during the exam. Violation of this provision or other school policies are grounds for expulsion from the program and will follow the University's Academic Conduct Code: <https://www.bu.edu/academics/policies/academic-conduct-code/>. However, students are encouraged to prepare for the exam in groups by reviewing their course notes together in the months leading up to the exam.

Students will be informed of the outcome of their examinations via email within one week after completion. Students can receive a grade of pass, conditional pass, or fail for the exam. Students who receive a conditional pass may be required to take additional coursework or conduct additional learning around specified topics. Students who fail the examination will receive a written report explaining the reason for their failure. Students will have two chances to pass the comprehensive exam. Failure to pass the comprehensive exams after a second attempt will result in Academic Dismissal.

Students will be evaluated based on their ability to:

- Apply relevant principles and theoretical approaches, learned through coursework and experience, to a specific public health situation.
 - Describe the problem and examine the contextual factors and legal and ethical considerations related to the topic that would need to be considered in both assessing the problem and developing a solution to it.
- Integrate multiple resources and types of data to define and address the case.
 - Assess data quality and associated measurement issues to determine the level of priority for the problem at hand.
 - Identify alternative approaches to addressing the problem and explain how they were prioritized, leading to the choice of a favored approach.
- Combine various components of their response into a persuasively communicated plan
 - Create and justify a plan to develop and implement a response, including cost considerations, to the problem as defined.
 - Develop a plan for evaluation to determine if the program being proposed was successful.
 - Communicate conclusions in an integrated and effective plan to public health officials.

- Thoughtfully summarize the strengths and weaknesses of the proposal to address the case.
 - Identify challenges that would be faced in developing and implementing this solution.
How would these challenges be overcome?
- Effectively contextualize the proposed plan into existing political realities and anticipated political implications using language relevant to a policymaker

Section 5: Public Health Practice Dissertation

Dissertation Topics and Design

Through independent work under the guidance of their Doctoral Dissertation Committee, DrPH candidates will prepare a dissertation demonstrating their ability to analyze and solve a complex, practice-based problem or maximize a practice-based opportunity in public health. The dissertation is expected to make a substantial contribution to the existing public health practice knowledge base and can include primary data collection and analysis or secondary data analysis. The dissertation format will be determined in large part by the nature of the public health problem students plan to address. It should reflect the variety of perspectives needed to analyze and ameliorate major public health problems and include explicit population-based policy and practice implications. DrPH dissertations are expected to provide support for ongoing public health field practice and at the same time include sufficient context and assessment of transferability so that practitioners in other public health settings can gauge the usefulness of the findings for their own work. National, regional and local health departments, community-based health centers and NGOs in the U.S. and internationally represent the types of sites in which students might conduct their practice-based dissertation work.

Appropriate dissertation projects may include:

- applied public health research
- development and analysis of new practice interventions
- design and implementation of public health programs
- program or policy evaluations
- historical program or policy analyses
- substantial legislative proposals
- other products as appropriate

At present, the majority of students in our program conduct their dissertation research part-time while working during the continuing studies period of the program (post-coursework and post-comprehensive exam).

Please note: International students should consider residency requirements and work limitations during the dissertation period, which may not involve full-time student status, in light of their intended dissertation work. International students should consult with ISSO to understand all regulations regarding dissertation research prior to engaging a specific topic for their research to ensure they fully understand all requirements.

DrPH Dissertation Competencies

Description	Competencies addressed	How competencies are synthesized	Assessment of competency synthesis
The DrPH dissertation addresses a significant, practice-based public health challenge. Each dissertation includes three deliverables: one publishable manuscript and two practice-oriented products (e.g., policy briefs, program evaluations, strategic plans, toolkits). Deliverables must be evidence-based, responsive to an organizational or community need, and demonstrate advanced public health leadership.	Students select at least 5 foundational DrPH competencies, identified in consultation with their advisor and committee. These competencies are identified in the Dissertation Summary, which is shared with the Program Director. Selected competencies typically span multiple domains, such as: • systems thinking • leadership and management • policy development and evaluation • data analysis/evaluation • workforce development	Each dissertation deliverable must integrate multiple competencies within a single product. For example, a program evaluation may combine data analysis (Competency #2), strategic management (Competency #7), and workforce training (Competency #13). This integration mirrors the complexity of senior-level practice, where competencies are applied together rather than in isolation.	Synthesis is assessed through: Competency Mapping: Students complete a competency alignment matrix at the proposal and defense stages, demonstrating how multiple competencies are integrated in each deliverable. Committee Review: Dissertation committees evaluate the extent to which deliverables demonstrate integration across domains, not just isolated competency achievement. Evaluation Rubric: Faculty use a rubric requiring evidence of synthesis (integration of analytic, leadership, policy, and management skills). Oral defense: Students must articulate how their deliverables synthesize competencies to address a real-world public health challenge.

Dissertation Products

Dissertation products will vary depending on the project and must ultimately be decided in consultation with the student's Dissertation Committee. Dissertation projects have three discrete research aims or objectives and three clear, distinct deliverables. At minimum, students must produce one manuscript of publishable quality in a peer-reviewed journal as a chapter to their dissertation. Students with an interest in a research career may look to publish all chapters as manuscripts, but this is not required. Additionally, the final should consider the transferability and generalizability of the findings of the dissertation research to other geographical and/or practice contexts as well as the financial and political sustainability of the programs or interventions in the given context. Examples of the DrPH dissertation can be found on our website.

The dissertation typically takes the form of 5 chapters:

- 1) Introduction, literature review, articulate of dissertation objectives
- 2) Research objective #1: Publishable/published manuscript. The student is expected to be the lead author of an article published in the peer-reviewed public health literature.
- 3) Research objective #2
- 4) Research objective #3
- 5) Integrated conclusions, generalizability, sustainability

Students will develop an individual plan for their dissertation with their Chair, Committee, and DrPH program leadership.

Formation of Dissertation Committee

Students will identify a Dissertation Chair (who may be but is not required to be their original academic advisor) and work with that individual to form a Doctoral Dissertation Committee. Membership shall consist of a minimum of four persons:

- The Dissertation Chair (First Reader). Students must meet with their Dissertation Chair at minimum once every semester, although many students meet more regularly with their advisors (weekly or monthly). The First Reader must have a primary appointment or secondary appointment at SPH.
- Two other faculty members must have a primary appointment at BU, with one also having a primary or secondary appointment at SPH (Second and Third Readers).
- The fourth member should work in a leadership capacity in the public health practice community and have applicable expertise to meaningfully advise the work (Fourth Reader).
- Students have the option of including additional members on their committee at their discretion, particularly if there is a need for support in specific skill areas not available from their committee (e.g., statistical or programming support). Additional committee members are expected to be full participants in all aspects of dissertation review and approval.

Please note: Students are strongly advised to begin considering dissertation topics and a Dissertation Chair in Year 1 of their program and engage in outreach and networking with SPH faculty who have mutual interests. Ultimately, the dissertation topic must reflect an alignment of student and faculty interests, and it may take some time to identify these areas and form relationships necessary for a

successful dissertation. It is the student's responsibility to identify a suitable and feasible project for which they have strong faculty support; this is a central component of conducting independent research. The most successful students are able to align their dissertation interests with ongoing or funded projects of faculty to provide mutual benefit to the student and their Chair. It may be difficult to identify a Chair for a dissertation project that is far afield from faculty research interests or funded projects.

Please start early to ensure you have the opportunity to develop relationships necessary for this stage of independent work. Students who are unable to identify a Dissertation Chair and dissertation topic within the timeframes below may face dismissal from the program.

Dissertation Proposal Development

Once a full Committee is identified, students will develop and submit a [Dissertation Summary](#) online. Students are asked to share their research aims and methodologies, data sources, scheduled dates for their proposal submission and oral presentation, and proposed timeline for completion of dissertation research. **The Summary is due within 3 months following completion of the Comprehensive Exam and requires close collaboration with their Chair.** The Program Director will follow up with committee members to ensure they have approved the project and dates as described on the Summary.

Following submission of their Dissertation Summary, students will develop and submit 10–15-page written proposal (double-spaced) and prepare an oral presentation based on their planned research to their Dissertation Committee and email it to Dr. Leibler and DrPH@bu.edu. The proposal should develop in greater depth the themes identified in the dissertation summary or topic approval request and include the sections below. **Students must complete a dissertation proposal and oral presentation within 3 months of the Summary.**

Components of the written proposal:

(1) Specific Aims – 1 page

Describe in one page the context of your research, its public health relevance, existing gaps in the knowledge base, and your specific aims (research aims) that are designed to address these elements. The specific aims should be written and presented as a standalone aims page. The target audience for the aims page is professionals both with and without specific topic area expertise.

Here is some guidance on writing a specific aims page: <https://writingcenter.catalyst.harvard.edu/write-your-specific-aims-page>. Your Chair and faculty mentors can likewise provide guidance and examples.

(2) Background – 2 pages

Summarize the literature on past and current strategies that have been used to address the issues studied. Sketch the background leading to present conditions and critically evaluate existing knowledge. Describe the effect of past studies on the concepts, methods, technologies, services, or interventions that drive this field. This section does not need to be a comprehensive literature review but should provide key references in the field. In this section, students must also identify gaps in the literature and/or knowledge that highlight the importance of the proposed research.

(3) Public health significance and innovation – ½ page

Describe the importance and relevance of your proposed work to public health practice, both in the specific context of your proposal as well as more broadly. What are the major issues that your project addresses? What aspects are particularly innovative? How can your project be generalized to other regions or populations?

(3) Research design and methods – 5-7 pages

This section should include the following subsections:

- a. Describe the research design or conceptual or practice framework, procedures, and analyses to be used to accomplish the specific aims of the project. Discuss methods used to address each aim separately and sequentially.
- b. Explain how the data will be collected, analyzed, and interpreted. This section should include detailed descriptions of methods for collection of any primary data, approaches to accessing secondary data, and statistical analyses approaches.
- c. Describe any new methodology used and its advantage over existing methodologies.
- d. Describe any novel concepts, approaches, tools, or technologies to be used in the proposed dissertation.
- e. Identify the strengths of the proposed project, in terms of methodology, scope, framework, data source, analytic method, population, or other factors.
- f. Detail the limitations of the proposed approaches and alternative approaches to achieve the aims.

(5) DrPH program alignment – ½ page

- g. Place the research in the context of one of the approaches discussed in the DrPH Guidebook (e.g. policy analyses, applied public health research, development and analysis of new practice interventions, design and implementation of public health programs, program or policy evaluations, historical program or policy analyses, substantial legislative proposals) and explain why that design is appropriate to the proposed question.

(5) Chapter outline for final dissertation – ½ page

(6) Timeline to completion of dissertation – ½ page. Please include a timeline for the oral presentation, frequency of meetings with your Chair and dissertation committee, and a detailed timeline by research aim.

These sections do not count towards the 15-page limit:

(7) References

(8) Human subjects research. For all research involving human subjects, describe your process for protection of subjects from research risks as well as the inclusion of women, minorities, and children as appropriate. This section should include timeline towards IRB or RCR approval as needed.

Oral presentation: Students will present their dissertation topic, methods, and timeline to their committee in oral format (PPT) following submission of their proposal. The student will present their research for 20 minutes, followed by questions from their committee members.

Faculty queries will be focused on discussion student's proposed research design and methodologies, including analytic methods, significance and relevance of the project for public health practice, both in the specific context and more broadly, feasibility and timeline, and resources needed for success.

Approval of Dissertation Proposal

After the candidate completes an oral presentation, the Dissertation Committee must approve the doctoral proposal unanimously prior to the student commencing the dissertation project. The decision of the Committee can be to approve, conditionally approve, or deny the student's dissertation proposal. The decision of the Committee must be conveyed in a short email from the Dissertation Chair to DrPH@bu.edu, indicating the decision and date of oral proposal defense. This must be delivered no later than one week following the oral proposal defense.

If the committee has any conditions concerning additional elements of the proposal that must be completed prior to approval (conditional approval), these elements should be stipulated in a letter to the candidate with a copy to DrPH@bu.edu with a recommended date for completion of the revised proposal or additional activities (such as additional coursework or independent study). In the case of a request for a revised proposal, once the Dissertation Committee has reviewed and approved it unanimously, an email indicating such must be sent by the Dissertation Chair to DrPH@bu.edu. Students whose proposals are not approved by their Dissertation Committee following two proposal submissions are subject to dismissal from the program.

Dissertation Progress Updates

Every student will submit a written progress update on the current status of their work and timeline once per academic year. These updates are required annually by BUSPH. The program administrator will reach out to every student annually to provide information as to their progress, challenges, and timelines.

Dissertation Defense

It is expected that throughout the writing of their dissertation, students will share drafts of each chapter with their committee for review and feedback. This back-and-forth is imperative for successful completion of the dissertation and a high-quality written product. Students must manage their own timeline to ensure committee members have mutually agreed upon time to review and provide feedback throughout.

The Dissertation Committee must have seen the entire dissertation at least once before the complete draft is submitted and the student advances to the defense. As students approach the end of their dissertation and anticipate graduation, they must follow the timeline outlined below and regular communication with their Dissertation Committee is required.

Students are required to submit their written, final dissertation to their Committee at least 30 days before their scheduled defense date.

Upon completion of the written public health practice dissertation, students will make an in-person oral defense summarizing the key elements of the dissertation and its population-based policy and practice implications to their Dissertation Committee. This requirement, to be conducted in an appropriate public forum, will demonstrate students' ability to present the integration and application of public health practice scholarship and skills required to solve complex public health problems in an appropriate, realistic, and proactive way. Students will be responsible for making changes to the written dissertation based on comments received at the oral presentation—and all such revisions must be made by the dissertation submission deadline set by the University library—though it is expected that most or all of these concerns will be resolved prior to the oral presentation.

Final Assessment/Approval

Based on the written and oral presentations, the Doctoral Dissertation Committee will formally vote to recommend approval or disapproval of the public health practice dissertation. The vote must be unanimous for the dissertation to be approved. The assessment of the dissertation will be based on the degree to which it makes a substantial contribution to the existing public health practice knowledge base and its alignment with DrPH program competencies.

There are 3 steps to fully completing the dissertation process:

- 1) The Dissertation Chair completes the [DrPH Dissertation Assessment Rubric](#) and send to Dr. Leibler and DrPH@bu.edu within one week of the oral dissertation defense.
- 2) Students finalize their dissertation, including any comments from their committee, within one month of their defense, ensuring that their final submission meets school-wide deadlines for graduation (see below for submission requirements to the library).
- 3) Students request and confirm receipt of the Readers' Approval Page through SPH, using DocuSign: <https://www.bu.edu/library/sph-dissertations-docusign/>
- 4) Students must send a final email to DrPH@bu.edu to notify the program when they have submitted their final dissertation and signatures to the library. Students must attach a copy of their final dissertation in this e-mail as well.

Preparation and Submission of Final Dissertation

After the successful dissertation defense, the student will incorporate the corrections that the Dissertation Committee require before they submit their dissertation electronically to the Mugar Memorial Library via the ProQuestETD site (<http://www.etdadmin.com>) by the deadline listed in the [Doctoral Graduation Calendar](#). Students have up to one month after their defense to prepare any final revisions required by their Dissertation Committee, obtain the final approval of the Dissertation Committee, and submit the final document to the Library.

There are Boston University requirements for the style, electronic submission, distribution, and other aspects of the dissertation which can be found in "Research Guide for Writers of Theses and Dissertations," available here: https://library.bu.edu/ld.php?content_id=30310050.

Students with questions about formatting or the dissertation submission process can contact Brendan McDermott, Thesis and Dissertation Librarian at the Mugar Memorial Library, at brendan@bu.edu. Mr. McDermott has requested that students send him an electronic copy of their dissertation draft long in

advance of the date when they would like to submit their final draft to give him ample time to assess their dissertation's adherence to Boston University formatting requirements. There is a charge for library services for handling the thesis.

DrPH Dissertation Checklist

Copies of all forms mentioned below can be found linked below, at the end of this Guidebook, or on the [DrPH Website](#). All students will also provide annual progress updates after the successful start to their dissertation research.

1. _____ Complete Responsible Conduct of Research Training (RCR – required of all students that receive NSF or NIH funding) and CITI training for human subjects research (if applicable)
2. _____ Identify your Dissertation Committee, including a SPH faculty member to serve as your dissertation chair and 2 SPH faculty members and 1 outside professional to serve as your Dissertation Committee. Begin conversations towards this end in Year 1 of the program.
3. _____ Select a dissertation topic in conjunction with your chair and committee. Schedule the submission deadline for your proposal and your oral presentation. Submit your [Dissertation Summary](#) to the DrPH program. The summary must be submitted within 3 months of completion of your Comprehensive Exam.
4. _____ Complete dissertation proposal
 - a. Complete written dissertation proposal of 10-15 pages following submission of your Summary. Submit this to your committee by agreed upon dates.
 - b. Present your proposal in an oral presentation for your committee
 - c. Your dissertation advisor will email DrPH@bu.edu when committee approves the dissertation proposal
 - d. Dissertation proposal + oral presentation must be completed within 3 months of the submission of your Summary and before the end of Year 4.
5. _____ Conduct dissertation research
 - a. Meet regularly (at least quarterly) with your committee for structured meetings with the goal of presenting your work to date, establishing a timeline, and troubleshooting as needed
 - b. Share drafts regularly with your committee for feedback
 - c. Share annual updates with the DrPH program as to your progress
6. _____ Carefully review the [Graduation Procedures for Doctoral Students](#) to determine appropriate timeline and process for defending your dissertation and graduation
7. _____ Submit graduation application form to BUSPH Registrar by the [appropriate deadline](#)
8. _____ Schedule dissertation defense
 - a. Formally schedule dissertation with Dissertation Committee and DrPH Director and complete the [Dissertation Defense Sign-Off Form](#)

- b. Ensure that your committee has had ample opportunity to provide comments on your proposal (multiple drafts)
- 9. _____ Schedule dissertation defense
 - a. Submit final, written dissertation to your Committee at least 30 days in advance of the dissertation defense
 - b. Complete the [*Dissertation Defense Sign-Off Form*](#) with Committee Chair
 - c. Submit the following to DrPH@bu.edu and DrPH Program Director
 - i. Dissertation abstract of no more than 350 words
 - ii. Defense date and time
 - iii. Defense format (e.g., in-person or hybrid) and room preference (if applicable)
 - iv. Completed [*Dissertation Defense Sign-Off Form*](#) with the names and email addresses of the Dissertation Committee members
- 10. _____ Prepare for defense
 - a. Prepare 45-minute PowerPoint presentation to share dissertation work with the DrPH and SPH community
 - b. Contact Brendan McDermott (brendan@bu.edu) at Mugar Library to begin the library submission process and formatting check
- 11. _____ Defend Dissertation
 - a. Dissertation Committee Chair will communicate the results of the defense (Pass, Conditional Pass, Fail) to the student following the defense and within 24 hours of the defense to Dr. Leibler.
 - b. Dissertation Committee Chair will complete [*DrPH Dissertation Assessment Rubric*](#) and send to Dr. Leibler and DrPH@bu.edu within one week of the oral dissertation defense.
- 12. _____ Submit Final Dissertation
 - a. Complete remaining edits from Dissertation Committee and Brendan McDermott
 - b. Collect approval signatures from each member of Dissertation Committee [via DocuSign](#)
 - c. Submit final Dissertation document via ProquestETD site and pay of processing fees by the appropriate graduation [deadline](#)
 - d. Email DrPH@bu.edu when final dissertation is submitted with copy of final dissertation attached
 - e. Celebrate your accomplishment!

Section 6: Student Policies and Forms

Below are policies and resources related to the DrPH program at BUSPH. All of the student forms printed in this section are also available as editable forms on the student website:

<https://www.bu.edu/sph/education/degrees-and-programs/doctor-of-public-health-drph/drph/>. All

Registrar forms (Substitution, Course Waiver, Add/Drop, etc.) can be found on the Registrar's website:

<https://www.bu.edu/sph/students/advising-and-registration/forms/>

Academic Accommodations

Students may seek and obtain academic accommodations through the University-wide Disability and Access Services: <https://www.bu.edu/disability/>. Accommodations are granted through DAS only and not through BUSPH specifically, the DrPH Program Director, or through individual faculty or advisors. Students can contact Ms. Mary Murphy Phillips at BUSPH for further information about the process to request and manage academic accommodations. (mcmurph@bu.edu). Students are advised to request accommodations early in their tenure, as it may take many months to complete the process.

Annual Doctoral Progress Report

Each year, all BUSPH doctoral students are required to complete an annual progress report. This collects information valuable for accreditation and collects meaningful information on student progress in the program and upcoming goals. This is required for each student at all stages of the degree and is usually distributed during the late spring/early summer. It is a great opportunity for students to connect with their advisor on their plan for the upcoming academic year.

Academic Standing

All SPH degree candidates must earn a minimum 3.0 GPA each semester to be in good academic standing and must have a minimum 3.0 GPA at SPH to graduate. Please see the BUSPH Grading Policy at <https://www.bu.edu/academics/sph/policies/grades/>.

A DrPH student is expected to maintain good academic standing in each semester, including meeting all deadlines for completion of program activities at the required pace and timelines as outlined in this Guidebook. SPH policies involving academic standing are outlined here: <https://www.bu.edu/academics/sph/policies/academic-standing/>.

Students who fail to achieve academic requirements or adhere to program deadlines for milestones (practicum, comprehensive exam, proposal activities, dissertation completion) will be placed on an academic warning status. Students on warning status will be required to meet with the Program Director and develop a learning plan that will get them back on track within a short period of time (one semester or less). Students who fail to accomplish their goals while on warning status will be placed on academic probation. When a student is placed on probation, the DrPH Program Director will send the student a letter specifying the reason(s) for probation, 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), they must write a letter to the DrPH Program Director that describes their completion of each step. The DrPH Program Director will respond in writing with a determination of whether the student (A) has met the requirements and has been removed from probation status or (B) has not met the requirements and will remain on probation.

Dismissal

A student who is on probation will be dismissed from the DrPH program if they do not demonstrate substantial progress during the probationary period, or do not meet the requirement(s) of probation by the deadlines specified.

A student who fails the comprehensive examination two times or fails to maintain the minimum GPA will be dismissed from the program. Dismissal may also occur as a result of committing an act of academic dishonesty, as defined in the School's policy on Academic Honesty.

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. A student who does not meet the established time limits may be dismissed from the program without a degree.

All decisions regarding academic standing, probation, and dismissal will be made by DrPH Program Director, the Dean of Education, and the Registrar. Decisions are final.

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

<https://www.bu.edu/academics/policies/academic-conduct-code/>.

Dispute Resolution Process

A concern or complaint from a SPH student should be directed to the persons whose actions or inactions have given rise to the concern or complaint. Whenever possible, every effort should be made to resolve the problem promptly at the level at which it occurred. The student may pursue the issue within the normal reporting structure of the academic or administrative department at SPH. If a student feels they have been unfairly treated by an instructor or teaching assistant of a SPH course, the student should contact the chair (or his/her designee) of the department in which course is taught. If the chair is the instructor, the student should seek assistance from the Associate Dean for Education. Should the student need additional assistance, they may also see staff in the Boston University Office of the Ombuds:

<https://www.bu.edu/ombuds/>.

Grievance Process

Boston University prohibits discrimination on the basis of race, color, creed, religion, ethnic origin, age, sex, [disability](#), sexual orientation, gender identity, or other unlawful basis. The goal of the procedures

outlined below is to ensure that non-discrimination is a reality at Boston University and that no person in the University community is subjected to such unlawful conduct. All members of the University community can assist in the furtherance of this goal by ensuring that complaints of discrimination are promptly directed to the departments or individuals who have been designated to receive them, in accordance with these procedures. <https://www.bu.edu/academics/policies/student-grievance-procedure-in-cases-of-alleged-disability-discrimination/>

Registration Requirements

Consistent Registration and Continuing Study

At Boston University School of Public Health, all doctoral students, regardless of citizenship or immigration status, must register each fall and spring semester during their doctoral program until they graduate, or risk being administratively withdrawn from their doctoral program.

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, in particular full-time enrollment. Full-time enrollment is achieved by registration for 12 or more credits of academic coursework, or by registering for Continuing Study with additional full-time certification (“Certified Full-time”) coding by the SPH Registrar. International, non-immigrant 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

In exceptional circumstances, a student may need to take a leave of absence from the program. A student may request a leave of absence of up to two semesters by writing a letter to the DrPH Program Director and the BUSPH Registrar. Students on leave of absence are not entitled to be advised officially by their advisors or meet with their Doctoral Dissertation Committee during a leave of absence, nor do they have library privileges. It has been possible for students on leave to maintain their ACS accounts. Students must petition the Registrar for a third leave of absence, with the notice that such leaves are typically not extended.

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.

For more information regarding Boston University’s Parental Leave Policy, [please follow this link](#)

International Students and International Work

International Students and Scholars Office (ISSO)

The ISSO provides professional expertise on immigration and employment issues to students, faculty, and staff at Boston University. Some additional resources include:

- International Travel Risk Policy: <http://www.bu.edu/policies/international-travel-risk>
- Maintaining F-1 Status: <https://www.bu.edu/isso/students/status/>
- International Student Employment: <https://www.bu.edu/isso/administrators/advising-current-students/work/>

For practicum work authorization guidance, please see “Curricular Practical Training (CPT) Guidance for International Students” in Section 3.

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 every fall and spring semester.