

Community Health Sciences PhD Program Guidelines 2026-2027



Complex issues require comprehensive solutions.

At the Department of Community Health Sciences (CHS), we apply social and behavioral sciences to enhance the health and well-being of communities and promote health equity.

Version date: July 31, 2026

CONTENTS	2
ABOUT THE BOSTON UNIVERSITY SCHOOL OF PUBLIC HEALTH (BUSPH)	4
BUSPH MISSION	4
BUSPH VALUES	4
ACCREDITATION	4
ABOUT THIS GUIDE	4
IMPORTANT DATES THROUGHOUT THE ACADEMIC YEAR	4
THE DOCTORAL STUDENT ORGANIZATION	4
COMMUNITY HEALTH SCIENCES DEPARTMENT CONTACTS	5
DEPARTMENT CONTACTS	5
COMMUNITY HEALTH SCIENCES DOCTORAL COMMITTEE (CHSDC) MEMBERS	9
WELCOME LETTER	6
PROGRAM OVERVIEW	7
GOAL OF THE COMMUNITY HEALTH SCIENCES DOCTORAL PROGRAM	7
COMPETENCIES	7
COMPETENCY MAP	8
ADMISSION	9
THE COMMUNITY HEALTH SCIENCES DOCTORAL COMMITTEE	9
MENTORING AND ADVISING	10
GRADUATE RESEARCH ASSISTANTSHIP	10
DOCTORAL STUDENT PROGRESS FILE	11
EDUCATION REQUIREMENTS	13
COURSEWORK	13
RECOMMENDED COURSE SEQUENCING	16
DOCTORAL SEMINARS	17
RESPONSIBLE CONDUCT OF RESEARCH TRAINING	17
QUALIFYING PROCESS	19
PRELIMINARY REVIEW	19
QUALIFYING REVIEW	20

APPEAL PROCESS FOR WITHDRAWAL RECOMMENDATIONS	21
DISSERTATION	22
DISSERTATION TIMELINE	22
DISSERTATION CONCEPT ONE-PAGER	22
REQUIREMENT FOR COMMUNITY EXPERTISE	24
DISSERTATION PROPOSAL	24
DISSERTATION	25
DISSERTATION FORMATTING	26
DISSERTATION SUBMISSION TO BU MUGAR MEMORIAL LIBRARY	26
PUBLICATION OF DISSERTATION PAPERS	27
CHANGE OF DISSERTATION OR COMMITTEE MEMBERS	27
DOCTORAL STUDENT GRADUATION CALENDAR	28
BU DOCTORAL EXIT SURVEY	28
STUDENT POLICIES	29
COMPLIANCE REQUIREMENTS FOR ALL BOSTON UNIVERSITY STUDENTS	29
REGISTRATION REQUIREMENTS	29
PARENTAL LEAVE	29
LEAVES OF ABSENCE	30
BOSTON UNIVERSITY INFORMATION REGARDING ACADEMIC HONESTY	30
GRADING STANDARDS, PROBATION, AND DISMISSAL	31
INTERNATIONAL STUDENTS	33
STUDENT RESOURCES AND PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT	34
DISABILITY SERVICES	34
BOSTON UNIVERSITY OMBUDS	34
STUDENT HEALTH AND BEHAVIORAL MEDICINE	34
COMMUNICATIONS	34
POLICY FOR STUDENT TRAVEL IN THE CHS DEPARTMENT	34
POLICY FOR FINANCIAL DONATIONS TO THE PROGRAM	35
PREPARING FOR LIFE AFTER THE PhD	35
APPENDIX A	37

About the Boston University School of Public Health (BUSPH)

BUSPH Mission

To improve the health and well-being of populations worldwide, particularly the underserved, through excellence and innovation in education, research, and practice.

BUSPH Values

We are committed to igniting and sustaining positive change that leads to health and well-being around the world. We strive for a respectful, collaborative, diverse, and inclusive community within our School of Public Health. We aim to promote justice, human rights, and equity within and across our local and global communities.

Accreditation

Boston University is accredited by the New England Commission of Higher Education. BUSPH is accredited by the Council on Education for Public Health (CEPH).

About This Guide

This document is intended to be a description of the guidelines in effect for the PhD program in Community Health Sciences at BUSPH for the 2026-2027 academic year. Students matriculating in this academic year will be responsible for the requirements described within the 2026-2027 guidelines, as well as any additional University requirements described in the [Bulletin](#), throughout their academic tenure at the BUSPH.

Boston University, BUSPH, and the Department of Community Health Sciences reserve the right to change policies, procedures, curricula, or other matters, and to cancel programs and courses at any time. 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

BUSPH maintains its own academic calendar, distinct from that of the Charles River Campus. It is important that students always refer to the BUSPH registration packets, academic calendar, and websites for BUSPH-specific information. That said, BUSPH aligns its schedule as much as possible with the Charles River Campus schedule, particularly for holidays, holiday replacement days, Intersession, and Spring Break.

Doctoral students should review the [BUSPH Student Resources Page](#) for forms, academic calendar, class meeting dates, registration information, and events calendars. The University also has a policy for religious holidays that can be reviewed [here](#).

The Doctoral Student Organization

Doctoral students are encouraged to become involved in the [Doctoral Student Organization](#), geared specifically towards connecting PhD and DrPH students at BUSPH.

Community Health Sciences Department Contacts

Department Contacts

The whole Community Health Sciences department is dedicated to your success! Throughout your degree, there will be times you need specific supports. The table below details the responsibilities of the various members of the CHS administrative leadership team that oversees the doctoral program. Please use this guide to direct specific questions to the appropriate resource to get the most efficient and responsive answers to your needs.

Title	Name	CHS PhD Responsibilities	Contact Info
Department Chair	Carlos Rodriguez-Diaz	Oversees the department and all the programs and student supported within	carod@bu.edu
PhD Program Director	Kimberly Nelson	Provides general oversight of all aspects of the program	knel@bu.edu
Senior Academic Program Administrator	Sarah Lawrence	Supports the PhD program director, the doctoral committee, and students	sel6@bu.edu
Associate Department Chair	Trish Elliott	Supports all educational programs of the department	pelliott@bu.edu
Director of Administration	Patty Gonzalez	Oversees program finances, including student stipends and paycheck administration	gonzalep@bu.edu
Senior Financial Administration	Denise Sanchez	Supports student travel, work spaces, and access to computers	dneves@bu.edu

Welcome Letter



Boston University School of Public Health
715 Albany Street
Boston, Massachusetts 02118

**Years, One Mission.
For the Health of All.**



April 24, 2026

Dear Members of the Inaugural PhD Cohort in Community Health Sciences,

It is both an honor and a profound source of excitement to welcome you as the first cohort of our PhD program in Community Health Sciences at BUSPH. You are beginning a doctoral journey and are supporting to define what this program will become and what it will stand for in the years ahead.

You were selected because of your intellectual curiosity, your commitment to advancing health equity, and your potential to contribute meaningfully to the science and practice of community health. Each of you brings a unique set of experiences, perspectives, and aspirations. Together, you form a community of scholars who will challenge, support, and learn from one another.

Community health sciences is about understanding and transforming the social, structural, and environmental conditions that shape health. It asks us to engage deeply with communities, to listen with humility, and to co-create knowledge that is both rigorous and responsive to real-world needs. In this program, you will be trained to generate high-quality research in ways that are ethical, collaborative, and grounded in the principles of social justice.

As our inaugural cohort, you will help shape the culture of this program: how we collaborate, how we support one another, and how we define excellence. Your voices matter. Your feedback will be essential. And your contributions will leave a lasting imprint on those who follow.

Doctoral training is a demanding and transformative process. There will be moments of uncertainty, complexity, and challenge. But there will also be moments of discovery, connection, and growth that will reaffirm your purpose. Know that you are not alone on this journey. You are supported by a dedicated faculty, committed staff, and a broader community that believes deeply in your success.

We encourage you to remain grounded in the reasons that brought you here—the communities you care about, the questions that keep you up at night, and the changes you hope to see in the world. Let those commitments guide your work and sustain you along the way.

We are thrilled to welcome you to this program and to walk alongside you as you develop into the next generation of leaders in community health sciences.

With warmest congratulations and great anticipation,

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, reading 'Carlos E. Rodriguez-Diaz'.

Carlos E. Rodriguez-Diaz, PhD, MPHE, MCHES
Professor and Chair
Department of Community Health Sciences

Section

1

Program Overview

The guidelines presented below aim to direct students through their doctoral studies at BUSPH in the Community Health Sciences Department at BUSPH. This section will address programmatic requirements – such as coursework, the qualifying process, and the doctoral dissertation – as well as the processes needed to meet them and recommendations for doing so.

Goal of the Community Health Sciences Doctoral Program

The Community Health Sciences PhD program aims to educate candidates to become independent, innovative, and productive research scientists who apply social and behavioral science theories and methodologies to enhance the health and well-being of communities and promote health equity.

Doctoral Competencies

Upon completion of the PhD program in Community Health Sciences, students will be able to:

- Analyze the social and behavioral determinants of health and health equity across individual, interpersonal, community, and societal levels.
- Develop theoretically informed public health research questions rooted in a social justice perspective.
- Apply a range of social and behavioral science approaches, including quantitative, qualitative, community-engaged, and implementation science methods, to design and conduct original research seeking to advance health equity.
- Demonstrate the professional skills essential to becoming a leader in using social and behavioral science approaches to advancing health equity.
- Communicate research findings effectively to diverse audiences.

Competency Map

Competency	How this competency is covered
1. Analyze the social and behavioral determinants of health and health equity across individual, interpersonal, community, and societal levels.	Required Coursework SPH EP755: Social Epidemiology SPH SB855: Social Justice in Action: Theories and Methods for Community Health Sciences
2. Develop theoretically informed public health research questions rooted in a social justice perspective.	Required Coursework SPH EP755: Social Epidemiology SPH SB855: Social Justice in Action: Theories and Methods for Community Health Sciences SPH PH803: Community-Based Participatory Research Other Educational Experiences Doctoral Dissertation
3. Apply a range of social and behavioral science approaches, including quantitative, qualitative, community-engaged, and implementation science methods, to design and conduct original research seeking to advance health equity.	Required Coursework SPH BS730: Introduction to Statistical Application in R SPH BS845: Data Science and Statistical Modeling in R SPH SB818: Qualitative Research Methods SPH PH803: Community-Based Participatory Research SPH SB865: Community-Engaged Research for Social Justice SPH PM839: Implementation Science SPH SB855: Social Justice in Action: Theories and Methods for Community Health Sciences Other Educational Experiences Doctoral Dissertation
4. Demonstrate the professional skills essential to becoming a leader in using social and behavioral science approaches to advancing health equity.	Required Coursework SPH SB855 Social Justice in Action: Theories and Methods for Community Health Sciences SPH PH885: Grant Writing for Doctoral Students I SPH PH886: Grant Writing for Doctoral Students II SPH PH895: Public Health Pedagogy and Curriculum Development SPH PH896: Mentored Pedagogy Practicum for Doctoral Students Other Educational Experiences Community Health Sciences Proseminar Doctoral Dissertation
5. Communicate research findings effectively to diverse audiences.	Required Coursework: SPH SB818: Qualitative Research Methods SPH PH803: Community-Based Participatory Research SPH SB865: Community-Engaged Research for Social Justice SPH PH896: Mentored Pedagogy Practicum for Doctoral Students Other Educational Experiences: CHS Doctoral Seminar Presentations Doctoral Dissertation

As required by BUSPH, 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 one of many springboards for discussion with a student's primary research mentor about course selection, dissertation progress, and professional development.

Admission

In addition to meeting general [admission requirements of BUSPH](#), admission to the Community Health Sciences PhD program also requires a Master's degree in public health or a related discipline (e.g., psychology, sociology, social work), a minimum of one full semester/quarter/trimester graduate level-course in biostatistics with a grade of B or better completed prior to February of the year of matriculation, and a minimum of one full semester/quarter/trimester graduate-level course in epidemiology with a grade of B or better completed prior to February of the year of matriculation. Successful candidates most often have research and work experience in a public health or related setting (e.g., community organization, health policy organization).

At the time of admission, students are notified that they have a guarantee of four years of various forms of material support during their time in the program, as long as they maintain good academic standing and full-time status. This support will cover full tuition for all coursework required for the degree program, the continuing education fee following the completion of coursework, mandatory health and wellness fees, and basic individual health insurance. Students also receive 12-month stipend funding. More information about student stipends and related expectations is available in the Graduate Research Assistantship section below.

The Community Health Sciences Doctoral Committee

The Community Health Sciences Doctoral Committee (CHSDC) oversees the doctoral program in Community Health Sciences. The CHSDC is a committee of primarily department faculty. The faculty members of the CHSDC, and the Director of the Community Health Sciences Doctoral Program ("Program Director"), who chairs the CHSDC, are appointed by the Chair of the Department of Community Health Sciences for 3-year renewable terms.

The CHSDC implements the program guidelines described herein. The CHSDC delegates authority to others 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 CHSDC is responsible for accepting students into the doctoral program, assessing students' progress throughout the program, approving members of the student's dissertation committee, approving students' dissertation concept letters, certifying that students have completed the degree requirements, and, if necessary, dismissing students from the doctoral program.

All CHSDC decisions concerning individual students are final. The decisions are reported to the department faculty and discussed as needed during monthly department meetings.

Community Health Sciences Doctoral Committee (CHSDC) Members

Allegra Gordon
Jonathan Jay
Lynsie Ranker
Kathryn Thompson

allegrag@bu.edu
jonjay@bu.edu
lranker@bu.edu
kdthomps@bu.edu

Mentoring and Advising

Each student entering the Community Health Sciences doctoral program will be assigned to a primary mentor. The primary mentor is typically the supervisor of the student's graduate research assistantship and the person whose scientific work is most aligned with the student's interests. Students are expected to meet with their primary mentor regularly to discuss their progress in the program and any meetings that occur as part of their research assistantship work. Formally, and in addition to the annual report of student progress required by BUSPH, at the start of each new school year, each student must complete an individual development plan (IDP) and review it with their primary mentor to facilitate a discussion about program progress, goals, and student needs. Following a meeting between the student and their primary mentor to review these materials, the student should send a copy of this IDP, the student's current CV, and the student's current unofficial transcript to the Doctoral Program Director and Academic Program Administrator. All materials are due to the Doctoral Program Director and Academic Program Administrator by the end of September each year.

At the student's request or upon the recommendation of the assigned primary mentor or the CHSDC, a second mentor may be added. Secondary mentors can be from the Community Health Sciences Department or other departments at BU. The Doctoral Program Director can facilitate the student's introduction to the second mentor. Students may request to change mentors, or the Doctoral Program Director may notify students of a need to change in mentor, in the first 3 years of the program (before the student forms a dissertation committee) due to changes in faculty availability or a match with a student.

Should students feel they need to discuss a challenge they are experiencing with their mentor, they are encouraged to speak with the Doctoral Program Director or Department Chair at any time. The mentor(s) appointed on entry to the program remain the student's mentor(s) until the student forms a dissertation committee (typically at the beginning of year 3 of the program). When the CHSDC approves the student's dissertation committee following a review of the student's dissertation concept letter, the dissertation committee chair becomes the student's primary mentor for the rest of their time in the doctoral program.

Graduate Research Assistantship

Funding sources vary among students, with the most common being appointment as a Graduate Research Assistant to a faculty mentor whose research interests align with their own. Graduate Research Assistants work 20 hours per week, beginning in the first month of the doctoral program, and receive a stipend in exchange for this work. Stipend amounts are determined by BUSPH and are not at the discretion of individual faculty members. The Graduate Research Assistantship should be viewed by faculty members as a training opportunity for the student through completing work on one of the faculty member's funded projects. The Graduate Research Assistantship should be viewed by the student as an important opportunity to learn outside of coursework via real world experience in community health sciences research. Funding for this stipend is usually provided through grants received from the National Institute of Health (NIH) or foundations. Thus, both the mentor and the student have a professional responsibility to ensure that an average of 20 hours per week is completed in accordance with the expectations outlined in NIH or foundation policies and grant award notices.

Stipend funding sources (and therefore primary research mentors) may change during a student's doctoral training. The initial offer of admission provides a guarantee of four years of

stipend funding, but, for example, the faculty mentor for whom the students serve as Graduate Research Assistants may change due to funding availability or faculty or student experience. Every effort will be made to ensure changes align with the student's scientific interests and professional goals.

Students are encouraged to work with their primary mentor to evaluate whether to seek external funding, for example, via NIH F31 or F99 pre-doctoral training awards, to support their training. Because such grants have implications for the faculty who have guaranteed funding to the student, it is important to discuss the plan with your faculty mentor. All doctoral student grant submissions must also be discussed with the CHS department Grants Manager(s) prior to submission, with as much notice prior to the application due date as possible and at a minimum of 8 weeks prior to the due date. Grant managers play a pivotal role in ensuring that grant applications are completed correctly and serve as a liaison between grant applicants and the Boston University Office of Sponsored Programs, which handles all grant funding awarded to BUSPH faculty and staff. Thus, involvement of a Grants Manager in the process of applying for a grant as early as possible is crucial.

Doctoral Student Progress File

The Doctoral Student Progress File tracks student progress throughout the program. Initially, the file contains the student's name, the date of entry into the program, and the name of the assigned primary research mentor. The Academic Program Administrator will include and maintain the following information and materials in the progress file:

- Copies of the BUSPH annual Doctoral Progress Report Form;
- Copies of the student's individual development plan and CV at the start of each academic year in the program;
- Copies of transcripts and other required documentation showing completion of the unit requirements;
- A copy of the certification of the completion of training in the Responsible Conduct of Research;
- The Program Director's written statements of the passage of the Preliminary Review;
- The Program Director's written statements of the passage of the Qualifying Review;
- A copy of the dissertation concept letter submitted to the Program Director documenting the formation and membership of the dissertation committee;
- The Program Director's written statement of approval of the concept letter;
- A copy of the dissertation proposal and committee members' review comments on the proposal;
- Approval form for the dissertation proposal;
- A copy of an announcement of the dissertation defense;
- Copies of all materials prepared for the dissertation defense presentation;
- Any correspondence pertaining to potential or actual disapproval of the dissertation;
- Approval form for the dissertation;

- Any other documentation that is relevant to the student's progress and performance in the program.

Section

2

Education Requirements

Coursework

Boston University requires that no doctoral student receive a grade below B in more than one full-semester course. The third such grade results in dismissal; however, this decision may be contested through a formal appeal process. More information about this process can be found within the [BU Academic Conduct Code](#).

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

1. The student must earn *at least* 44 units at Boston University with a grade of B or higher. None of the coursework units may be for pass/fail courses.
2. At least 36 units must be earned in courses offered by the Boston University School of Public Health. If any course is retaken to bring the grade up to B or higher, the units for the first enrollment will not count toward the required units. The grades of both will remain on the student's transcript though.
3. The following courses are required (36 units):
 - SPH SB 855 Social Justice in Action: Theories and Methods for Community Health Sciences (4 units)
 - SPH PH 803 Community-Based Participatory Research: Theory and Methods (2 units)
 - SPH SB 865 Community-Engaged Research for Social Justice (2 units)
 - SPH EP 775 Social Epidemiology (4 units)
 - SPH SB 818 Qualitative Research Methods (4 units)
 - SPH PM 839 Implementation Science: Linking Research to Practice (4 units)
 - SPH BS 730 Introduction to Statistical Applications in R (4 units)
 - SPH BS 845 Data Science and Statistical Modeling in R (4 units)
 - SPH PH 885 Grant Writing for Doctoral Students I (2 units)
 - SPH PH 886 Grant Writing for Doctoral Students II (2 units)
 - SPH PH 895 Pedagogy and Curriculum Development (2 units)
 - SPH PH 896 Mentored Teaching Practicum (2 units)
 - SPH PH 700 Foundations of Public Health (0 units)
 - SPH SB 980 Continuing Study in Community Health Sciences (0 units)
4. Students will choose 8 units of electives to supplement their training. Students may conduct an independent study or research, approved by the Doctoral Program Director and their faculty mentor, for up to 4 elective units. Students will also have the option to

select graduate-level courses at Boston University, but outside of BUSPH, to replace 4-8 units of electives. The Doctoral Program Director and the student's faculty mentor will need to approve any courses outside of BUSPH or outside of the following elective options:

- SPH BS 852: Statistical Methods in Epidemiology (4 units)
 - SPH BS 805: Intermediate Statistical Computing and Applied Regression Analysis (4 units)
 - SPH BS 821: Categorical Data Analysis (4 units)
 - SPH BS 857: Analysis of Correlated Data (4 units)
 - SPH BS 849: Bayesian Modeling for Biomedical Research & Public Health (2 units)
 - SPH BS 853: Generalized Linear Models with Applications (4 units)
 - SPH BS 751: Essentials of Quantitative Data Management (4 units)
 - SPH EH 811: Intro GIS for Public Health (4 units)
 - SPH EP 722: Data Collection Methods for Epidemiologic Research (2 units)
 - SPH EP 790: Mental Health Epidemiology (2 units)
 - SPH EP 797: Concepts in the Measurement of Psychosocial Constructs (2 units)
 - SPH EP 818: Advanced Social Epidemiology: Theories of Disease Distribution and Health Inequality (2 units)
 - SPH EP 819: Advanced Social Epidemiology: Methods (2 units)
 - SPH EP 860: Novel Analytical Methods for Epidemiology (4 units)
 - SPH GH 806: Using Mobile Technologies to Improve Health Outcomes (4 units)
 - SPH MC 759: Perinatal and Child Health Epidemiology (4 units)
 - SPH PH 843: Quantitative Methods for Health and Social Policy Research (2 units)
 - SPH PM 822: Advanced Quantitative Methods for Health and Social Policy Research (4 units)
 - SPH PM 828: Advanced Qualitative Methods (4 units)
 - SPH PM 842: Health Economics for Health and Social Policy Research (4 units)
5. 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 BUSPH non-degree student may count the units towards their 44-unit doctoral degree.
6. A maximum of four of the 44 units may be transferred from other institutions, including short courses and summer courses. Requests for permission to transfer units must be made to the Program Director. Requests to transfer units earned before entering the doctoral program must be made during the first semester. Requests to transfer units earned during the doctoral program must be submitted before taking the course. Transferred units must be at the graduate level. Transferred units 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. Units may not be transferred for

courses judged by the CHSDC 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 coursework applied to the degree requirements. Although units for Boston University courses taken outside of BUSPH are considered transfer units by BUSPH, they may count (with the Program Director's approval) toward the 44 units without counting toward the maximum of 4 transfer units. Students interested in transferring units from other institutions should review the [BUSPH transfer unit policy](#). The transfer unit request form is available on the [BUSPH website](#).

7. Doctoral students who have completed their coursework requirements must register for 0-unit continuing student status (SPH SB 980 Continuing Study in Community Health Sciences) for each fall and spring semester until they complete the doctoral program.

Recommended Course Sequencing

Year 1		
Semester	Courses	Units
Fall		
	SPH SB 855: Social Justice in Action: Theories and Methods for Community Health Sciences	4
	SPH BS 730: Introduction to R: software for statistical computing	4
	SPH PH 803: Community-Based Participatory Research: Theory and Methods	2
Spring		
	SPH SB 865: Community-Engaged Research for Social Justice	2
	SPH EP 775: Social Epidemiology	4
	SPH BS 845: Data Science and Statistical Modeling in R	2

Year 2		
Semester	Courses	Units
Fall		
	SPH SB 818: Qualitative Research Methods	4
	SPH PH 885: Grant Writing for Doctoral Students	2
	SPH PH 895: Pedagogy and Curriculum Development	2
Spring		
	SPH PM 839: Implementation Science: Linking Research to Practice	4
	SPH PH 886: Grant Writing for Doctoral Students II	2
	SPH PH 896: Mentored Teaching Practicum	2

Year 3		
Semester	Courses	Units
Fall		
	Elective(s)	4
Spring		
	Elective(s)	4

Doctoral Seminars

Community Health Sciences Doctoral Seminar

All doctoral students must participate in the doctoral seminar throughout their time in the program. The departmental seminar will be held approximately monthly during the fall and spring semesters. This seminar series allows students to hear from experts in various areas of community health sciences, share ideas and research initiatives with fellow doctoral students and faculty, and gain experience giving presentations to their professional peers. The first session of each semester typically includes an update from the Department Chair, who provides an overview of the latest activities/developments in the department and in the school as a whole, and from the Doctoral Program Director, who reviews expectations for doctoral students and the logistics that support the learning experience. The final session of each semester is used as a student review session, in which doctoral students provide feedback to the Doctoral Program Director or Department Chair to be used as a basis for program enhancements. Students will be allowed to miss two seminar sessions per year and must communicate with the doctoral director ahead of the seminar they will be missing to let them know they will be absent.

Doctoral students in the third year of the program help identify themes for seminars in that given year and invite seminar speakers. This is an opportunity for students to develop leadership skills and network with experts in an area of community health sciences that is of high interest to them.

Community Health Sciences Proseminar

In proseminar, doctoral students meet approximately monthly during the fall and spring semesters to receive additional training in aspects of research that are often under-addressed in coursework (e.g., strategies for preparing a manuscript, establishing a mentoring network, etc.). Attendance at all sessions is required for first-year students. First-year students will be allowed to miss two seminar sessions per year and must communicate with the doctoral director ahead of the seminar they will be missing to let them know they will be absent. Attendance by more advanced graduate students is encouraged to promote mentorship and knowledge sharing.

Doctoral Student Presentations

Each doctoral student must give at least one presentation each year, either in the doctoral seminar, proseminar, or at another department-wide event, until they have completed the

program. In preparing any seminar presentation, the doctoral student will work closely with their mentor in a structured process that includes at least one required practice presentation.

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 online preparation and four live workshop sessions. This training program should be completed as early as possible, preferably during the first year of study. It is the student's responsibility to submit the certificate of completion to the Program Director and the Academic Program Administrator. More information about the training can be found [here](#).

Section

3

Qualifying Process

There are two formal reviews of a student's progress in the doctoral program before the Dissertation. These reviews include, but are not limited to, fulfillment of the Doctoral Competencies.

The **Preliminary Review** is scheduled after the student has completed at least 10 units, but no more than 20 units, within the doctoral program (not including external courses accepted toward the PhD). The purpose of the Preliminary Review is to review the student's performance in courses, research initiatives, and future study directions.

The **Qualifying Review** is scheduled upon completion of the required coursework, excluding the 8 units of electives, and takes place before work begins on the Dissertation. Exact timelines for review will vary by student, but typically towards the end of the 2nd or beginning of 3rd year.

The Preliminary and Qualifying Reviews are the means of documenting progress toward achieving program competencies.

- For the Preliminary Review, students develop a coherent, integrative plan with their Preliminary Review Committee (explained below) to attain as many competency related skills and experiences as feasible.
- The Qualifying Review documents students' abilities to integrate multiple substantive areas, theories and methods, and basic and applied dimensions of the field.

Plan for Completion of Competencies

- a) At the Preliminary Review, the student's Preliminary Review Portfolio will indicate how they plan to achieve the program competencies. The Preliminary Review plan will be approved by the student's Preliminary Review Committee and the Doctoral Program Director.
- b) At the Qualifying Review, the student's Qualifying Review Portfolio will address how the student has achieved the program competencies. The Qualifying Review Portfolio will be approved by the student's Qualifying Review Committee and Doctoral Program Director.

Preliminary Review

The Preliminary Review Committee will consist of the student's primary mentor(s), a member of the CHSDC, and the Doctoral Program Director. The Preliminary Review Conference with the Preliminary Review Committee is intended to assess progress to date and plan for subsequent training. In preparation for the Preliminary Review, the student compiles a Preliminary Review Portfolio to be submitted to the Preliminary Review Committee.

To prepare for the Preliminary Review, the student must submit the following materials in the Preliminary Review Portfolio:

1. An updated curriculum vitae outlining experience and academic background
2. A transcript of coursework completed
3. A plan of study, including a statement of goals and a proposal for the coursework timeline, related experiences, and plans for developing further competencies

4. Publications or sample course papers and reports demonstrating evidence of research competency. Course papers should include faculty comments.

The Preliminary Review Committee assesses the Preliminary Review Portfolio. The reviewing faculty must have the Portfolio to review at least 3 weeks before the scheduled Preliminary Review Conference date. The Preliminary Review Conference will take no more than one hour. At the Preliminary Review Conference, the student and their Preliminary Review Committee will review the plan of study, completed coursework, and other materials in the Preliminary Review Portfolio. Students may be advised at this meeting to take additional coursework, participate in a research activity, or plan applied experiences as part of their program and in preparation for their dissertation work.

A one-page summary of the recommendations and discussion held at the Preliminary Review Conference is prepared by the student and approved by their Preliminary Review Committee. The summary is submitted with a copy of the complete Preliminary Review Portfolio to the Doctoral Program Director and Academic Program Administrator, with a recommendation by the Preliminary Review Committee for one of the following: (a) pass; (b) pass, pending specific documentation due at a specified time; (c) defer until a specified time, pending documentation; or (d) recommend withdrawal from the program.

Qualifying Review

The Qualifying Review process takes place before beginning dissertation research and must be completed before a dissertation concept letter is accepted. The Qualifying Review aims to assess the student's performance in the doctoral program and qualify the student as a Candidate for the doctoral degree. The decision to hold the Qualifying Review is made jointly by the student, their primary mentor(s), and the Doctoral Program Director. The Qualifying Review aims to certify that all students seeking the PhD in Community Health Sciences have a breadth of knowledge in social justice-focused, community-engaged, social and behavioral sciences approaches to addressing public health concerns. This differs from the goal of the dissertation, which typically focuses on depth of knowledge in a particular subject to advance the state of the science in that area.

The student's Qualifying Review Committee consists of the student's primary mentor(s), a CHSDC member, and the Doctoral Program Director.

To prepare for the Qualifying Review, the student must submit the following materials in the Qualifying Review Portfolio:

1. Two or more papers from courses representing different foci within the program (i.e., community-based participatory research methods, social epidemiology, social justice); Faculty comments on papers should be included.
2. The plan of study submitted for the Preliminary Review, with an updated statement, including:
 - a. List of all courses taken and summary of requirements met
 - b. Description of all practical (applied) experiences, including collaborations with community organizations and/or community members
 - c. Description of how the courses and practical experiences in a. and b. led to achievement of the Doctoral Student Competencies
 - d. Statement of professional goals and directions
3. Syllabi of graduate courses taken outside of BUSPH, if any
4. A current transcript
5. An updated curriculum vitae

6. Two letters of recommendation from people who have supervised or collaborated on recent research or applied experiences; Although not required, typically, these letters are requested from people outside the Department.

Students must submit copies of the materials mentioned above to their Qualifying Review Committee members and schedule a Qualifying Review Conference to review the material. The meeting is typically held between 10 and 30 days after the materials are submitted. The Qualifying Review Conference will take no more than one hour. At the Qualifying Review Conference, the student and their Qualifying Review Committee will review the Qualifying Review Portfolio and discuss progress, readiness for the dissertation phase, and recommendations for future goals/directions.

Following the Qualifying Review Conference, the student prepares a one-page summary of the discussion and recommendations and has it approved by their Qualifying Review Committee. The summary is submitted with a copy of the complete Qualifying Review Portfolio to the Doctoral Program Director and Academic Program Administrator, with a recommendation by the Qualifying Review Committee for one of the following: (a) pass; (b) pass, pending specific documentation due at a specified time; (c) defer until a specified time, pending documentation; or (d) recommend withdrawal from the program.

Once a student has passed both the preliminary and qualifying reviews, they are granted PhD candidate status.

Appeal process if withdrawal is recommended

If a student receives a recommendation to withdraw from the program during the Preliminary or Qualifying Process that they would like to appeal, the student may petition the CHSDC in writing to remain in the program and to attempt the Preliminary Review or Qualifying Review (whichever resulted in the recommendation to withdraw) a second time. The petition must be addressed to the Program Director and delivered no more than one month after the student receives notice that they are recommended to withdraw from the program. The petition must describe *extraordinary* circumstances that led directly to their failing to pass the Preliminary or Qualifying Review, and state *exactly* how these circumstances *will be overcome* in another attempt. If the CHSDC grants the petition, it may be conditional on the successful completion of a course or courses of preparatory action by the student, and the next Preliminary or Qualifying Review must be completed within 12 months of the petition's approval. However, the use of such appeals should be thoughtfully considered by the student and their mentor(s), since they are very infrequently granted and it is rarely in the student's best interest to remain in the program after it is recommended that they withdraw. Under no circumstances may a student complete the Preliminary or Qualifying review more than twice.

Section

4

Dissertation

The doctoral dissertation is a written report of the student's independent and original research in community health sciences.

Students begin the process by briefly proposing their dissertation topic in a concept one-pager (detailed below). If approved by the CHSDC, the concept letter is followed by a more formal written proposal and an oral defense of that proposal to be approved by the student's dissertation committee. Once the student has passed the proposal and oral defense, they will proceed with the dissertation research, writing up the dissertation, and an oral defense of their dissertation work. The written portion of the dissertation will include an introduction, three manuscripts of publishable quality research presenting original research conducted for the dissertation, a conclusion, a bibliography, acknowledgments, and appendices as appropriate.

Dissertation Timeline

This timeline represents the major milestones along the pathway to dissertation and graduation. Each time period is in addition to the previous milestone.



Dissertation Concept One-Pager

The purpose of the dissertation concept one-pager is to briefly describe the student's dissertation plans so that CHSDC members can review it before the student invests effort in developing an entire proposal. The concept one-pager will provide the CHSDC with a summary of the research question, potential methods to be used, and proposed dissertation committee members. Dissertation concept one-pagers must be submitted to the Program Director within six months of passing the Qualifying Review. The one-pager may be submitted at any point in the calendar year; it does not need to be submitted on a certain date.

One-pager formatting. The document should be no longer than one page, excluding citations (0.5-inch margins, single-spaced, no less than 11-point font, and no non-standard acronyms). Failure to adhere to these requirements will result in the one-pager being returned for revision.

One-pager contents. The one-pager should begin with a brief introductory paragraph that presents the dissertation topic and its importance. The introduction should be followed by three research aims, each corresponding to one of the three study chapters. Each aim should convey what the research goal is (i.e., what will be learned by conducting the research), followed by brief descriptions of the data source, methods, and analytic plan. One aim can be a systematic literature review, scoping review, methodological advancement, or theoretical paper. The letter should briefly address the feasibility of the dissertation and the expected timeline for completion. It should conclude with the nomination of the dissertation committee members, including its chair.

Dissertation committee composition. The chair of the dissertation committee must be a faculty member with a primary or secondary appointment in the Community Health Sciences Department at Boston University. The dissertation chair must be approved by the CHSDC, which will consider whether the proposed chair has the experience and expertise to chair the committee. The chair becomes the student's primary mentor during the dissertation phase of the doctoral program. The dissertation 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 Community Health Sciences. A typical committee would consist of a Community Health Sciences faculty member with topic area or methodological expertise that aligns with the dissertation serving as chair, a second member of the department's faculty or a relevant methodologist from another BUSPH department (e.g., biostatistician, epidemiologist, implementation scientist, qualitative research expert), and a person with substantive expertise related to the topic of the research. For proposed committee members who are not in the department's primary, secondary, or adjunct faculty, the one-pager should include a brief statement of their areas of expertise as they pertain to the dissertation research.

Additional one-pager requirements. The dissertation concept one-pager must state that each member of the committee has agreed to serve on it and has approved the description of the proposed research. It is expected that students meet with their full dissertation committee at least quarterly to review progress, and this expectation should be made clear to potential committee members before they agree to serve on a dissertation committee.

Concept one-pager review process. Two CHSDC members, selected on a rotating basis, will review submitted one-pagers. The reviewers have 10 business days to complete the reviews. Any discordance between the reviewers will be arbitrated by the rest of the CHSDC. Concept one-pager decisions are made by the Program Director based on feedback from reviewers and the Program Director's own review of the concept one-pager. No more than three weeks after submission of the dissertation concept one-pager, the Program Director informs the student whether the one-pager was approved or disapproved. Comments, along with the reviewers' names, will also be communicated to the student. Students may reach out to the reviewers or the Program Director for clarification or for additional information about the comments as needed.

Disapproval of the dissertation concept one-pager will be accompanied by specific recommendations for improving the proposed research and/or the composition of the dissertation committee. While it is not common for an entire concept one-pager to be disapproved, the amount of feedback students receive may vary, and in some cases, students will be asked to consider extensive revisions prior to writing their proposal.

Students whose one-pager is not approved are encouraged to meet with the Program Director for further guidance about the reasons the one-pager was not approved and plans for revision. After being notified that a one-pager was not approved, students must submit a revised one-pager that addresses the reasons for the disapproval within two months of the notification. Students may submit an additional page (0.5-inch margins, single-spaced, no less than 11-point font) of text with the revised one-pager that outlines the changes to the one-pager that were made in response to the comments that resulted in disapproval, and to the extent necessary, explains their reasoning for the changes. Review of revised one-pagers and notification of decisions will follow the procedure for original submissions as outlined above. In the rare case that a student's second one-pager is disapproved, the Program Director will meet with the student and the proposed dissertation committee chair to develop a detailed plan for submitting a third one-pager that fully addresses previous concerns.

Submission, review, and notification procedures for a third one-pager would follow those outlined above. It is not expected that a student who is addressing prior comments, or thoroughly explained why prior comments cannot be addressed, would have a third one-pager disapproved; however, should it happen, a meeting of the Chair of the Department of Community Health Sciences, the Program Director and the proposed dissertation committee chair will be convened to determine how to proceed in a way that best supports the student's completion of this requirement.

Next steps after concept one-pager is approved. Following approval, the PhD candidate may proceed with developing and writing the full dissertation proposal, which will be evaluated and approved solely by the candidate's dissertation committee. This is also the time to address any Institutional Review Board (IRB) issues. Some research will be exempt from IRB approval, or the student may be conducting their study as part of a previously approved research project, but other research will require full IRB approval. This process can easily take three months of work with careful involvement of the dissertation committee.

Requirement for Community Expertise

Students, in collaboration with their committee, will be required to identify a community expert representing the dissertation's focal population (e.g., someone with lived experience or substantial collaboration with the focal community). This person with community expertise will need to agree, at a minimum, to attend and participate in the oral defense of the dissertation proposal and the oral defense of the dissertation. This person should be identified and submitted in writing to the Program Director and Academic Program Administrator prior to scheduling the oral defense of the dissertation proposal. In some cases, the community expert may agree to serve as a 4th dissertation committee member; these cases should be reviewed with the Program Director as early as possible. In all cases, the identified community expert should be provided with all written documents at the same time as the rest of the dissertation committee (outlined below) and will be encouraged to provide feedback and ask questions during the oral defenses. The person will be provided with an honorarium by the department for their participation in the oral defenses.

Dissertation Proposal

The structure of the dissertation proposal should follow the format of the PhD Dissertation Proposal Template included in Appendix A. The proposal should be structured in a grant format and must include the following: an abstract; specific aims; significance, innovation and impact of the research; a theoretical model or conceptual framework, including a description of key concepts and theories and their connection to the proposed analytic approach; sources of data; and a complete plan for analysis.

Oral Defense

After the student's dissertation proposal has been preliminarily approved by their committee, the student will defend it in a formal oral defense. Once the full proposal is preliminarily approved, the student should consult with their dissertation committee, the community expert, and the Academic Program Administrator to identify a date and time for the dissertation proposal defense. Once a date and time are established, the student should contact the Academic Program Administrator to address all administrative and process details. This date must be set at least 30 days in advance to reserve a room and invite the CHS community.

Timeline

A copy of the final approved proposal and the Dissertation Proposal Completion Record form (Appendix A), signed by all committee members, should be submitted to the Program Director and Academic Program Administrator within nine months of approval of the concept letter. If the dissertation proposal is not completed within nine months of approval of the concept letter, the student will be required to send the Program Director a written request for an extension, including a justification for why they need additional time and an updated timeline for submission. This request will be reviewed by the CHSDC at their next meeting. Possible outcomes of that review include approval of the extension, a request for additional information, and a request for a meeting with the dissertation committee to ensure sufficient support for the student to complete their proposal in a timely manner.

Dissertation

Following approval of the dissertation proposal, students should carry out the proposed dissertation work. The completed dissertation must display proficiency with the application of research and analytic skills (quantitative, qualitative, and/or mixed methods) with a health equity, community engagement, and/or social justice focus. Each individual paper should address a clearly defined research question within a general content area - strong dissertations often include multiple types of studies to show different areas of methodological strength. One paper may be a systematic literature review, scoping review, methodological advancement, or theoretical paper.

The written portion of the dissertation will include an introduction, three manuscripts of publishable quality research presenting original research conducted for the dissertation, a conclusion, a bibliography, acknowledgments, and appendices as appropriate. It is recommended that the dissertation addresses a common theme; although not required, having a thread of commonality will aid in making the dissertation more efficient and easier to write and position the student for a successful job search. The dissertation must comply with the formatting requirements specified by Boston University (see below). The research presented in the three manuscripts must meet the current standards of publication quality in refereed journals such as the *American Journal of Public Health*, *American Journal of Preventive Medicine*, *Journal of Community Health*, *Progress in Community Health Partnership*, *Journal of Primary Care and Community Health*, and *Public Health Reports*. It is understood that dissertation manuscripts may be longer, include more detailed discussions of methodological decisions and theoretical models, and contain more tables and figures than are permitted in published papers. The dissertation will likely require multiple iterations after review by the dissertation committee. It is the final prerogative of the dissertation committee to determine whether the research fulfills the standards for a PhD in Community Health Sciences at BUSPH. Publishing the work does not automatically satisfy the standard for PhD-level work, and the submission and publication process can consume valuable time. Students are encouraged to elicit dissertation committee approval for each manuscript *before* preparing and submitting the corresponding paper for publication.

Dissertation Defense

The dissertation defense is an oral presentation of the dissertation work, with dissertation committee members present, and to which all interested persons are invited. A final draft of the entire dissertation must be sent to the dissertation committee members and community expert, with the committee's agreement that it is ready to defend. Students must consult with their dissertation committee and community expert and identify a few dates and time options for their dissertation defense. Once those options have been identified, please inform the Academic Program Administrator, and they will identify which date, and time will work best to

hold the defense. They will also address all administrative and process details once a date and time are confirmed. A 350-word abstract approved by the dissertation committee must be submitted to the Academic Program Administrator at least 30 days before the defense date. Prior to the scheduled date of defense, the student must submit a draft of the signature page to the Academic Program Administrator to ensure that page formatting is appropriate.

The defense begins with an introduction of the student and committee by the dissertation committee chair. The student presents the dissertation for approximately 45 minutes. All questions are reserved until after the presentation. The student then receives questions in this order: committee members and the community expert, and then other attendees. After the defense, the dissertation committee privately votes to approve, approve with revisions, or not approve the dissertation. If changes to the dissertation are requested, the student will work with their dissertation committee chair to determine a feasible timeline for completing the changes while still meeting all BUSPH and University graduation deadlines. Once the changes are completed and approved by the committee, or within one week after the dissertation defense if no changes are requested, the dissertation committee chair must send a written notification of the defense outcome to the Doctoral Program Director and the Academic Program Administrator.

Dissertation Formatting

The dissertation must be prepared in accordance with the Boston University requirements (bu.edu/library/guide/theses/). The CHSDC strongly recommends that students begin preparation for their dissertation by writing a detailed outline and reviewing it with all members of their committee. However, the process by which dissertations are written and reviewed by the student's committee is at the student's and their committee members' discretion. Students are encouraged to meet with the Program Director if they believe this process is negatively affecting their progress toward completing the dissertation.

The final dissertation should be accompanied by signatures from each committee member, which are obtained (via [DocuSign](#)) following a successful defense. It is important to review the formatting of the dissertation approval page with Brendan McDermott, Thesis & Dissertation Coordinator, BU Mugar Memorial Library, Room 306 (brendan@bu.edu) before it is signed by the dissertation committee members.

If the student works on the dissertation 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.

Dissertation Submission to BU Mugar Memorial Library

Dissertations are submitted to the Mugar Library electronically via [ProQuest ETD Administrator](#). Students are encouraged to review the final draft of their dissertation as early as possible with [Brendan McDermott](#), Thesis & Dissertation Coordinator, Mugar Memorial Library, Room 306, to confirm proper formatting in preparation for library submission.

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](#) to describe the process, including a dissertation template.

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. It is the student's responsibility to review the [relevant information](#) about the fees they may incur.

Upon submission, dissertations are made publicly available via OpenBU and ProQuest. In limited cases, it may be necessary to delay the publication of the dissertation due to embargoes or similar restrictions. 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, a letter must be uploaded when the dissertation is submitted. The letter must include:

- The reason for the delay
- The length of the requested embargo
- Contact info
- Signatures from both the student and the dissertation chair.

Questions regarding submission can be directed to [Brendan McDermott](#) or [Nikki Longe](#).

The Community Health Sciences Department plans to keep a library of doctoral student dissertations. Please provide the Department Administrator with a digital copy of your dissertation for the Department library.

Publication of Dissertation Papers

It is the expectation of the CHSDC that students publish the results from their dissertation research. Many dissertations utilize data that have been obtained from grant-funded studies. These data represent significant time and effort by the Principal Investigators, research staff, and participants involved in conducting the study. Principal Investigators have an obligation and responsibility to study participants, their colleagues, the research teams, and the funder to ensure that work is being completed as outlined in grant proposals. Moreover, community health sciences researchers hold an ethical obligation to study participants to communicate the public health relevance and implications of their work, which is based on data voluntarily contributed by these individuals. When students lead manuscripts that are a part of grant-funded projects, they are entrusted with this responsibility. As such, students are expected to attend to the process of publishing their dissertation papers in a timely fashion until they are accepted for publication. If a student has not made considerable progress towards publication within two years of graduating, they are encouraged to have a meeting with their mentor and authorship team to determine the best path forward.

Change of Dissertation or Committee Members

If one or more of the student's three proposed studies change substantially from those described in the dissertation proposal and approved by the CHSDC, the student must send a short description (1 page) of the rationale and methods of the new dissertation study(ies) to the CHSDC for review and approval. A study is considered substantially different if it addresses a different research question or employs a different data source from that described in the dissertation proposal. A request for this change may be submitted at any

time during the academic year (September through May) and will be discussed at the next monthly CHSDC meeting that occurs more than two weeks after the submission date. This proposed change must be accompanied by a letter from the dissertation chair approving it on behalf of the dissertation committee.

A student may propose a change in dissertation committee membership by the same process, except that no letter of approval is required from the chair of the committee if the chair's membership is changing. The CHSDC will review the proposed change and may approve or disapprove it.

For either a change to the dissertation or a change to the committee members, the decision will be sent to the student, with a copy to the chair of the dissertation committee, within two weeks of the CHSDC review. If the proposed change is not approved, the letter will contain an explanation and suggest revisions that may be approved. Processes for resubmission and review following disapproval of a proposal change will be the same as those described above for disapproved proposals.

Doctoral Student Graduation Calendar

As per BU, there are three times per year when students can be awarded a doctoral degree - May, August, and January. Deadlines for required steps prior to each degree award date are important. Students must apply to graduate. The deadlines for registering for graduation, dissertation defense, and dissertation submission to the Mugar Library change year to year.

Students must check the [Graduation Procedures for Doctoral Students](#) as early as possible to ensure they have sufficient time to meet the graduation deadlines.

BU Doctoral Exit Survey

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 from the BUSPH Registrar's Office with a link to the survey after they begin the dissertation submission process. Graduates have the option to decline the survey (on page 2 of the survey), but they must submit 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, students will be redirected to the National Science Foundation's Survey of Earned Doctorates. The University asks that students complete both the BU and NSF surveys.

Questions about the BU Doctoral Exit Survey can be directed to [Nikki Longe](#), BUSPH Registrar.

Section

5

Student Policies

In addition to the selected academic policies listed below, all students must adhere to all BUSPH 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 payment, health and immunizations, motor vehicle regulations, documenting local address and telephone contact number of emergencies. Students may verify their compliance status on the [MyBU Student](#). Students not in compliance are blocked from registration or updating their status in any way.

Registration Requirements

All doctoral students at BUSPH, 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. Please note that full-time certification ("Certified Full-time") is designated for doctoral students by the SPH Registrar, regardless of whether taking courses or continuation credits. International students must check in at the Boston University International Students and Scholars Office (ISSO) upon arrival and then complete "Semester Verification" in each subsequent semester to ensure they remain in lawful status. Please confirm with ISSO any change in your employment, course load, or work status prior to making the change to ensure you are not in violation of visa stipulations.

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.

Parental Leave

The Boston University policy on Childbirth and Adoption (effective date 2014) states that: "The period of accommodation is 60 days and must end no later than the final day of the semester immediately following the semester in which the child is born, or the newly adopted child is placed. The summer period between spring and fall semesters will be considered a semester for the purpose of this policy. A student may elect a shorter period of accommodation, at the sole discretion of the student, and should inform the relevant department chair (or program director) in writing."

The Graduate Student PFML notice states that: "As of January 1, 2021, eligible students may be entitled to up to 12 weeks of paid family leave in a benefit year for the birth, adoption, or foster care placement of a child. Graduate students may be eligible for PFML bonding and

personal medical leaves if they do NOT fall under the exemption cited in the Grad Student PFML notice, which says:

"Most graduate students fall under this exemption - Exemptions: Student employees cannot be eligible for PFML if they are (1) exempt from FICA/FUTA, and (2) enrolled in the University, and (3) taking classes/doing supervised research, and (4) the services they are performing are incident to and for the purpose of pursuing a course of study. Eligible student employees do not include H-2A visa holders, any employees who do not perform services in Massachusetts, and any other employee exempted under the Law." Any student who is interested in applying for PFML should contact Student Employment Services, which will determine if the student falls under the exemption and meets the financial eligibility requirements.

Leaves of Absence

A student may request a leave of absence of up to two semesters by writing a letter to the Program Director and the BUSPH Registrar. It is expected that students, along with their primary research mentor who funds their stipend, will inform departmental grant managers of their intention to take a leave of absence to assess any implications for funding (e.g., a leave may need to be approved by a funder). Longer leaves of absence may be approved under compelling circumstances. Please see more detailed information on the BUSPH website: <https://www.bu.edu/academics/sph/policies/withdrawal-leave-of-absence-and-reinstatement/>

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 are not entitled to official advice from their mentor(s) during a leave of absence, nor do they have library privileges or receive stipends. It has been possible for students on leave to maintain their Academic Computing System (ACS) accounts.

Boston University Information Regarding Academic Honesty

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

Academic misconduct is any intentional act or omission by a student which misrepresents their 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 their 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; or presenting Artificial Intelligence (AI)-generated text as one's own, such as text originating from ChatGPT, TerrierGPT, Claude, or similar AI tools.

- 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 their own.
- Violating the rules of an examination or assignment.
- Undisclosed use of AI supports to complete work.

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:

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

Grading Standards, Probation, and Dismissal

We hold both a commitment to the full support of our students, in parallel with holding all students to the highest academic and ethical standards. These guidelines are presented to you as a means of preventing issues that might result in probation or dismissal. At any point, please seek guidance and support from your advisor or the program director to avoid severe outcomes.

Grading Standards

All BUSPH 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 BUSPH to graduate. If any specifically required course is retaken to bring the grade up to a B or higher, the credits for the first enrollment will not count toward the required credits, however both grades will remain on the student's transcript.

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

Students who do not meet a minimum grade requirement of B must register for the course, or its curricular equivalent, for a second time in the next semester the course is offered. In all cases, a student must repeat the course in which they 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 academic probation if their overall GPA falls below 3.0. A student also may be placed on probation if they have failed to make adequate progress in the program over a longer-than-average length of time. Reasons this may occur include, but are not limited to: the student has been in the doctoral program for four years and has not completed the qualifying review; the student has not submitted a dissertation concept letter within one year of passing the qualifying review; the student has not submitted a dissertation proposal within one year of receiving notice that their concept letter has been approved; or,

the student has not shown adequate progress on their dissertation based on progress reports requested of the student by the CHSDC, or a report of the dissertation committee chair to the Program Director. In addition, the CHSDC may assess a student's progress at any time and place the student on probation if it determines that the student has not made adequate progress toward meeting graduation requirements. If at any point the student believes they may be in danger of meeting one of the criteria for probation above, they are strongly encouraged to meet with the Program Director to alert them of the situation and for guidance.

When a student is placed on probation, the Program 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), they must write a letter to the Program Director that describes these steps. The Program 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 CHSDC for further action.

Program Time Limits

It is Boston University policy that all requirements for a doctoral degree must be completed within 7 years of entering the doctoral program. A typical program might consist of the following: two years for the required coursework and qualifying process, and two years for electives and 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 CHSDC. A student who does not meet the program's time limits may be dismissed without a degree. Leaves of absence do not extend program time limits.

Dismissal

A student who is on probation for not making adequate progress will be dismissed from the doctoral program if they do not demonstrate substantial progress during the specified probationary period or do not meet the requirement(s) of probation by the deadline specified by the CHSDC.

A student who receives a recommendation to withdraw from the program during the qualifying process (while the student has the option to petition this determination, such petitions are rarely granted) will be dismissed. Dismissal may also occur because of committing an act of academic dishonesty, as defined in the BUSPH's policy on Academic Honesty.

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

Questions and Concerns

Students should raise questions or concerns about procedural aspects of the Community Health Sciences doctoral program with the Program Director, who may resolve them or refer them to the CHSDC as a whole. Questions or concerns not resolved by the CHSDC are referred to the department faculty as a whole, the Chair of the Department of Community Health Sciences, or to other administrative sections of the BUSPH, depending on the nature of the question or concern.

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

South Entrance, 2nd Floor

Boston, MA 02215

Phone: (617) 353-3565

Email: isso@bu.edu

Students with questions about required registration or necessary documents for travel or study should contact the ISSO. If students must visit the office in person, they [should make an appointment](#) and visit the office (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). A visa represents a contract between the student as an individual and the United States Government, any issue that may affect visa or immigration status should be discussed thoroughly with ISSO before proceeding. To remain lawfully in the United States during their doctoral studies, international students must comply with the laws and regulations governing their F-1 and J-1 visa status.

Completing the Dissertation as an International Student

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](#), Assistant Dean of Student Affairs, who is the BUSPH liaison to the Boston University Office of Disability Services. Please refer to the [BUSPH Student Resources](#) and to the [Office of Disability Services website](#) for more information.

Boston University Ombuds

The [Office of the Ombuds](#) provides assistance in resolving problems and conflicts. It is an independent, impartial, informal, and confidential resource available to all members of the Boston University community. The mission of the Office is to provide a confidential place for people to voice concerns, develop options, and problem-solve.

Student Health and Behavioral Medicine

BUSPH students have several options for [health insurance and medical care](#). Students should always refer to their insurance brochure and policy for coverage options, benefits and any restrictions. Health insurance begins on August 15 in the year of admission and runs through August 14 of the following year, with renewal occurring for each subsequent enrollment year.

IN AN EMERGENCY YOU SHOULD ALWAYS 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 SPH Student Resources Website: <https://www.bu.edu/sph/students/student-services/student-resources/>

The SPH Calendar: <https://www.bu.edu/sph/calendar/>

There are also emails students should automatically receive, including **BUSPH Today** and **BUSPH This Week**. While we realize that reviewing communications may be a lower priority during busier times, the CHSDC recommends that students do their best to stay apprised of and attend the various BUSPH and departmental events advertised in regular communications to build relationships with faculty and other doctoral students and to enrich their doctoral program experience.

Policy for Student Travel in the CHS Department

Depending on available funds, the Department of Community Health Sciences may provide financial support to enable Community Health Sciences PhD students to attend conferences

or engage in other professional development activities (e.g., workshops, brief research rotations with off-site collaborating research teams) that cannot be funded by other sources. Most grants have funding to support conferences, travel, or business-related expenses for students; however, some grants do not have available travel funds, or those funds cannot be used for student travel.

Further, some important student research projects or learning opportunities cannot be supported by existing grants. As such, the Department of Community Health Sciences may provide funding to students to enhance their training and opportunities for scientific engagement, with an emphasis on faculty-mentored projects. Students may request up to \$500 /year for travel (and related costs such as conference registration). Applications will be reviewed on a case-by-case basis, with priority given to settings that provide a clear professional development benefit to the student and have no other funding source. We strongly encourage applicants to be cost-conscious and use other sources of funding whenever they are available.

Guidelines: Students must be enrolled in the Community Health Sciences PhD program at BUSPH.

Funds should be used in accordance with [BU travel expense](#) policies.

Funds can be used to cover 100% of the student travel expenses or in conjunction with other available grants and discretionary funds.

A brief application, including an estimate of the funding needed, should be submitted before making any travel arrangements. Funding decisions will be made within 2 weeks. If you do not hear back from us within 2 weeks, please inquire promptly with the CHS Sr. Financial Administrator, Denise Sanchez, at dneves@bu.edu.

Applications will be reviewed by the Department of Community Health Sciences administration team. Priority will be given to opportunities with the largest apparent benefit to the student's professional development.

Airfare, conference or workshop registrations, and hotel room and tax can be booked through the department to avoid student financial burden.

Students may be asked to present about their experience at one of the doctoral seminars.

Other sources of student travel funding can be found [here](#).

Policy for Financial Donations to the Program

In the event that the doctoral program receives a financial donation, use of the gift will be decided by the Program Director in conjunction with the wishes of the donor. Use of all donations must be discussed with the CHSDC and the Department Chair, but the Program Director has final discretion regarding the decision. Depending on the intention of the donor, use of donated funds may include supplementation of student stipends, additional travel funds for students, or other uses that benefit students experience in the program. Depending on the approved use of the funds, students may be required to apply to receive funds and students will be notified of this process on a donation-by-donation basis.

Preparing for Life After the PhD

Approximately 18 months before a student anticipates completing your dissertation, they should discuss with their mentor(s) plans for career steps after the PhD. This would include discussing whether they aim to pursue an academic career, work in government, the for-

profit or non-profit sector, or in another capacity. If they are unsure at 18 months, their mentor can work with them to develop a plan to explore their options. Once they have a clear plan, their mentor can help them lay out a path for pursuing that career path, e.g., conducting informational interviews with prospective employers, applying for postdoctoral positions, or identifying funding sources to support their next steps.

Appendix A

PHD DISSERTATION PROPOSAL - OUTLINE

*The PhD dissertation proposal can be submitted after a candidate has completed the qualifying review AND has an approved dissertation concept one-pager. It must be preliminarily approved by the proposed committee members before the oral proposal defense is scheduled. Proposals should be no longer than **12 pages** in length exclusive of timeline and references and should be structured in a grant format.*

The candidate must submit their dissertation proposal to their dissertation committee members for approval.

Once the proposal is approved, an approved 350-word abstract must be submitted to the Academic Program Administrator 30 days before the scheduled proposal defense.

Proposal Formatting Guidelines

Font

Text in your attachments must follow these minimum requirements:

Font size: *Must be 11 points or larger. Smaller text in figures, graphs, diagrams and charts is acceptable, as long as it is legible when the page is viewed at 100%. Some PDF conversion software reduces font size. It is important to confirm that the final PDF document complies with the font requirements.*

Type density: *Must be no more than 15 characters per linear inch (including characters and spaces).*

Line spacing: *Must be no more than six lines per vertical inch.*

Text color: *No restriction. Though not required, black or other high-contrast text colors are recommended, as they print well and are legible to the widest audience.*

We recommended the following fonts, although other fonts (both serif and non-serif) are acceptable if they meet the above requirements.

- Arial
- Georgia
- Helvetica
- Palatino Linotype

Paper Size and Page Margins

- Use paper (page) size no larger than standard letter paper size (8 ½" x 11").
- Provide at least one-half inch margins (½") - top, bottom, left, and right - for all pages. No applicant-supplied information can appear in the margins.

Figures

Smaller text in figures, graphs, diagrams, and charts is acceptable, as long as it is legible when the page is viewed at 100%.

For more information on formatting, please refer to the [NIH's Format Attachments page](#).

Proposal Content

Proposed Title for Dissertation: _____

Abstract (30 lines of text):

(Provide a brief description of the nature of the problem, why it is important to study (significance), and the proposed methods.)

Specific Aims (1 page):

(Present the problem, significance, and specific aims of the research, including hypotheses to be tested if appropriate.)

Significance, Innovation, and Impact (1 page):

(Describe the severity of the problem and the size of the populations affected, the state of the literature on this problem, how the proposed research adds to the literature, and how the anticipated findings could affect health equity.)

Theoretical Model (1 page):

(Include a short background. In both text & graphic; what is the theoretical model or framework & what is the rationale for it? What is novel about your use of existing model(s) OR what new model are you proposing? How will your inquiry contribute to model development?)

*The description of each distinct dissertation paper (3) should include the following components and are no longer than **1-2 pages** each in length.*

Aim X

Background and Significance

(Goals/nature of the study; how it connects to the overall research area & model)

Data Sources

(Where will the data come from or be generated? What is included in the data?)

Study Design and Methods

(What methodology or methodologies will be employed? What is the analysis plan?)

Hypothesis Testing if Appropriate

(Re-state the hypotheses and how they will be tested by the data)

These items should be included at the end of the proposal:

Timeline (1 page):

(Best in Gantt chart format, laying out how the pieces fit together and the key milestones)

Reference List (no page limit):

CHS DISSERTATION PROPOSAL DEFENSE COMPLETION RECORD

CANDIDATE NAME: _____

APPROVED TITLE: _____

COMMITTEE CHAIR: _____

ADDITIONAL COMMITTEE MEMBERS: _____

DATE PROPOSAL DEFENSE DRAFT

GIVEN TO COMMITTEE: _____

DATE PROPOSAL DEFENSE HELD: _____

DEFENSE - RESULT (TO BE FILLED OUT AND SIGNED BY COMMITTEE CHAIR):

- Satisfactory and complete
- Satisfactory, with minimal additional work required
- Satisfactory, with significant additional work required
- Unsatisfactory

COMMITTEE MEMBER

SIGNATURE _____ DATE: _____

COMMITTEE MEMBER

SIGNATURE _____ DATE: _____

COMMITTEE MEMBER

SIGNATURE _____ DATE: _____

COMMITTEE MEMBER

SIGNATURE _____ DATE: _____

DATE OF FINAL APPROVAL BY CHAIR: _____

COMMITTEE CHAIR SIGNATURE: _____