

Doctor of Philosophy (PhD) in Health Services and Policy Research (HSPR)

GUIDEBOOK
2026 – 2027



Boston University School of Public Health
Department of Health Law, Policy & Management

PHD PROGRAM IN HEALTH SERVICES AND POLICY RESEARCH

BOSTON UNIVERSITY SCHOOL OF PUBLIC HEALTH (BUSPH)

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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 guidebook without prior notice. Students will be notified of major changes as soon as practicable after they are decided.

**Mission**

The mission of the Boston University School of Public Health is to improve the health of local, national and international populations, particularly the disadvantaged, underserved and vulnerable, through excellence and innovation in education, research and service.

Values

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

Welcome!

This guidebook is intended to be a helpful reference throughout your time in the PhD in Health Services and Policy Research program here at BUSPH. The guidebook is updated each academic year to reflect current calendars and changes in curriculum. If you have suggestions for other information that would be helpful to include, we would love to hear those suggestions. We encourage you to use this guidebook in conversation with your academic advisor at each stage of the program to ensure that your planning is consistent with program expectations and parameters.

As PhD students, you represent the future of our field, and we are committed to providing a program and mentoring experience that will enable you to successfully move into the next phase of your career. We look forward to working with you throughout your academic program and urge you to take full advantage of the many resources that are available within the School and broader Boston community to support and extend your learning.

Please note that this guidebook should be used for students matriculating in the fall 2026. Students who matriculated prior to fall 2026 should refer to the guidebook for the year in which they entered the program. If you do not have a copy of the guidebook for your matriculation year, please contact the Academic Program Administrator.

Warmly,

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QUICK REFERENCE GUIDE

Subject	Office & Contact Info
Academic Program Administrator: General questions regarding the HSPR PhD program and requirements; advisor assignments; HSPR PhD events; other communications	Health Law, Policy and Management Talbot 245 West Abigail Ford , 617-358-1926
Course Materials	Online: Course information, assignments, and syllabi are often posted on Blackboard . A BU email address and Kerberos password are required for access. Course Readers and textbooks are available for purchase through Barnes & Noble bookstore located at 910 Commonwealth Ave, Boston, MA 02155 (Boston University Charles River Campus).
Career Services: Resume reviews; networking; job fairs; career workshops	Office of Career Services Talbot 2 East Email: sphcareerooffice@bu.edu 617-358-6550
Financial Assistance	Office of Student Financial Services (OSFS) Email: osfs-sph@bu.edu 617-638-5130 Financing Your Education
International Student Services: Visas; immigration; employment	International Students and Scholars Office (ISSO) Email: isso@bu.edu 617-353-3565
Housing: Seeking a roommate	Office of Housing Resources Email: ohr@bu.edu 617-358-5208
Library Resources: Paper and online books and journals; reserve materials; computer labs; research guides	Alumni Medical Library L Building, 12 th Floor 617-358-2350 Boston University Library Network
Parking and Transportation: Student T passes; bike cages; parking	Office of Parking and Transportation Services 710 Albany Street 617-638-7473
Registration Information: Graduation applications; course rotation guide; academic policies	Office of Professional & Academic Services Talbot 2 Center Nikki Longe , Registrar & Director of Academic Integrity, 617-358-3222 Amelia Williams-Edmondson , Senior Associate Registrar, 617-358-3225 Course registration and unofficial transcripts are available through MyBU Student Official transcripts available at the University Registrar's Office
Student Health Behavioral Medicine	Student Health Services 881 Commonwealth Avenue, 617-353-3575 OR Solomon Carter Fuller Mental Health Building, 85 E. Newton St. Suite 816, 617-353-3569
Student Services: Student organizations; academic accommodations; orientation; commencement; student events	Office of Graduate Student Life Talbot 2 East Mary Murphy-Phillips , Assistant Dean of Students, 617-358-1750

IMPORTANT DATES

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.

BUSPH key registration and course schedule dates can be found on the [Academic Calendar](#).

Fall 2026 Withdrawal* and Tuition Refund [Schedule](#)

On or before September 1	100% refund of tuition and fees
September 2 – September 16	80% refund of tuition only
September 17 – September 23	60% refund of tuition only
September 24 – September 30	40% refund of tuition only
October 1 – October 7	20% refund of tuition only
As of October 8	0% refund

*Withdrawal means dropping **ALL** classes at the University. Students must complete a withdrawal form available in the Registrar's Office.

Graduation Dates

The following table includes dates that are especially important for your consideration as a doctoral student.

Doctoral Calendar 2026-2027			
Doctoral Candidates (DrPH/PhD)	August 2026 Award	January 2027 Award	May 2027 Award
Graduation Application (Submitted to the BUSPH Registrar)	March 1, 2026	June 1, 2026	November 1, 2026
Last Date to hold Dissertation Defense	July 15, 2026	November 15, 2026	April 15, 2027
Deadline for Submission of Approved and Signed Dissertation*	July 31, 2026	November 30, 2026	April 30, 2027

*Dates are subject to change

Graduation Application

Students must submit a [graduation application](#) online. This form is available approximately three months before graduation each semester. Please make note of the date for graduation applications.

BUSPH Policy on Religious and Government Holidays

The School, in scheduling classes on religious or government holidays, intends that students observing these holidays be given ample opportunity to make up work. Faculty members who wish to observe such holidays will arrange for another faculty member to meet with their classes or for canceled classes to be rescheduled.

Emergency Cancellation Information

In the event of an emergency or class cancellation, notices will be posted to the [BUSPH Student Page](#) and the [BUSPH website](#). Email messages will also be sent to faculty, staff and students in the event of closings. A message will also be posted to the BUSPH main telephone number: 617-358-3301.

PLEASE NOTE: Do not rely on information about closings for the Charles River Campus or Boston University. The Boston University Medical Campus has different closing policies from the Charles River Campus. Obtain information specific to SPH from the above resources. Instructors are required to reschedule cancelled classes. Students will be

notified by the instructor of make-up dates for any cancelled classes.

Emergency Make-Up Days

In an effort to better manage emergency closings which cancel classes, SPH has scheduled two dates in the Fall 2026 semester and several in the Spring 2027 semester as make-up class days:

Fall 2026 Make-Up Days: *TBD*

Spring 2027 Make-Up Days: *TBD, dates will be released [here](#)*

SECTION 1

INTRODUCTION

OVERVIEW

What is Health Services and Policy Research?

The Health Services and Policy Research program at the Boston University School of Public Health focuses on developing independent research scientists and scholars with excellent methodological skills and strong substantive knowledge of health care settings and policies. The methodological skill emphasis encompasses qualitative and quantitative methods and an understanding of diverse interdisciplinary perspectives. The desired program outcome is for students to develop the necessary skills to conceive, design and execute innovative research projects of high quality. The practical context of the educational approach employed will enable students to produce research findings that address challenging problems in clinical and management settings and to translate and apply them to make concrete improvements in health services financing, organization and delivery.

This program is committed to education in both quantitative and qualitative research methods and encourages students to develop facility in mixed methods research. The program has particular strengths in Health Services and Policy Research related to health economics, health and social policy, and how to implement and evaluate changes in health care delivery systems or policies.

The program is based upon the theoretical knowledge and core competencies that the program faculty have identified as critical foundations. In particular, the program focuses on developing the ability to adapt and apply theoretical and conceptual models relevant to Health Services and Policy Research. Students in the BUSPH program create trans-disciplinary models that incorporate elements of frameworks from across fields, depending on the depth of their previous background and additional perspectives gained in the program. Conceptual frameworks available for study in this program include those derived from social sciences (e.g., economics, sociology, anthropology, psychology); management sciences (e.g., organizational theory, operations research) and implementation sciences.

This program ties classroom education closely to practical experience in research. Our students are assisted, encouraged and expected to begin developing their own research projects early in their studies. Most students also work directly with a faculty mentor to gain hands-on experience in current Health Services and Policy Research.

At BUSPH, the Health Services and Policy Research program is enriched by a department faculty drawn from many of the above fields. Faculty members are actively engaged in diverse areas of research, and the department is closely affiliated with nearby US Department of Veterans Affairs Centers for Health Services and Policy Research. Our diverse student body also enriches classroom discussions, as the students in Health Services and Policy Research courses bring experience from a variety of professional and disciplinary backgrounds.

COMMUNICATIONS

All official communications from BUSPH will be sent to your BU email. **Please activate a BU email account as soon as possible after you accept admission to the program.** You may elect to have this email forwarded to an alternative email account. You should regularly check and clean out your BU email, so the mailbox has sufficient space to accept messages.

ADVISING

The Health Services and Policy Research program at BUSPH offers students substantial advising support — from your Academic advisor, the Program Co-Directors, and the department faculty member who chairs your dissertation committee.

Program Co-Directors

The Program Co-Directors are available to discuss your goals and interests, your choice of courses and appropriate schedule, possible research opportunities, plans for your dissertation, and any questions or concerns about the Health Services and Policy Research program.

Academic Advisor

After considering your areas of interest and research goals, you will identify a faculty member who might serve as your initial academic advisor. It is not assumed or expected that your initial advisor will eventually become your dissertation advisor, although this is sometimes the case.

You should meet regularly with your academic advisor to help plan your direction in the program. The academic advisor consults on your choice of courses and projects and also helps you begin to think about an appropriate dissertation topic and choose a committee.

Further, your academic advisor is a professional mentor, available to discuss how you can gain the skills and competencies you need to advance your goals and career. You may wish to discuss, for example, which professional meetings to attend and association(s) to join, how to submit your research findings for presentation at conferences and for publication, or whether to seek funding to support your dissertation research and how to do so.

Dissertation Advisor

After you form a dissertation committee, your committee chair will become a primary resource to help you consider such questions to further your professional development. Other sections of this guidebook address your work with your dissertation committee.

Planning

Boston University offers its students an enormous array of opportunities and resources on both the Medical and Charles River Campuses. In addition to successfully completing required courses and your chosen electives, you will need to plan your dissertation work and supplemental activities carefully to enhance your career preparation.

As you develop your course plan with the Program Co-Directors and your academic advisor, this guidebook and a number of tools included in it will be helpful.

Students must obtain prior approval from the Program Co-Directors to take any elective course not specifically mentioned in this guidebook.

Problems

If you experience challenges executing your academic plan, return to your academic advisor or the Health Services and Policy Research Program Co-Directors for guidance. The Registrar's Office is also available to provide help with academic roadblocks. The Student Services Office can help students connect with many useful resources.

If you wish to request a change of academic advisor, please contact the Program Co-Directors.

For information concerning policies on timely completion of course requirements, please refer to the [Registrar's website](#).

ACADEMIC ASSISTANCE

The University has numerous resources available to students, including the Educational Resource and Writing Centers on the Charles River Campus, and the Public Health Writing Program at SPH. See the BUSPH [Student Resources Page](#) or your advisor for additional information on all resources available to students.

COMPETENCIES

Appendix C includes a full list of competencies students gain through the PhD program in Health Services and Policy Research.

SECTION 2

COURSE REQUIREMENTS

OVERVIEW

The doctoral program in Health Services and Policy Research is designed to provide advanced training in research methods and the substantive areas of theory relevant to health services and policy. Qualified students will hold a Master's or Bachelor's degree in a field related to Health Services and Policy Research, such as social or behavioral sciences, epidemiology, management, biological sciences, or other health professions. Students who complete the program will be prepared to assume leadership positions in academia and applied research settings and to pursue careers as independent investigators.

PHD IN HEALTH SERVICES AND POLICY RESEARCH REQUIREMENTS

The School of Public Health requires students pursuing a PhD in Health Services and Policy Research to:

- Complete **50 credits** of coursework within 4 academic semesters at full-time status. This includes:
 - 16 core courses (40 credits) and the remainder (10 credits) in electives in an area of focus. Students entering with relevant graduate courses may be eligible for course waivers and/or transfers. However, in every case, students must complete a minimum of 32 credits in residence at BU.
 - Additional courses in the focus area or to develop additional skills for dissertation purposes must be approved by the Program Co-Directors in writing.
 - Students in the NIDA or NIA T32 training grants may have additional requirements related to those training grants and should consult with the T32 PI or their T32 training packet for further information.
 - Summer courses will also require prior permission and written approval from the Program Co-Directors.
- Participate in two Boston University training programs (if on a T32): training in the responsible conduct of research (this is a 4-session program) and training in the protection of human research subjects.
- Pass the Admission to Candidacy Exam (ACE).
- Successfully present an oral defense of their dissertation proposal.
- Complete a dissertation that is the equivalent of three publishable papers.
- Successfully defend the dissertation and receive final approval from the dissertation committee and outside readers.
- Earn a BUSPH grade point average (GPA) of 3.0 or higher and earn at least a B or better in each individual course.
- Complete all PhD degree requirements within 7 years. Students typically finish in 4-5 years.

RECOMMENDED TIMELINE & PROGRAM REQUIREMENTS

Year 1	Year 2	Year 3	Year 4 & Beyond
Meet regularly with advisor or mentor and secondary mentor	Meet regularly with advisor or mentor and secondary mentor	Meet regularly with advisor or Dissertation Chair	Meet regularly with Dissertation Chair and Committee.
Begin coursework requirements and any electives	Continue coursework requirements and any electives	Complete the required courses (Pedagogy and Curriculum Development, Mentored teaching practicum, Grant Writing I, Grant Writing II) and any additional courses to develop additional skills for dissertation purposes (must be approved by the Program Co-Directors in advance)	Submit all graduation and defense paperwork by the appropriate deadlines
Explore opportunities and engage in research projects	Continue research projects	Organize/finalize Dissertation Committee	Attend and present annually at the HSPR PhD Monthly Student Seminar
Complete the Responsible Conduct of Research Training <u>AND</u> the Protection of Human Research Subjects training (if on a T32)	Advancement to Candidacy Exam (ACE) (Summer before Year 3)	Submit Topic Approval Form within 6 months of passing the ACE	Successfully defend dissertation
Complete annual student progress report	Complete annual student progress report	Schedule and orally defend dissertation proposal	Complete annual student progress report
Attend HSPR PhD Monthly Student Seminars	Attend HSPR PhD Monthly Student Seminars	Complete annual student progress report	
		Attend and/or present annually at the HSPR PhD Monthly Student Seminar	

COURSE REQUIREMENTS

PRE-REQUISITES Students who have not taken a graduate level biostatistics or epidemiology course must complete both of the following courses before starting PH 842, PH 843, and PH 844	SEMESTER
SPH BS 704: Introduction to Biostatistics (3)	Fall, Spring
SPH EP 714: Introduction to Epidemiology (4)	Fall, Spring
CORE COURSES Students must earn at least a B in all required courses and elective courses	SEMESTER
SPH PH 842: Research Theory and Design (2)	1 st half of Fall
SPH PH 843: Quantitative Methods for Health and Social Policy Research (2)	2 nd half of Fall
SPH PH 844: Introduction to Qualitative Methods for Health and Social Policy Research (2)	2 nd half of Fall
SPH PM 820: Introduction to Quality Measurement and Evaluation (2)	1 st half of Fall
SPH PM 822: Advanced Quantitative Methods for Health and Social Policy Research Methods (4)	Spring
SPH PM 828: Advanced Qualitative Methods (4)	Alternate Spring (even years)
SPH PM 842: Health Economics for Health and Social Policy Research (4)	Alternate Spring (odd years)
SPH PM 844: Health Policy and Policy-Making for Public Health Researchers (4)	Alternate Spring (odd years)
SPH PM 846: Advanced Quantitative Policy and Program Implementation and Evaluation (4)	Fall
SPH PM 864: Contemporary Structures of Health Services (2)	1 st half of Fall
SPH PM 866: Theory in the Analysis of Health Services (2)	2 nd half of Fall
SPH PH 895: Pedagogy and Curriculum Development (2)	1 st half of Fall
SPH PH 896: Mentored teaching Practicum (2)	1 st Half of Spring
SPH PH 885: Grant Writing I (2)	2 nd half of Fall
SPH PH 886: Grant Writing II (2)	1 st Half of Spring

EMPHASIS AREAS/ELECTIVES

A minimum of **10** credits are required in elective courses. These 10 credits can be used to define an area of emphasis (e.g. health economics, implementation and evaluation, health and social policy). The following courses are organized by emphasis area and have been pre- approved as electives. This list should serve as a general guide. Additional courses may be approved on a case-by-case basis by the Program Co-Directors.

HEALTH ECONOMICS	SEMESTER
CAS EC 501: Microeconomic Theory (4)	Fall, Spring
CAS EC 508: Econometrics (4)	Fall, Spring
CAS MA 242: Linear Algebra (4)	Fall, Spring
GRS EC 782: Health Economics II (4)	Fall
SPH PM 807: Introduction to Cost-Effectiveness Analysis (2)	2 nd half of Fall
SPH PM 874: Causal Inference for Health Services and Policy Research (4)	Alternate Fall (odd years)

HEALTH AND SOCIAL POLICY	SEMESTER
SPH GH 888: Seminar on Global Health Policy Issues (2)	Spring
SPH MC 763: Maternal and Child Health Policy Making (2)	Spring
SPH PM 795: Alcohol, Tobacco and Other Drug Policy and Politics (4)	Spring
SPH PM 840: Analysis of Current Health Policy Issues (4)	Spring
SPH PM 851: Organizing and Advocacy for Health Policy Change (4)	Fall
SPH PM 874: Causal Inference for Health Services and Policy Research (4)	Alternate Fall (odd years)

IMPLEMENTATION AND EVALUATION	SEMESTER
Boston College MGMT 8853: Organizational Change and Transformation (3)	Fall
Brandeis University HS 472B: Policy to Action: Understanding Implementation (4)	Fall
CAS AN 590: Seminar: Theory, Method, and Techniques in Fieldwork (4)	Alternate Fall
QST MO 844: Managing Organizational Change (3)	Fall, Spring
SPH EP 775: Social Epidemiology (4)	Fall
SPH PH 803: Community-Based Participatory Research: Theory and Methods (2)	Fall
SPH PM 817: Introduction to Organizational Theory (2)	Alternate Spring (even years)
SPH PM 839: Implementation Science: Linking Research to Practice (4)	Spring

DISSERTATION REQUIREMENT

Students must complete the qualifying exam process and submit an approved Dissertation Topic/Committee form before beginning their dissertation work.

The Registrar will register students for SPH PM 980: Continuing Study every fall and spring semester that the dissertation has not been completed after coursework has been finished.

Please note — Calendar for Dissertation Defense and Submission:

- * **Dissertation Proposal** must be submitted to the proposed committee members before the oral proposal defense is scheduled
- * Approved **Dissertation Abstract** must be submitted to Academic Program Administrator at least 30 days before the oral proposal defense date
- * **Dissertation Defense**: see semester deadlines, published annually for BUSPH
- * Library Submission of Approved Dissertation: see BUSPH semester deadlines

CONTINUING STUDY

Doctoral students who have finished coursework and are working only on their dissertation will be registered for SPH PM 980: Continuing Study by the Registrar, each fall, spring and summer semester until the dissertation is completed. Continuing Study allows for access to advisors and other BUSPH and university resources. Registration for SPH PM 980 with additional full-time certification ("Certified Full-time") coding by the SPH Registrar may facilitate deferring payment on student loans and obtaining financial aid. Please note that the cost of SPH PM 980 is equivalent to 2 credits, but the student is registered for zero credits, and no grade is generated.

Any interruption in Continuing Study should be documented by applying for a leave of absence, which must be approved by the Program Co-Directors.

DIRECTED STUDY/DIRECTED RESEARCH COURSES

Students may choose to augment elective course offerings by arranging a Directed Study (SPH PM 931) or Directed Research (SPH PM 932) project with a BUSPH faculty member. In addition to the usual process for registering for these courses, approval of the Program Co-Directors is required in advance and must be applied for at least two months before coursework is scheduled to begin. A BUSPH faculty member is required to advise Directed Study or Directed Research coursework.

SECTION 3

PROGRAM POLICIES

THE PROGRAM COMMITTEE

The Health Services and Policy Research PhD Program Committee, chaired by the PhD Program Co-Directors and composed of department faculty, oversees the PhD program in Health Services and Policy Research and develops and implements the guidelines described below. The Program Committee delegates authority to other persons for certain functions, such as the dissertation committee for a student's doctoral dissertation but retains final authority. This authority includes approving or disapproving a student's PhD studies, approving members of a student's dissertation committee, outside readers for the dissertation, dissertation papers, final dissertation, and dismissal of students from the PhD program. All dissertation topic proposals are reviewed and approved by the Program Committee (this process is described in detail in Section 5).

ACADEMIC ADVISOR

Each student is assigned an initial academic advisor. The academic advisor will be a faculty in the Department of Health Law, Policy and Management and will be appointed by the Program Co-Directors. A student may request a change in academic advisor by contacting the Program Co-Directors and may request a particular academic advisor with that faculty member's written agreement. The advisor is available to discuss coursework, potential research topics, career paths, and other issues relevant to the student's success; however, the student bears all responsibility for meeting administrative and academic requirements and deadlines.

A student may also choose to have a second advisor who would serve as a scientific advisor. This scientific advisor should have similar interest in the field of study or topic area. This is optional and up to the student to identify their scientific advisor.

At the time a student chooses a dissertation topic, a change in advisor(s) may be appropriate to provide the student with the most appropriate supervision for completing their dissertation. Until the dissertation committee is fully appointed and the dissertation plan is codified in the dissertation proposal, the academic advisor for a student may not also simultaneously be the work supervisor for that student. Once the dissertation committee is appointed, the Chair of the dissertation committee is the academic advisor for the student and may also serve as their work supervisor. Please see Section 1 of this guidebook for additional information on advisors.

PRESENTATION REQUIREMENT

All PhD students who have completed the qualifying process (which includes passing the ACE and completing and orally defending the dissertation proposal) are required to make an oral presentation concerning their dissertation research at least once per academic year (September - May). These presentations serve as an opportunity to share the dissertation work, receive valuable feedback from colleagues, and develop oral

presentation skills. Any additional presentations made by the student at seminars or at conferences should be documented in the PhD Student Annual Report. Although the annual presentation is required only of students who have passed the qualifying examination process, they are an extremely valuable experience for all PhD students and are open to students at any stage.

PHD STUDENT ANNUAL REPORT

The PhD Student Annual Report process is conducted each spring, and reports are due by July 1st each year. Any current PhD student who fails to submit the report by July 1st without prior permission for a delay may be placed on Academic Probation by the Health Services and Policy Research Program Committee or may be dismissed from the program.

COURSE WAIVERS

Previous graduate-level coursework may be used to waive particular course requirements with the approval of the Program Co-Directors. Course waivers should first be discussed with your academic advisor and then with the Program Co-Directors.

TRANSFER OF COURSE CREDITS

Students may take courses at other accredited graduate schools and transfer these courses into BUSPH; however, transfer course credit may not exceed 8 credits, and may not reduce credits taken at BUSPH for the doctoral degree below 32 credits. For a previously completed course to be accepted for transfer credit, it must be a graduate-level course in which the student has received a grade of B or better and which has **not** been applied to meet the requirements of another degree program either at Boston University or elsewhere. The previously completed course must be relevant to the PhD program as determined by the Program Co-Directors, who must approve all transfer credits. The judgment of the Program Co-Directors in this regard will be final.

SECTION 4

QUALIFYING PROCESS

The Admission to Candidacy Exam (ACE) is a mandatory examination that students must pass as the first step in the qualifying process. This exam is broad in scope and covers the range of the theory and practice of Health Services and Policy Research, while also expecting the student to apply this knowledge to specific research design questions. The qualifying process is complete once the student successfully completes the ACE and the oral defense of their dissertation proposal (see Section 5 for more details). Students may take the Health Services and Policy Research Admission to Candidacy Exam once they have completed the core course requirements.

SCHEDULING

The Admission to Candidacy Exam is offered two times each year, usually at the start of the spring semester and over the summer. No guarantee is made that exams will be offered on the schedule desired by students. Before the expected exam date, students who are scheduled to take the exam will be informed of the upcoming exam and will work directly with the faculty examination coordinator on planning and logistics.

ADMISSION TO CANDIDACY EXAM

The exam will contain 4-6 questions. The questions will be integrative (covering material from 2 or more courses). At least 4-6 weeks before the exam, the faculty exam coordinator will meet with the students taking the exam to address any general questions.

The key substantive areas for the basis for the exam are drawn from the following core PhD courses:

- Research Theory and Design (PH 842)
- Introduction to Quality Measurement and Evaluation (PM 820)
- Advanced Quantitative Methods for Health and Social Policy Research (PM 822)
- Advanced Qualitative Methods (PM 828)
- Health Economics for Health and Social Policy Research (PM 842)
- Health Policy and Policy-Making for Public Health Researchers (PM 844)
- Advanced Quantitative Policy and Program Implementation and Evaluation (PM 846)
- Contemporary Structures of Health Services (PM 864)

EXAM GRADING AND OUTCOMES

Each exam question answer is blind reviewed by two program faculty members on a pass/fail basis. Students must pass all of the exam questions in order to pass the exam. Students who fail the Admission to Candidacy Exam on their initial attempt must take the exam again within one year of the initial exam date. Students who fail to re-take the exam within one year of the initial examination date will be subject to review by the Program Committee, which may result in dismissal from the program. Students who fail the exam a second time will be dismissed from the program. Under no circumstances may a student take the exam a third time.

SECTION 5

DISSERTATION

DEVELOPING A TOPIC

The dissertation should address an important issue in a content area of interest to the student and to the wider Health Services and Policy Research community. Each paper should address a clearly defined research question within that general content area. Ordinarily, the best way to discover topics of interest is to read the literature and search for questions that are raised but unanswered, or for questions where the evidence is mixed and further work with refined questions or methodologies can help. Given the importance of methods training, strong dissertations often include multiple types of study methods and/or designs that demonstrate different areas of methodologic strength.

DISSERTATION MENTORING AND ADVISING

The dissertation committee shall consist of one Dissertation Chairperson and at least two other committee members who must be Boston University faculty members. The Dissertation Chairperson must be a Department of Health Law, Policy and Management faculty member who has served on at least one prior dissertation committee and has the experience needed to guide the student through all aspects of the dissertation process. Depending on the content area or methods proposed for the dissertation, additional committee members may be recommended.

It is strongly recommended that students choose committee members who have expertise in the content and methods areas of their dissertations. Students may want to add additional committee members to assist with particular methods or content areas who may come from other schools/departments within the University. The student's initial Academic Advisor may or may not be an official member of the dissertation committee but should assist in connecting the student with the communities and resources necessary to develop the dissertation proposal and form the committee.

The HSPR Program Committee must approve all members the dissertation committee as part of the Dissertation Topic/Committee Approval process. If the Dissertation Chair or another member of the committee leaves their position at Boston University prior to the student's defense, the chair and student must consult with the HSPR Program Committee about the advisability of the member's continued involvement in the committee.

TOPIC APPROVAL FORM AND DISSERTATION PROPOSAL

Within six months after successfully passing the Admission to Candidacy Exam (ACE), the PhD candidate will submit their [Dissertation Topic/Committee Approval Form](#). This will include both a brief synopsis of the proposed dissertation research topic and methods for each paper, and the proposed composition of and rationale for the dissertation committee. All members of the proposed dissertation committee must sign (no email approvals) the approval form before it is reviewed by the HSPR Program Committee. Forms must be

submitted to the Program Co-Directors **AND** the Academic Program Administrator one week before the HSPR Program Committee monthly meeting (2nd Tuesdays of every month).

Once the approved form is received, it will be placed on the agenda for the next HSPR Program Committee meeting. If the Committee anticipates issues with either the research topic or the dissertation committee composition, written feedback will be provided to both the student and dissertation committee members following the meeting. Once the Dissertation Topic/Committee Approval form is approved, 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.

STRUCTURE OF DISSERTATION PROPOSAL

The structure of the full proposal should follow the format of the [PhD Dissertation Proposal Template](#) included in the Guidebook. The proposal should be structured in a grant format and must include the following: an abstract, specific aims, a statement of significance, innovation and impact of the research, a literature review, a conceptual framework, sources of data, and a complete plan for analysis. See Appendix A for a detailed outline. The conceptual framework is extremely important. It includes a description of key concepts and themes, a contextual relationship to the problem being studied, and a linkage to the analytical methods that will be applied.

ORAL DEFENSE OF DISSERTATION PROPOSAL

After the student's dissertation proposal has been preliminarily approved by their committee, the student will defend their proposal in a formal oral proposal defense. Once the full proposal is preliminarily approved, the student should consult with their dissertation committee and the Academic Program Administrator to identify a date and time for the dissertation proposal defense. Once a date and time is established, contact the Academic Program Administrator to address all administrative and process details. This date must be set at least 30 days in advance so that a room is reserved, and the program community is invited. Students will need to have two discussants, who are not already part of the dissertation committee, attend the student's oral defense of the dissertation proposal. After final proposal approval, a copy should be submitted to the Academic Program Administrator for tracking purposes. Additionally, the student must submit the [Dissertation Proposal Completion Record form](#), which is to be signed by all committee members.

DISSERTATION CONTENT

Following approval of the proposal, students should carry out the proposed dissertation work. The completed dissertation must display proficiency with application of research and analytic skills (quantitative, qualitative and/or mixed methods). Each individual paper should address a clearly defined research question within that general content area - strong dissertations often include multiple types of studies to show different areas of

methodologic strength. One paper may be a systematic literature or scoping review.

The typical dissertation includes five chapters: 1) introduction, complete review of the literature and conceptual framework for addressing the Health Services and Policy Research issue; paper one, including research question, methods, results, discussion; 3) paper two, including research question, methods, results, discussion; 4) paper three, including research question, methods, results, discussion; and 5) conclusion/implications for HSPR. It also includes references and appendices. The dissertation will likely require multiple iterations after review by the dissertation committee. All review efforts are designed to mirror the research review process in which many students will become actively engaged upon program completion, and to facilitate completion of a high-quality dissertation. See the [dissertation evaluation rubric](#) in Appendix A for areas to be assessed.

OUTSIDE READERS

The Chair of the Dissertation Committee, in consultation with the candidate, will recruit two outside readers who are not on the student's dissertation committee. The outside readers must be approved by the Dissertation Chair and have an arm's length relationship with the candidate. They may be faculty members outside of the HLPM department at Boston University, or they may be researchers outside of Boston University. Once the outside readers have been contacted and have agreed to participate, the Academic Program Administrator must be notified with their contact information. A formal letter will then be sent to the outside readers 30 days prior to the scheduled dissertation defense. The outside readers should also be given at least 30 days to review the dissertation between the draft submission date and the date of the dissertation defense.

Their role is to ensure that the methods and results are scientifically sound. They must review the dissertation to ensure that it has the quality of a manuscript or manuscripts acceptable for publication in an academic Health Services and Policy Research journal (e.g. *Health Services and Policy Research*).

The outside readers will give the dissertation one of the following three ratings:

- approve as is, or with minor suggested edits;
- approve contingent upon substantive changes based on recommendations
- disapprove, accompanied by reasons.

The readers must send their reviews of the dissertation to the student and dissertation chair. The student must discuss the comments from both outside readers with the dissertation committee chair, in order to come to agreement about necessary changes. Any unresolved disagreements among the student, the dissertation committee chair, and either or both of the outside readers must be brought to the Program Co-Directors (and then to the Department Chair if necessary) by the dissertation committee chair for resolution.

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 dissertation committee members, with committee agreement that it is ready to defend. 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. Students must consult with their dissertation committee and their outside readers and identify a few 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 your defense. They will also address all administrative and process details once a date and time is confirmed.

Prior to the scheduled date of defense, the student must submit a draft of the signature page to [Brendan McDermott](#), Thesis/Dissertation Coordinator, to ensure that page formatting is appropriate.

POST-DEFENSE: SUBMISSION OF DISSERTATION

Please note that students must submit a graduation application by the date specified on the [BUSPH Graduation page](#). This is often before the date of the dissertation defense. Students are responsible for submission of the graduation application and all other materials within the required deadlines.

Dissertations and theses are submitted to the Mugar Library electronically via [ProQuest ETD Administrator](#). The dissertation must be in PDF format with embedded fonts and no password restrictions; otherwise, the system will not accept the upload. The library has produced a guide and a series of brief, informative videos to help with this process available at [library.bu.edu/theses](#). It is strongly recommended that students review the final draft of the dissertation as early as possible with Brendan McDermott, Thesis/Dissertation Coordinator, Mugar Memorial Library, Room 306 (theses@bu.edu).

SECTION 6

BOSTON UNIVERSITY AND BUSPH POLICIES

In addition to the selected academic policies outlined in this guidebook, all PhD students must adhere to all BUSPH [Academic Policies](#), the University's [Administrative Policies](#), and the policies listed on the [student dashboard](#) and/or the [Registrar's office](#).

COMPLIANCE REQUIREMENTS FOR ALL STUDENTS

Boston University policy requires students be in compliance with four requirements (payment, health, BU alert number, and Massachusetts Motor Vehicle Law) in order to be in status with the University. You may check your compliance status through [MyBU Student](#).

The BUSPH Registrar's Office is blocked from entering registration for any student who is not in compliance with University requirements and cannot manually override this block and register students. If you need assistance with compliance information, please talk with a staff member in the BUSPH Registrar's Office.

If you have any questions regarding the purpose of the compliance requirements, or would like more information on the requirements, visit the [Registrar's website](#).

Massachusetts Motor Vehicle Law

The Massachusetts Motor Vehicle Law requires that all out-of-state students, including those who do not bring cars to Massachusetts, sign an acknowledgement that they have been informed of the law.

The Massachusetts Motor Vehicle Law requires out-of-state students bringing vehicles into the Commonwealth of Massachusetts to file a non-resident driver statement with the local police department in the city in which their university is located. Students must formally acknowledge they have been notified of the law by clicking on the acknowledge button [here](#). Students who fail to do so will not be in compliance and will be unable to register for upcoming semesters.

Boston University Alert Telephone Number

Boston University requires all students studying on Massachusetts campuses must provide a BU Alert phone number, which is used to notify you of a University-wide emergency. View and update your BU Alert phone number on [MyBU Student](#).

Immunization Requirements

In the spirit of public health, we ask all students to be sure their immunizations are up to date, although part time students will not be asked to verify their immunization status. International students must meet mandatory state immunization requirements at the time of registration.

For more information about immunization requirements, go to the [Student Health Services website](#).

Tuition Payment

All students must pay their bill by published tuition payment deadlines.

CHILDBIRTH AND ADOPTION ACCOMODATION POLICY

The [childbirth and adoption accommodation policy](#) for full-time or certified full-time PhD students in good academic standing provides for extensions for academic coursework and other requirements to the primary caregiver of an infant or adopted child. It also provides for a continuation of stipend support for funded students during the accommodation period.

ACADEMIC HONESTY

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

Academic misconduct is any intentional act or omission by a student which represents 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.
- 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.

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.

Please view the [full academic misconduct policy](#) for more information.

USE OF ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE

School Policy

This policy establishes the minimum standards required across all BUSPH programs related to the use of Artificial Intelligence (AI) tools in teaching and learning, and delegates authority to instructors to define course-specific rules. The goal of the policy is to ensure clarity, fairness, and integrity in academic work. This policy will be regularly reviewed and revised to reflect emerging technologies and evolving standards, ensuring responsible use.

Minimum Standards

- Transparency: If AI tools are used in any stage of work (e.g., brainstorming, editing, coding, data analysis), students must clearly acknowledge their use, including which tool was used and how.
- Responsibility and accountability: Students remain fully responsible for the accuracy, originality, and integrity of all submitted work, regardless of whether AI contributed. Note that any use of AI that produces discriminatory findings (e.g., biased, unfair, or inequitable treatment of any group), whether intentional or not, will be subject to review and evaluated against BUSPH Expectations of Ourselves at Our Best (outlined in every BUSPH syllabus).
- Privacy: Students must not input confidential, sensitive, or personally identifiable information into AI platforms.
- Prohibited uses unacceptable in all BUSPH courses
 - Submitting AI-generated text, analysis, code, or images without attribution (plagiarism).
 - Using AI to create or manipulate data or research findings.

Course-Level Policies

While these BUSPH-wide rules apply universally, individual instructors have the authority to set specific AI policies for their courses and assignments. Faculty may:

- Prohibit all AI use.
- Allow unrestricted AI use (with clear requirements on transparency).
- Allow limited AI use with clear conditions (e.g., for editing or brainstorming only, with attribution).

Faculty must state their AI policy explicitly in the syllabus and clarify expectations for each assignment.

Ethical Guidance

Students should approach AI tools with the same standards of honesty, integrity, and professionalism expected in all academic work. AI should be used to support learning and creativity, not to replace critical thinking, misrepresent authorship, or compromise ethical standards. Misuse of AI can result in violations of the BU Academic Conduct Code.

GRADING STANDARDS, PROBATION, AND DISMISSAL

Grading Standards

All BUSPH degree candidates must earn a minimum 3.0 GPA each semester to be in good academic standing and to graduate. Doctoral students must earn a B or better in all coursework.

Please see the BUSPH [Grading Policy](#) for information on grade changes and incomplete grades.

ACADEMIC REVIEW

At the end of each semester, the grades of all BUSPH degree candidates will be reviewed against the criteria for Satisfactory Academic Progress (SAP) by the SAP Committee. Students deemed at risk for failing to make SAP will be notified in writing, with a copy also sent to the academic advisor and student record. Such correspondence is not part of the permanent academic record unless the student is subsequently dismissed from SPH for academic reasons.

If deemed necessary by the Committee, a student deemed at risk of not making SAP will work with their academic advisor and the HSPR Program Co-Directors to devise a learning plan prior to registration for each upcoming semester. The learning plan should describe a semester-by-semester educational plan to make degree progress while improving the student's GPA. The plan must be signed by the student, their academic advisor, and the HSPR Program Co-Directors and be submitted to the BUSPH Registrar. Once a student is deemed at risk, they must exhibit SAP each semester. SAP is defined as steady upward progress toward a 3.0 GPA, completing all courses with required minimum grades, and adhering to the learning plan, as established, unless all parties agree to changes. Any student who continues to fail to make progress in subsequent semesters will be placed on warning. This information is forwarded to financial aid. Any student on warning who again fails to make SAP in the following semester will be placed on academic probation. OSFS may determine that these students are no longer eligible for federal financial aid. The SAP Committee will take appropriate academic action for students on academic probation, including suspension or dismissal. Should a student be suspended, he or she may not make progress toward degree requirements during the period of academic suspension. BUSPH will not accept transfer credit for courses taken by a suspended BUSPH student at another school within Boston University or another academic institution during the student's period of suspension.

Dismissal

A student who is on probation for not making adequate progress will be dismissed from the 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 HSPR PhD Program Co-Directors. Dismissal may also occur as a result of committing an act of academic dishonesty, as defined in the School's policy on Academic Dishonesty.

REGISTRATION REQUIREMENTS

All students at BUSPH, regardless of citizenship or immigration status, must register each

fall and spring semester during their program until they officially graduate.

Enrollment

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 registration in Continuing Study with additional full-time certification ("Certified Full-time") coding by the BUSPH Registrar. International students must check in at the Boston University International Students and Scholars Office (ISSO) when they first arrive at Boston University and then complete "Semester Verification" in each subsequent semester to ensure that they remain in lawful status.

International students who are not full-time by virtue of academic course load (12 credits or more) or who are not certified full time when enrolled 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 may be registered as either part-time or full-time students and must register for either coursework or be registered for Continuing Study each fall, spring and summer semester.

Leaves of Absence

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

Students on leave of absence are not entitled to be advised officially by their faculty advisors during a leave of absence, nor do they have library privileges.

PROGRAM TIME LIMIT

BUSPH requires all PhD students to complete the program within 7 years of matriculation. Most students are able and expected to finish in less time. Any extensions of the overall time limit must be requested in writing to the PhD Program Co-Directors with documentation of the extraordinary circumstances creating the delay and a date by which the requirements will be met and will be reviewed by the HSPR Program Committee. A student who does not meet the time limits established by the program may be dismissed from the program without a degree.

REQUIRED RESEARCH TRAINING

All PhD students who are on a T32 are required to complete two Boston University training programs: training in the responsible conduct of research, which consists of four, in-person, training sessions; and training in the protection of human research subjects. These training programs should be completed as early as possible, preferably during the first year of study. For more information, visit the [RCR website](#).

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*

*The ISSO office is closed every Wednesday morning until 12:00PM.

Contact Information:

888 Commonwealth Avenue, 2nd Floor

Boston, MA 02215

Phone: (617) 353-3565

Email: isso@bu.edu

Students who have any questions regarding their required registration or necessary documents for travel or study should contact the ISSO. If students must visit the office in person, they may take the BU BUS. 888 Commonwealth Avenue is located opposite the C6 – Buick Street and Commonwealth Avenue stop on the BU Shuttle Outbound to the Charles River Campus.

Maintaining Visa Status

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

Students on an F-1 visa: bu.edu/isso/students/current/f1.

Students on a J-1 visa: bu.edu/isso/students/current/j1.

International Students Completing the Dissertation

Regardless of when you participate in graduation ceremonies, you officially complete your studies when you submit the final version of your dissertation and Boston University certifies that you have successfully completed all degree requirements. Please note that all international 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, international students must register in every fall and spring semester. An exception to this rule is that if an international student is conducting dissertation research during the summer that is off campus; in that case, the student must be registered for summer research, PH 995 C1.

DOCTORAL STUDENT FUNDING AND WORK REGULATIONS

There are several funding models for full-time doctoral students at BU. Full-time students may be funded through a T32 training grant, or from a GRA working with faculty. Full-time

students cannot work more than 20 hours per week at Boston University. Students are eligible to TA for one Semester and are capped at 10 hours. This is a one-time exception, students may only be allowed to TA once, and it must request an exemption through the Education Office.

Boston University Employees

Full-time BU employees cannot be full-time students. The tuition remission benefit covers up to 8 credits per semester. Employees must receive their supervisor's approval to take courses during the regularly scheduled workday.

SECTION 7

STUDENT RESOURCES AND PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

ACADEMIC ASSISTANCE

If you experience challenges executing your academic plan, you should consult with your academic advisor or the HSPR Program Co-Directors for guidance. The Registrar's Office is also available to provide help with academic roadblocks. [The Office of Graduate Student Life](#) can help students connect with many useful resources.

The University has numerous resources available to students, including the Educational Resource and Writing Centers on the Charles River Campus, and the Public Health Writing Program at BUSPH. To make an appointment with either writing center, please do so through this [online form](#).

Public Health Writing Program

Peer writing assistance is available free of charge for students who wish to improve their public health writing skills within the context of courses. Writing assistance is provided for all courses that have a writing component and is designed for all levels of writers.

Students can receive writing assistance by self-referral or instructor referral. Students bring 2 printed copies of the latest draft of the writing assignment and 2 printed copies of the assignment description to the appointment. Students may have up to two writing appointments per assignment but no more than 14 appointments per semester. Contact Tenbit Mitiku, Assistant Director, Student Success (sphcoach@bu.edu) for more information or to schedule an appointment. Or visit the [site](#). Writing assistance is **not** provided for PhD dissertations.

Charles River Campus Educational Resource and Writing Center

The Educational Resource and Writing Center located on the Charles River Campus offers several types of writing assistance for BU students, including assistance for non-native English speakers. Scheduling of appointments is done through [TutorTrac](#). Students can refer to the [Charles River Campus website](#) for more details on writing assistance.

DISABILITY SERVICES

Students requiring disability services or accommodations are encouraged to meet with Mary Murphy-Phillips, Assistant Dean of Students (mcmurph@bu.edu), who is the BUSPH liaison to the Boston University Office of Disability Services. Students may also refer to their [student dashboard](#) or the [Registrar's office](#) and to the Office of Disability Services [website](#) for more information.

Student Health and Behavioral Medicine

BUSPH students have several options for health and medical care, including support for mental health and well-being. Students should always refer to their [insurance brochure](#)

[and policy](#) for coverage options, benefits and any restrictions.

COMMUNICATIONS

All official communications from BUSPH will be sent to your BU email. Please activate a BU email account as soon as possible after you accept admission to the program. You may elect to have this email forwarded to an alternative email account. You should regularly check and clean out your BU email, so the mailbox has sufficient space to accept messages.

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

- The BUSPH [website](#)
- HSPR Blast: monthly newsletter sent by the Academic Program Administrator, with announcements and information specific to the HSPR PhD program
- BUSPH [Student Page](#): school-wide emails announcing information for students. *Please be sure to add busph@bu.edu to your safe senders list.*
- [The Student Dashboard](#)

Events

BUSPH hosts several events designed to get students involved in the community and socialize with your fellow students.

Student Meetings with the Deans: Open discussions and free food for students to discuss issues they find important with the Dean of BUSPH and other deans.

Student Coffee Chats with the Dean: Each month, the Dean invites students for coffee and a chat to discuss current public health issues.

Public Health Forum

BUSPH Public Health Forum is a monthly presentation at which students, faculty, and colleagues gather to examine contemporary problems or issues in the public health world. Speakers include public health practitioners and policy experts from around the globe and faculty from schools of public health. The goal of the Forum is to promote awareness and dialogue about matters critical to the public's health.

PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

HSPR Student Seminars, HLPM Seminars and Other Regular Meetings/ Seminar Series

Health Services and Policy Research students are expected to attend the program's student seminars, are strongly encouraged to attend the HLPM Seminars, and are expected to explore other seminar/meeting series at VA CHOIR, HDRI, and other centers. Some series present current Health Services and Policy Research and others offer an opportunity to see researchers formulating research proposals and grant applications, collegially offering recommendations to improve them, responding to funders' reviews, and revising proposals, as well as discussing early and final research results and their implications. If you have questions about which of these groups are most useful for you, please discuss with your advisor or the Program Co-Directors.

- HSPR Student Seminars: Generally held monthly on the 2nd Tuesdays of each month. All students are expected to attend these seminars. **Final dates and guest speakers are TBD.**
- HSPR Dissertation Proposal/Dissertation Defenses: All students are expected to attend all HSPR defenses. **Dates are TBA.**
- Boston University training programs: All PhD students who are on a T32 are required to participate in the Responsible Conduct of Research (RCR) and training in the protection of human research subjects. Students are encouraged to participate in other campus training programs, such as those held by the CTSI or the Clinical Research Resources Office (CRRO).

Please regularly check the [calendar](#) for BUSPH and HLPM events. HSPR-specific events will usually be posted on the BUSPH calendar and you will also be notified by email.

PROFESSIONAL ASSOCIATIONS

Students benefit greatly from joining professional associations. These associations offer students opportunities to meet people working in public health, learn about job opportunities, understand trends in the field, and polish communication and presentation skills at annual meetings. Students are strongly encouraged to become active in any of the following organizations and are welcome to discuss their interest in other associations with the Health Services and Policy Research Program Co-Directors, academic advisor and other faculty. These organizations generally welcome student members at a reduced cost.

- [AcademyHealth](#)
- [American Public Health Association \(APHA\)](#)
- [Massachusetts Public Health Association \(MPHA\)](#)
- [Healthcare Information and Management Systems Society](#)
- [International Health Economics Association](#)
- [Society for Medical Decision Making](#)
- [American Health Quality Association](#)

SECTION 8

FACULTY

Bios of HLPM faculty, and links to publications, can be found under the Faculty & Staff tab on the department [website](#).

HLPM Teaching and Advising Faculty for the HSPR PhD Program, 2026-2027

Name	Office Location	Email
Stein, Michael (Chair)	Talbot 250 W	mdstein@bu.edu
Adams, Rachel Sayko	Talbot 342 W	rsayko@bu.edu
Auty, Samantha	Remote	sgauty@bu.edu
Brimhall, Kimberly	Talbot 263 W	brimhall@bu.edu
Callaghan, Timothy	Talbot 262 W	timcal@bu.edu
Carey, Kathleen	Talbot 257 W	kcarey@bu.edu
Clark, Jack	Talbot 253 W	jaclark@bu.edu
Crosby, Sondra	Crosstown Center	scrobsy@bu.edu
Drainoni, Mari-Lynn	Crosstown Center	drainoni@bu.edu
Ettinger de Cuba, Stephanie	Talbot 338 W	sedc@bu.edu
Fix, Gemmae	Bedford VA	gmmfix@bu.edu
Garrido, Melissa	Boston VA	melissa.garrido@va.gov
Gordon, Sarah	Talbot 239 W	gordonsh@bu.edu
Huberfeld, Nicole	Talbot 362W	nlh@bu.edu
Jernigan, David	Talbot 349 W	dhjern@bu.edu
Lipson, Sarah	Talbot 265 W	sklipson@bu.edu
Louis, Chris	Talbot 261 W	louisc@bu.edu
McCuskey, Elizabeth	Talbot 357 W	Mccuskey@bu.edu
Morgan, Jake	Talbot 340 W	jakem@bu.edu
Motta, Matthew	Talbot 262 W	mmotta@bu.edu
Nguyen, Kevin	Talbot 244 W	nguyen@bu.edu
Ni, Pengsheng	Talbot 242W	psni@bu.edu
Pogoda, Terri	Boston VA	terri.pagoda@va.gov
Pizer, Steve	Talbot 247 W	pizer@bu.edu
Sager, Alan	Talbot 344 W	Asager@bu.edu
Ross, Jennifer	Talbot 345 W	jjross@bu.edu
Shafer, Paul	Talbot 340 W	pshafer@bu.edu
Shimada, Stephanie	Bedford VA	shimada@bu.edu
Slavin, Mary	Remote	mslavin@bu.edu
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"W" addresses are in Department of HLPM offices on the 2nd and 3rd floors of Talbot Building, West Wing.

APPENDIX A

DISSERTATION RESOURCES

- PhD Dissertation Process – General Overview
- HSPR PhD Dissertation Topic/Committee Approval Form
- Policy for HSPR Dissertation Proposal Approval
- PhD Dissertation Proposal Outline
- Dissertation Proposal Defense Completion Record
- Dissertation Assessment Rubric
- Dissertation Completion Record

HSPR PHD DISSERTATION PROCESS – GENERAL OVERVIEW

A dissertation is required of all students in order to complete the PhD program. The process includes several steps:

1. Selection of a proposed topic – the dissertation typically involves the selection of an overall topic area and three specific papers within that area
2. Identification of Dissertation Committee Chair and additional Committee Members
3. Submission of the Dissertation Topic/Committee Approval form to the Academic Program Administrator and Program Co-Directors –within six months of successful completion of the Admission to Candidacy Exam (ACE)
4. Obtain documented approval of the dissertation topic and committee from the HSPR Program Committee
5. Development of a full dissertation proposal that is evaluated and approved by the candidate's dissertation committee – this often takes several drafts
6. Completion of an oral defense of the dissertation proposal
7. Development of a complete dissertation (three papers) that is evaluated and approved by the candidate's dissertation committee – this often takes several drafts
8. Identify outside readers for dissertation
9. Work with dissertation committee and Academic Program Administrator to identify a date for oral dissertation defense
10. Submission of a final dissertation abstract that has been approved by the candidate's dissertation committee to the Academic Program Administrator no later than 30 days prior to the defense date – following this, work with the Academic Program Administrator to schedule defense
11. Complete oral defense, with voting for approval by the student's dissertation committee
12. Library submission of the completed dissertation
13. Complete HSPR Department Dissertation Completion Record Form and send final copy of dissertation with signature page to the Academic Program Administrator

HSPR PHD DISSERTATION TOPIC/COMMITTEE APPROVAL FORM

The completed approval form should be submitted via email to the Program Co-Directors AND the Academic Program Administrator one week prior to the monthly HSPR Program Committee meeting. All proposed Committee Members must sign the form before it will be reviewed by the HSPR Program Committee.

Candidate Name: _____

Proposed Dissertation Title: _____

Proposed Committee: *(List your committee members, designating the chair, and briefly identifying the anticipated role of each member (e.g. Dr. X will provide methodological expertise on Bayesian analyses; Dr. Y will guide the qualitative interview study). The Committee Chair must be an HPLM faculty member, and all committee members should be Boston University faculty. In addition, it is recommended that the committee chair be at the Associate Professor level or above and have previously served on a dissertation committee. Committees should have at least 3, and no more than 5, members.*

Chair:_____ **Signature:**_____ **Date:** _____

Explanation:

Committee Member:_____ **Signature:**_____ **Date:** _____

Explanation:

Committee Member:_____ **Signature:**_____ **Date:** _____

Explanation:

Committee Member:_____ **Signature:**_____ **Date:** _____

Explanation:

Committee Member:_____ **Signature:**_____ **Date:** _____

Explanation:

Background and Significance: *(Provide a brief description, of about 500 words, of the nature of the problem, why it is important to study (significance), and the proposed conceptual model as a diagram or graphic.)*

Methods: *(Provide a brief description of the methods to be used for each component of the dissertation, not more than 750 words. Please be sure to address any threats to feasibility.)*

HSPR DISSERTATION PROPOSAL APPROVAL

Within six months of successfully completing the Admission to Candidacy Examination (ACE), the PhD candidate will submit to the HSPR Program Committee the Dissertation Topic/Committee Approval form (see previous page), which includes both a brief synopsis of the proposed dissertation research, and the proposed composition and rationale for the Dissertation Committee.

This will be placed on the agenda for the next month's HSPR Program Committee Meeting. If the HSPR Program Committee anticipates issues with either the research topic or the dissertation committee composition, written feedback will be provided to both the student and dissertation committee chair following the meeting. Once the Dissertation Topic/Committee Approval form is formally approved by the HSPR Program Committee, the PhD candidate has six months to write a complete dissertation proposal and schedule an oral proposal defense, which will be evaluated solely by the candidate's dissertation committee.

The oral proposal defense date must be arranged with the Academic Program Administrator. It will be publicly announced and open to all community members. All of the candidate's dissertation committee members and two discussants are required to be in attendance. It should be scheduled for 90 minutes, of which no more than 45 minutes should be a prepared presentation; the balance of the time is for questions and discussion. The Dissertation Committee Chair must then report to the Program Co-Directors and Academic Program Administrator when the full proposal has been successfully defended. The successful completion of the ACE and dissertation proposal process (HSPR Program Committee approval of the dissertation topic and committee, completion of the written dissertation proposal, and successful oral defense of the proposal) comprise the complete qualifying process for the degree.

PHD DISSERTATION PROPOSAL – OUTLINE

The PhD dissertation proposal can be submitted after a candidate has completed the qualifying exam process AND has an approved dissertation topic form. It must be approved by the proposed committee members before the oral proposal defense is scheduled. Proposals should be no longer than 16 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 since they print well and are legible to the largest 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](#).

Proposed Title for Dissertation: _____

Project Summary/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.)

Project Narrative: (3 Sentences)

(Describe the relevance to Public Health, how does your research contribute)

Specific Aims (1 page):

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

Research Strategy (12 pages):

(Significance, Innovation, Approach. When writing your Research Strategy, your goal is to present a well-organized, visually appealing, and readable description of your proposed project and the rationale for pursuing it.)

*The description of each distinct dissertation paper (3) should include the following components and are no longer than **1 page** 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):

HSPR DISSERTATION PROPOSAL DEFENSE COMPLETION RECORD

CANDIDATE NAME: _____

APPROVED TITLE: _____

COMMITTEE CHAIR: _____

ADDITIONAL COMMITTEE MEMBERS: _____

DISSCUSSANTS: _____

**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: _____

HSPR PHD DISSERTATION RUBRIC

Dissertation Domain	Approve as is OR Approve w/ minor changes	Approve contingent on substantive changes	Do not approve; significant changes are needed	Comments, concerns, changes needed
<i>Literature review (clear, relevant, Comprehensive)</i>				
<i>Conceptual framework (based on/supported by literature review, clearly linked to research?)</i>				
<i>Clearly defined research questions/hypotheses (follow from lit review & grounded in conceptual model)</i>				
<i>Appropriate methods and critical analysis (may be quant., qual., or mixed; should be well-suited to research questions posed)</i>				
<i>Presentation of findings (well-organized, clear, concise & comprehensive)</i>				
<i>Conclusions (implications for further research, for HSPR theory, and/or for policy and practice are addressed)</i>				
<i>Independence of work (work is carried out by student with moderate levels of faculty advising & direction)</i>				
<i>Novelty (contribution to the field/provides basis for next steps in new direction)</i>				

HLPM DEPARTMENT DISSERTATION COMPLETION RECORD

CANDIDATE NAME: _____

COMMITTEE CHAIR: _____

ADDITIONAL COMMITTEE MEMBERS: _____

OUTSIDE READERS: _____

APPROVED DISSERTATION TITLE: _____

DATE DEFENSE DRAFT GIVEN TO COMMITTEE: _____

DATE DEFENSE HELD: _____

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

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

Expected date of final copy completion: _____

COMMITTEE CHAIR SIGNATURE: _____

DATE: _____

PROGRAM CO-DIRECTORS SIGNATURE:

DATE: _____

To be completed by the Academic Program Administrator

REGISTRAR NOTIFIED OF SUCCESSFUL DEFENSE BY PROGRAM:

DATE: _____

SUBMITTED TO MUGAR LIBRARY:

DATE: _____

ELECTRONIC COPY TO HLPM DEPARTMENT:

DATE: _____

**APPENDIX
B**

DOCTORAL COURSEWORK PLANNING

Doctoral Coursework Planning Worksheet

HSPR PHD COURSE PLANNING WORKSHEET

Use this to organize your coursework over the following few semesters in the HSPR program. You can also use this sheet to identify any skill sets you would like to acquire during your PhD program.

I. PRE-REQUISITES	CREDITS	SEMESTER/YEAR
SPH BS 704: Introduction to Biostatistics	3	
SPH EP 714: Introduction to Epidemiology	4	
II. REQUIRED COURSES (32 CREDITS)		
SPH PH 842: Research Theory and Design	2	
SPH PH 843: Introduction to Quantitative Methods for Health and Social Policy Research	2	
SPH PH 844: Introduction to Qualitative Methods for Health and Social Policy Research	2	
SPH PM 820: Introduction to Quality Measurement and Evaluation	2	
SPH PM 822: Advanced Quantitative Methods for Health and Social Policy Research	4	
SPH PM 828: Advanced Qualitative Methods	4	
SPH PM 842: Health Economics for Health and Social Policy Research	4	
SPH PM 844: Health Policy and Policy-Making for Public Health Researchers	4	
SPH PM 846 Advanced Quantitative Policy and Program Implementation and Evaluation	4	
SPH PM 864: Contemporary Structures of Health Services	2	
SPH PM 866: Theory in the Analysis of Health Services	2	
SPH PH 895: Pedagogy and Curriculum Development	2	
SPH PH 896: Mentored Teaching Practicum	2	
SPH PH 885: Grant Writing I	2	
SPH PH 886: Grant Writing II	2	
III. EMPHASIS AREA/ELECTIVES (10 CREDITS)		
Check an Emphasis Area: ☐ Health Economics ☐ Health and Social Policy ☐ Implementation and Evaluation		
COURSE # AND TITLE	CREDITS	SEMESTER/YEAR
IV. OTHER COURSES AND/OR ELECTIVES <i>Must receive permission AND written approval from Program Co-Directors. If you are on a T32 Training Grant, list any additional required courses here.</i>		

PhD Requirements Checklist:

- ☐ 32 credits or approved transfer credits applied to the PhD required courses
- ☐ Additional T32 courses as part of the T32 Training Grant / other courses approved by Program

Co-Directors

- ☐ Grade of B or higher in all courses applied to PhD
- ☐ Passing grade on the ACE
- ☐ Presented at the Monthly Doctoral Student Seminars
- ☐ Complete all dissertation requirements
- ☐ Submit graduation application by the appropriate deadline

APPENDIX C

PHD COMPETENCIES

PHD COMPETENCIES

- Analyze key factors that have the potential to influence health and provision and use of health services. These may include policy, organization, and financing of healthcare services. They may also include social, economic, cultural, political, and biological factors that influence population health, health equity, and the use of services.
- Critique, adapt, and develop theoretical analyses of health services and policies, including explanations of their structures and processes, the use of health services, the effectiveness and implementation of health policies, and the effects of health services and policies on individual and population health and health equity. This may be done by drawing upon the foundational fields of sociology, economics, anthropology, political science, psychology, demography, epidemiology, management, and/or organizational science.
- Develop original, relevant and important research questions to pursue in HSPR that are grounded in both relevant theory and a critical analysis of prior literature.
- Analyze the strengths and weaknesses of a variety of possible study designs that can appropriately address HSPR questions. Appropriate methods may employ experimental or observational approaches, qualitative or quantitative analytic techniques, and a variety of data types.
- Based on relevant theory and selected research question(s), develop an HSPR design, specifying study constructs, research objectives, hypotheses, and methods that reliably and validly measure outcomes of interest. Select optimal analytical approaches, in combination as necessary, to investigate hypotheses.
- Acquire and manage appropriate data to answer HSPR questions. Collect and manage primary health and healthcare utilization data and/or assemble and manage existing data from public and private data sources in accordance with an original research design.
- Apply appropriate analytical techniques to data in order to investigate HSPR questions. Utilize appropriate combinations of analytic techniques to enrich data analysis and interpretation.
- Develop, document and employ procedures that ensure the reproducibility of the science, the responsible use of resources, mutual accountability with collaborators, and the ethical treatment of research subjects.
- Effectively communicate the process, findings, and implications of HSPR via multiple modes including peer-reviewed publications, oral presentations, and electronic media. Translate findings to multiple stakeholders and audiences including funders, research participants, colleagues, policy-makers, news media, and managers.

- Work collaboratively in teams within and across disciplines to develop and disseminate HSPR knowledge; assembling and leading teams with the necessary combinations of knowledge and expertise.