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University of California, Merced

Public Health Graduate Student Handbook

Doctor of Philosophy (Ph.D.) in Public Health

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# 1. Preface

Welcome to graduate school! You are about to begin one of the most exciting, rewarding, and demanding phases of your adult life. Between now and graduation, you will develop from an enthusiastic and ambitious student into a professional scientist with highly specialized technical and substantive knowledge, a professional who is capable of functioning independently as a researcher, teacher, and colleague. Few other times in your life offer you the opportunities you will encounter in the next several years. Take advantage of them. Remember, you are preparing for a successful career in a competitive job market, not merely to obtain a degree. You will want to leave here as well-prepared as you can be.

This Public Health Graduate Student Handbook is a manual to help you successfully navigate the Doctor of Philosophy (Ph.D.) in Public Health program at UC Merced. It contains a variety of information, ranging from milestone requirements (e.g., pre-candidacy project, dissertation) to expected coursework to training as a teacher. Read the Handbook to get an overview of what will happen throughout the next several years and refer to it regularly as you encounter questions about what you need to do. Develop questions for your advisor and regularly discuss with them how, within this structure, you can reach your goals with excellence. Ask your fellow graduate students about their experiences. They can provide useful guidance on getting through the program. You can also use the Handbook to help you keep track of your own progress against the milestones and expected timelines for completion of your doctoral degree. By the time you graduate, your copy of the Handbook should be well-worn and annotated.

Students should also refer to the Graduate Policies & Procedures Handbook on the Graduate Division’s website to access additional information about graduate policies and procedures at UC Merced:

https://graduatedivision.ucmerced.edu/sites/graduatedivision.ucmerced.edu/files/page/documents/2020-21\_gpph\_-\_gc\_approved\_6.30.20.pdf

This is a live document and may be updated throughout the year. You are expected to adhere to the expectations detailed in the version provided to you when you entered the program, unless you elect to adopt a version that is more recent.

# 2. Vision

Public Health at UC Merced is a vibrant and collegial intellectual community, marked by outstanding scholarship and participation in interdisciplinary communities of inquiry. Our goal is to foster scholarly excellence in Public Health, with a specific focus on three topical areas: prevention sciences, environmental health, and health services. The Public Health Program provides members of underrepresented groups access to first class under- and graduate-level training and contributes new knowledge to efforts to address health and healthcare disparities in the region.

# 3. Introduction of the Program

Doctoral study in Public Health is focused on acquiring the conceptual and methodological skills necessary to operate as an independent researcher. At UC Merced, this is accomplished through a mentorship model in which students work closely with a supervising Faculty Advisor who has primary responsibility for overseeing that student’s training. At the same time, students may broaden their research training through involvement in research programs conducted by another faculty. There are also numerous specific requirements. For example, students must complete a program of coursework, an empirical Second-Year Paper, a Candidacy Exam portfolio demonstrating professional skills in the discipline, and an empirical Doctoral Dissertation involving original research that contributes to knowledge in the field. These are only the major requirements and are not meant to be exhaustive. It is also expected that graduate students will contribute to and generate additional research, adding to the intellectual and organizational life of the department.

The Doctor of Philosophy degree is not granted by the University of California merely for the fulfillment of technical requirements. Rather, the recipient of a PhD degree is understood to possess thorough knowledge of a broad field of learning, have demonstrated evidence of distinguished accomplishment in that field, and evidence critical ability and powers of imaginative synthesis. The degree also signifies that the recipient has presented a doctoral dissertation containing an original contribution to knowledge in his or her chosen field of study.

Although the Public Health Graduate Program is designed for students interested in pursuing a PhD in Public Health, PhD students will have the option to obtain a *Master of Science in Public Health* degree, either en route to a PhD degree or in lieu of a PhD degree if a student exits the graduate program prior to fulfilling the PhD requirements.

Graduate work is highly demanding. Graduate students quickly come to learn that far more is expected of them now than when they were undergraduates. You will likely be more successful if you adjust your expectations for your own performance from the start. Below are some examples.

* Generally, you will need to work 60-70 hours a week to complete your:
  + **Coursework**. Coursework provides a foundation for core areas of your learning, an opportunity to become familiar with research literature, and a forum for creatively exploring your own research ideas. Your investment and success in classroom learning is critical to your success as a graduate student. You will read much more than you are probably used to for some courses, and in other courses you will work on several larger assignments that will require consistent, high-quality work over several weeks.
  + **Assistantship**. Teaching and research assistantships provide hands-on opportunities to engage in scholarly work. You should expect to devote an average of 20 hours per week, sometimes more or less in any given week.
  + **Research**. Unlike many undergraduates who simply strive to “get the requirements done,” as a graduate student you are expected to become an expert in your chosen field, to know your literature deeply, to be able to use the methods in your field independently, and to establish your research vita with publications, conference presentations, and grants. It is not enough to meet the milestone research requirements; you need to accomplish considerably more than that. Devoting as much time as possible to your research is essential to a successful graduate career.
  + **Service**. Service opportunities, such as organizing talks or serving on committees, provide the chance to more fully engage in our academic community. You will be expected to be involved in some aspect of service. However, first year graduate students are usually exempt from service. The amount of time this will take varies by task, but you should put in the time needed to achieve commendable results in your service work.

You should also plan to work most of the semester breaks. This is prime time to spend on your research development. Talk to your advisor or other faculty members about how much they worked as graduate students.

The first year of graduate school, especially the first semester, is often the most difficult for many graduate students. The adjustment demands are steep. You will take more courses than at any other time in graduate school, and some of them like statistics and research methods are difficult for many students. You are learning new skills in teaching and research that you may not have much prior experience with. Be patient and work hard. Support each other. By your second year, you will take fewer courses, and towards the end of your graduate career, you may not take any courses at all. If you want a sense of your likely course load, look at the sample program listed in this Handbook. The following are other recommendations to increase your likelihood of success throughout graduate school:

* Make your milestones, as outlined here. As an undergraduate, a student often has the freedom to go slow, to take 5 or 6 or 7 years to finish. You are expected to move through your graduate training on schedule because part of being a professional is being able to meet the many demands of professional life. Finish the Second-Year Paper by the end of your second summer. Advance to Candidacy by the end of your third summer. Finish your dissertation by your fourth or fifth summer. Although some variation in this timeline among students is expected, justifications for failing to make the milestones will be highly scrutinized.
* If an undergraduate did not think he or she would do well in a course, the student could just drop it. As a graduate student, dropping a course is generally strongly discouraged, especially if the reason is that the student is not doing well in the course. The courses that graduate students take are the ones the faculty has judged are essential for you to develop as a professional. If a graduate student has to drop a course, it calls into question whether the student can master the needed professional skills. Of course, there will always be exceptions to this, especially under extraordinary circumstances. If that is happening to you, go talk to your advisor, your course instructor, the graduate group chair or any faculty member you trust. They will likely be able to help you.

# 4. Academic Advising

## 4a. Faculty Advisor

A student is usually admitted to the Public Health graduate program with the intent of being mentored by a named Faculty Advisor. Upon entry, students are expected to immediately begin engagement in graduate study under the guidance of that Faculty Advisor. At the same time, the student is encouraged as early as possible to explore research interests and a possible focus for research, beginning with the Second Year Paper and culminating with the Dissertation, not only with the Faculty Advisor but also with a range of faculty within, and possibly outside, Public Health.

The Faculty Advisor must be a member of the Public Health Graduate Group. The student’s selection is approved by the Public Health Graduate Group Chair. The student and the Faculty Advisor will regularly interact and together develop research projects that will lead to a focus to be pursued in the student’s Doctoral Dissertation. The Faculty Advisor, in the role of a mentor, plans strategies that will support the development of required competencies and provides ongoing informal feedback regarding the student’s progress. In addition, the Faculty Advisor conducts a formal evaluation of the student’s progress in the program at least annually (see Section 10). Therefore, each graduate student must always have a recognized Faculty Advisor who agrees to take on this important role. A match in terms of research interests with a Faculty Advisor is crucial for progress towards the degree. The Faculty Advisor will normally serve as Chair of all the student’s committees, including the Faculty Advisory Committee, the Candidacy Committee, and the Dissertation Committee.

## 4b. Changing Faculty Advisor

The faculty recognizes that under certain circumstances there may be valid reasons for a graduate student to want to change Faculty Advisor. Examples may include lack of funding, personality conflict, changes in research interests, and resignation of the Faculty Advisor from the faculty. If a student requests a change in Faculty Advisor, the faculty members in the Public Health Graduate Group are expected to ensure a smooth transition that takes into account the needs of both the student and the faculty involved.

If assistantships or fellowships are connected to a specific faculty member, for example if a student is funded as a research assistant on the Advisor’s grant, a change of advisor may result in a change in or loss of financial support. Likewise, a change in research direction that is likely to result from a change of Faculty Advisor may result in increased time required to complete the PhD degree. Therefore, it is often useful for a student contemplating a change in Faculty Advisor to discuss this informally with one or more impartial faculty members, such as the Public Health Graduate Group Chair or other faculty in the Public Health Graduate Group.

When a student decides a change in Faculty Advisor is in their best interest, the student must obtain complete a change of advisor form and obtain signatures from both faculty (old and new), as well as Graduate Group Chair.

<https://graduatedivision.ucmerced.edu/sites/graduatedivision.ucmerced.edu/files/page/documents/changeofadvisor.pdf>

## 4c. Faculty Advisory Committee

Additional mentoring and/or guidance of a student are provided by a Faculty Advisory Committee, which is chaired by the Faculty Advisor. This Committee is established jointly by the Faculty Advisor and student, prior to the end of the spring semester of the 1st year in the program. The student and members of this Committee can meet as often as is desired to provide the appropriate mentoring and/or guidance. This Committee is also charged with formally evaluating the student’s progress in the Graduate Group at least annually, following the completion of each spring semester.

The Faculty Advisory Committee must include at least 3 faculty members: The Faculty Advisor and 2 other members of the Public Health Core *or* affiliated Group. It is expected that at least one member of the Faculty Advisory Committee will be tenured, either at the level of Associate or Full Professor. Members of the Faculty Advisory Committee may be replaced by agreement among the student, Faculty Advisor, and the committee member being replaced, or if such consensus is not possible, by vote of the faculty in the Public Health Department. The Faculty Advisory Committee will become the Candidacy Committee and, later, the Dissertation Committee, at the appropriate stage in the program. Regardless, a student will have a committee of faculty providing mentoring and/or guidance and conducting formal evaluations throughout the completion of the PhD degree.

See the Appendices for the Faculty Advisory Committee form. Fill it out and turn into the SSHA Graduate Specialist.

If committee members change, fill in a new form and turn in to the SSHA Graduate Specialist.

# 5. General Expectations

From time to time, faculty may request that graduate students assist in activities that facilitate the organizational functioning of the Graduate Group. Three key activities are:

1. Attending departmental seminars and events
2. Attending graduate student meetings when called by the Graduate Chair
3. Participating in new graduate recruitment activities, including the Visitation Weekend
4. Actively participating in maintaining and updating the departmental website

Examples of additional activities include serving on search committees, serving as a representative in graduate student governance organizations, and participating in outreach activities. Such service activities are voluntary, not required. Students doing such activities should include them in their annual evaluation reports.

In addition, graduate students are expected to make efforts to involve themselves in the wider intellectual community by attending regional and national professional conferences, and where possible presenting their own original research at these venues.

Graduate students should also discuss with their Faculty Advisor the advisability of participating in service and scholarly activities associated with professional associations. Examples would be serving as a reviewer for submitted paper proposals and serving on committees of those associations.

Graduate students are also strongly encouraged to seek grant funding to support their research. The UC Merced Graduate Division web site maintains a list of some such opportunities. Other examples include Ford Foundation Fellowships and NSF National Research Service Awards. NIH and AHRQ R36 dissertation awards are also encouraged for graduate students who are eligible (https://researchtraining.nih.gov/programs/research-education/R36).  
  
Finally, we encourage students to regularly discuss additional ways to be involved in the community with their Faculty Advisor. The above list is not meant to be exhaustive.

# 6. Coursework Requirements

The Public Health Graduate Group faculty has established a minimum requirement of 56 units of graduate (200 series) coursework for the PhD, which must be met during at least four semesters of full-time (defined as being enrolled in a minimum of 12 units) academic residence at UC Merced.

## 6a. Core Required Courses

## Typically, 24 of the 56 required units will come from six required core courses, shown in the table below.

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| Course Number | Course Name | Units |
| PH 201 | Foundations in PH | 4 |
| PH 202 | Epidemiology | 4 |
| PH 211 (Stats I) and PH 212 (Stats II) | PH Stats I and II | 8 |
| PH 203 | Research Methods | 4 |
| PH 208a & 208b (counted as 1 course taught over 2 semesters) | Professional seminar | 4 |

Students who have earned a Master of Public Health (MPH) or Master of Science in Public Health (MSPH) are automatically waived out of *PH 201: Foundations of Public Health*. These students also have the option of waiving out of other core courses if they have previously taken an equivalent course, and the following conditions are met:

* The content of the equivalent course has >80% overlap with the UC Merced course for which the waiver is requested. Course content overlap is assessed using the course syllabi provided with the request.
* The course has been taken within the last five years
* The course was completed with a B (or class GPA of 3.0) or higher

The waiver will NOT reduce the minimum number of course credits (i.e., 56) to be taken as part of the degree program. The process for a student to request a waiver is found within the Graduate Policies and Procedures Handbook.

Students must receive a passing grade (a B or higher) in all core courses. Students receiving a failing grade in these courses must repeat the course and receive a passing grade. Students may, in collaboration with their Faculty Advisor, determine the pace of coursework that is appropriate. However, the core requirements must be met in the first year of residence at UC Merced unless a required course is not offered during the first year. At least ten 4-unit courses (or 40 units), including all core required courses, must be completed before advancing to candidacy.

To ensure consistency in training, the following core courses cannot be waived:

* Epidemiology (PH 202)
* Research methods (PH 203)
* The Professionalization Seminar (PH 208a & 208b)

Students may petition the Graduate Group’s Education and Curriculum Committee to substitute a different statistics class or classes. Such a class or classes must cover some part of linear models and must be approved by the instructor of record of the statistics class(es) to be substituted.

In order to request a waiver of a formal core course requirement, students must follow the procedure below:

1. Submit a Waiver of Core Course Requirement Form (form 16g) together with a request letter to the Graduate Chair providing specific reasons why the waiver should be granted for each class requested. This initial request must include the syllabi of the class/es under consideration, transcript, and any other supporting materials relevant for the request. NOTE: submitted syllabi must include the original course outline that specifies class content.
2. The request should be submitted to the Graduate Chair during the first semester of the PhD program, and at least ten (10) ***business*** days prior to the add/drop deadline.
3. Students should attend all class sessions and complete coursework until they have received a written approval of their request.

The request is reviewed by the Graduate Chair, academic advisor, and the instructor of record. Together, they make the final decision. If deemed necessary, the student may be asked to take a one-time proficiency exam prior to granting the waiver. In such cases, a final score of 80% or more is required to pass. If the three do not agree, then the decision is turned over to the graduate group for a formal vote. No appeal is available for this waiver process.

## 6b. Advanced Methods and Substantive Courses

The remaining 32 (of 56) units will come from a combination of Advanced Methods courses and substantive/elective courses.

* Advanced Methods: One advanced methods course (4 units; choose from PH213 Advanced Biostatistics, PH215 Qualitative Methods, or PH2XX Evaluation)
* Substantive/elective courses: Seven courses (28 units), five of which must be taken within Public Health. Relevant Public Health courses that fall under this category include but are not limited to: PH204 Environmental Health, PH205 Health Services Research and Policy, PH216 Health Policy, PH206 Health Communication, PH207 Health Behavior Theory, PH220 Environmental Epi, PH209A/B Grant Writing, and PH290 (revolving topics). As the department grows, new course options will be introduced.
  + Additional Advanced Methods courses taken (beyond the one required) will count towards this requirement.
  + Two of the seven required substantive courses may be taken in departments outside Public Health. Credit will not be given for more than 2 courses taken outside of the Public Health department.
  + Directed reading courses (i.e., PH294 units) may count for up to 8 substantive course units if the following conditions are met:
    1. The coursework is facilitated by a Public Health faculty member (core or affiliate),
    2. A complete syllabus is prepared for the course, for submission to the Graduate Group’s Education and Curriculum Committee for approval before the last day of the Add/Drop period of the semester in which the course will be taken, and
    3. There is no equivalent formally approved course anticipated to be offered at UC Merced within the student’s first 3 years of study.
    4. To sign up for PH294 independent study credit, students should use the Independent Study form, available at: <https://registrar.ucmerced.edu/sites/registrar.ucmerced.edu/files/page/documents/independent_study_ay.pdf>). The “Graduate” option should be selected on the form, and PH294 can be indicated on the “other” line under “Specify one course number from the following.” Instructor permission can be obtained by attaching an approval email to the submission, which should be emailed to [registrar@ucmerced.edu](mailto:registrar@ucmerced.edu), copying the PH Graduate Specialist and [ssha.grad@ucmerced.edu](mailto:ssha.grad@ucmerced.edu).
  + PH295 research units may not count towards the 56 required units. It is expected that students will conduct research separate from their coursework as part of their doctoral training.
  + The Graduate Division requires that graduate students be enrolled in at least 12 units of upper division or graduate‐level units per semester. Registration in PH 295 (Graduate Research) or PH 297 (Dissertation Research) may be used to fill this requirement in any given semester, with permission from the faculty advisor.

Summary: 24 units of core coursework and 32 units of additional coursework (comprising advanced methods coursework and substantive courses) are required for a total of 56 units. Full-time students must enroll for 12 units per semester including research, academic and seminar units.  Per UC regulations, ordinarily students shall not receive credits for more than 12 units of graduate level courses per semester.

# 7. Second Year Research Paper

Research skills in Public Health are best acquired through hands-on participation in empirical science. Thus, before advancing to candidacy, graduate students are expected to complete the Second Year Research Paper, which consists of an empirical research project[[1]](#footnote-1) taken from the conceptualization stage, through design, data collection, analysis, and write-up. The student does not necessarily need not be the originator of the 2nd Year Paper research idea, but must be an active participant in all steps, and the write-up must be sole authored by the student; other authors may be added to a later published version of the paper, as appropriate, and the order of authorship on such a subsequent publication may change. The project should typically be completed by the end of the second year of study (typically the end of the Spring semester); it *must* be completed and submitted for review by the Faculty Advisory Committee prior to commencement of the 3rd year of the program (i.e., by the end of the summer following the 2nd year of graduate study), and prior to advancing to candidacy. If a full draft is not submitted by this time, the student will be required to convene a Faculty Advisory Committee meeting at the end of that fall semester and will receive an Unsatisfactory Progress or Potentially Unsatisfactory Progress evaluation.

Note that a Faculty Advisor may expect that a student is involved in other research than that leading to the completion of the Second Year Research Paper.

The Second Year Paper will be conducted in close collaboration with the Faculty Advisor; students should ensure that the Advisor concurs with decisions made at all stages of the project. The Second Year Paper will be evaluated by the members of the Faculty Advisory Committee (FAC). Upon submission of the final paper, the FAC have at least 14 but no more than 28 days to evaluate the paper and make a recommendation as to whether the 2nd year paper requirement has been satisfied. [Note: students are expected to give a brief presentation (10-15 minutes) of their Second Year Papers at August orientation of incoming doctoral students.]

The recommendation will be for the student to be awarded an MSPH and continue onto the pre-candidacy phase (PhD Pass), to be awarded an MSPH but not be recommended for the pre-candidacy phase (Master’s Pass), or to not be awarded an MSPH (Fail). In the event that the Second Year Paper is awarded a Masters Pass or a Fail, the student will be given the opportunity to revise the paper. A written request for revisions will be provided to the student. Students will be expected to undertake the requested revisions and resubmit the paper to the FAC within 6 weeks. The FAC will then re-evaluate the paper, and provide a revised assessment. In the event that the student and the FAC do not agree on the acceptability of the Second Year Paper, the Chair of the Public Health Graduate Group will make the final decision.

## 7a. Steps for obtaining the *Masters Along the Way*

The Public Health Graduate Program is designed for students interested in pursuing a PhD in Public Health. PhD students have the option to obtain a *Master of Science in Public Health* (MSPH) degree, either en route to a PhD degree or in lieu of a PhD degree if a student exits the graduate program prior to fulfilling the PhD requirements. The advancement-to-candidacy course requirements satisfy the course requirements for the MSPH degree. The Second Year Paper at the PhD Pass or Master’s Pass level will serve as the Master’s capstone project.

Requirements to receive the optional MSPH:

* Complete at least four semesters of academic residency at UCM
* Complete the core courses: PH201, PH202, PH 203, PH 208a, PH 208b, PH 211 and PH212
* Complete 4 elective courses (16 units of coursework), which can but are not required to include an Advanced Methods course
* Have a cumulative GPA no lower than 3.0
* Receive at least a Master’s level “pass” on the Second Year Paper

Students who choose the MSPH degree en route to their Ph.D. (non-terminal) need to complete the Graduate Division form *Final Report for Master’s Degree* following the successful completion the Spring semester of their 2nd year of study. All other MSPH requirements should have been met at this point and the MSPH degree will be awarded at the end of the Spring semester, provided they meet the above criteria. Links to the form and detailed instructions on how to submit it can be found in the Public Health Graduate Student Handbook.

Students must be advanced to candidacy for their Master’s degree prior to the beginning of the final semester of enrollment. An Application for Advancement to Candidacy initiated by the student and approved by the Graduate Group should be submitted to the Graduate Dean 30 days before the opening of the semester in which the degree is expected. The application must be accompanied by petitions for any course credits that have not already been approved by the Graduate Dean. The membership of the student’s Second-Year Paper committee must be included, and the Graduate Group chair, and the graduate student must sign the Statement of Conflict of Interest form, which is included in the Application. If the student has not advanced to candidacy prior to the beginning of the semester in which all requirements are completed, the degree will not be conferred until the end of the following semester. When the student is formally advanced to candidacy, the student and the Graduate Group are notified.

Information for the Master’s Along the Way is also provided on Graduate Division’s website (including required forms). The steps to obtain the Masters are below.

Students who opt for a terminal MSPH degree in lieu of the PhD degree should inform their Faculty Advisor and the Graduate Group Chair of this decision prior to the start of their terminal semester (typically the Spring Semester of their 2nd year). Students must complete the relevant portions of the Graduate Division form “Application for Advancement to Candidacy” at this time.

**Step 1.** File the Final Report for Master’s Degree Form

* + Form can be found on Graduate Division website under “*Forms*”: <https://graduatedivision.ucmerced.edu/faculty-staff-resources/forms-publications>

Submit via email to Graduate Services at [gradservices@ucmerced.edu](mailto:gradservices@ucmerced.edu)

* + Copy the Graduate Chair and Graduate Specialist (Pakou Thao, [pthao29@ucmerced.edu](mailto:pthao29@ucmerced.edu))

**Step 2.** Obtain the signed signature page (get the blank form from Pakou/the Graduate Specialist) and submit a signed, hard-copy signature page to Graduate Services in SSB 310

\* Only wet signatures are accepted.

**Step 3.** Upload **approved** project onto E-scholars

* + Go to the link <https://escholarship.org/uc/ssha_phc>
    - * Click on the “*Deposit*” button on the right hand-side
        + Select “*Public Health Capstone Projects”*

**Step 4.** Complete the electronic Advancement to Candidacy Link.

Once all the required steps are completed, Graduate Services will notify you via email to request the electronic link to Advance to Candidacy for the Masters from your program specialist (Pakou); forward the email confirmation from Graduate Services to Pakou if not already CC’ed.

*\*Please note, this process may take two to four weeks.*

Requesting electronic **Advance to Candidacy for Masters** link -

* Select “PhD” under student type if you will be continuing your PhD
* Select “MS”, under Degree
* Select “Project”, under Master’s Plan Option

**Step 5.** Complete the Graduate Student Graduation Application

Once Graduate Services confirmed your Advancement to Candidacy has been approved, complete the **Graduate Student Graduation Application** –

<https://mystudentrecord.ucmerced.edu/pls/PROD/bwskgrad.p_disp_grad_term>

Please take note of the important deadlines regarding graduate application which can be found here: <https://registrar.ucmerced.edu/policies/graduation>.

If you have additional questions regarding the graduation commencement, please visit <https://commencement.ucmerced.edu/>.

# 8. Teaching Requirements

The Public Health PhD program presents numerous opportunities for graduate students to gain teaching experience. To ensure that students acquire a range of relevant experiences, serving as a teaching assistant (TA) is a requirement for earning the PhD. A student meets the teaching requirement by serving as a TA for *no less than two semesters*. This does not need to be through a funded teaching assistantship but can be as a volunteer.

As the TA for the course, you are responsible for performing teaching or teaching-related duties to assist the instructor in the course. You should expect to devote up to 20 hours per week, on average, sometimes more in any given week, sometimes less. When working as a TA, here are the expectations:

1. You are expected to attend all classes baring illness, emergency or prearranged absence such as conference participation. Failure to attend AT LEAST 80% of classes will be reported on end of term evaluations.
2. In class, demonstrate respectful behavior (e.g., do not interrupt the class, do not present information to the class without the instructor’s approval).
3. Meet with the instructor on a regular basis (weekly or bi-weekly) to discuss assignments, internal deadlines, and other course-related topics. The instructor will provide information and guidance on internal deadlines for administrative, grading, and other assigned tasks. It is important to discuss and adhere to internal deadlines established with the instructor. Internal deadlines are different than external deadlines (i.e., those communicated to students).
4. Requests for modified schedules must be approved by both the supervising instructor and Graduate Group Chair.
5. Office hours:
   1. You are expected to hold office hours at the times and amount requested by your supervising instructor.
   2. Office hours should be held ON SITE (not via video) and be accessible for students (e.g., not at 7 am).
6. Failure to grade in a timely manner or meet grade entry deadlines will result in a negative evaluation.
7. You are responsible for meeting the expectations of your supervising instructor for the class to which you are assigned. The following list is representative of possible duties and responsibilities of a TA; however, the list is not exhaustive nor are all TAs responsible for all these tasks. Requests might include:
   1. Tracking and recording student class attendance
   2. Maintain the course website, including posting assignments, reviewing discussions, and entering grades as assigned
   3. Receive and promptly respond to students regarding inquiries about grades, assignments, attendance, and course material. Refer to the instructor as needed.
   4. Evaluate student performance by grading assignments, presentations, and exams with guidance from the instructor. Some assignments may need to be completed on campus (e.g., grading midterms with student ID information) as requested by the instructor.
   5. Obtain materials needed for classes, including textbooks or other materials (i.e., peer-reviewed articles).
   6. Develop course curriculum such as prepare presentations and deliver lectures.
   7. Plan, schedule, and facilitate review sessions as requested by the instructor.
   8. Hand out assignments or materials in-class.
   9. Proctor examinations.
   10. Record grades using a grade book or another format as requested by the instructor.
8. Demonstrate respect to and collaborate with the instructor in and out of the classroom.

At the beginning of a semester, it is important for a TA to communicate any dates during the semester when he/she will not be available due to a reasonable excuse (e.g., conference attendance, medical appointment, family responsibility, etc.). If a scheduling conflict arises during the semester, it is the TA’s responsibility to communicate the conflict to the instructor as soon as possible and to identify an alternative arrangement that is acceptable.

Students who have advanced to candidacy may also satisfy two semesters of serving as a TA by teaching one full course of their own design (see below). It is expected that many students will, in fact, exceed these minimums and thus accrue even more teaching experience. A student may request a waiver of the TA requirement, partially or completely, by petitioning his/her Faculty Advisory Committee that they have completed an alternative equivalent teaching experience (e.g., TA at prior institution, community college instructor).

After advancing to candidacy (i.e., passing the Candidacy Exam), a student may serve as Teaching Associate (the Instructor of Record) for pay. Having advanced to candidacy, however, does not guarantee an assignment as a Teaching Associate or Fellow as this depends on the availability of courses to teach. Moreover, to be prepared to serve as a Teaching Associate or Fellow and teach a full course in Public Health, the student *must* complete and pass the Teaching Preparation option of the Candidacy Exam.

Teaching a course is a significant investment of time and effort and yields corresponding gains in acquiring relevant skills. Therefore, teaching a full course can fulfill the equivalent of 2 semesters of TA activity; that is, a student who teaches a full course as a Teaching Associate or Fellow fulfills the teaching requirement.

The Graduate Division has several rules that affect when a graduate student may serve as a Teaching Associate or a Teaching Fellow. The graduate student will typically be a Teaching Associate or Fellow for a lower division course. However, on an exception basis[[2]](#footnote-2), a graduate student, upon recommendation from an academic unit, may be assigned an upper-division course or course section with the written approval of the Graduate Dean and the UCM Academic Senate’s Undergraduate Council. Such approval must be obtained in writing prior to the student beginning their assignment/appointment. A graduate student will also typically be a Teaching Associate or Fellow for a summer course so as not to unduly interfere with their academic year studies. Again, however, exceptions may be granted. Finally, Graduate Division rules limit graduate students to 8 semesters as a Teaching Assistant or Teaching Associate prior to advancement to candidacy, and to no more than 4 additional semesters in those capacities after advancement to candidacy, for a maximum of 12 semesters.

# 9. Sample Program

The goals and needs of individual students vary considerably, and no single plan will accommodate all students. Therefore, the following program of study should be considered as a general guide only. In particular, the following example illustrates a 5-year program of study, which may not be appropriate for all students.

|  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Sample Plan of Study for a Public Health Graduate Student** | | | | | |
|  | **Fall Semester** | **Units** | **Spring Semester** | **Units** | **Summer** |
| **Year One** | * PH 201: Foundations in Public Health * PH 203: Research Methods in Public Health * PH 211: Stats I * PH 208a: Professionalization Seminar | 4  4  4  2 | * PH 212 Statistics II * PH 202: Epidemiology * PH 2XX Elective or Topical Area Requirement * PH 208b: Professionalization Seminar   *First Year Review* | 4  4  4  2 | Research for 2nd year thesis |
| **Year Two** | * PH 204: Environmental Health * PH 210a: Grant writing seminar * PH 2XX: Elective or Topical Area Requirement |  | * PH 2XX: Elective or Advanced Methods Requirement * PH 210b: Grant writing seminar * PH 2XX: Elective or Topical Area Requirement   *Turn in 2nd Year Thesis\**  *Second Year Review* |  | Summer Research experience (with faculty, community, gov) |
| **Year Three** | * PH 2XX: Elective or Advanced Research Methods * Prepare for the Qualifying Examination * Formulate a Candidacy Committee |  | * Qualifying Examination * Work on Dissertation Proposal   *Third Year Review* |  | Work on Dissertation Proposal |
| **Year Four** | * PH 297: Dissertation Research * Dissertation Proposal Defense * Advance to Candidacy |  | * PH 297: Dissertation Research   *Fourth Year Review* |  |  |
| **Year Five** | * PH 297: Dissertation Research |  | * PH 297: Dissertation Research * Dissertation should be completed and defended by the end of the spring semester.   *Fifth Year Review* |  |  |

\*Terminal MSPH students depart at the end of their 2nd year

# 10. Advising Structure and Mentoring

A graduate student is expected to have a faculty advisor at all times during their graduate studies. The graduate chair is the default academic advisor for all incoming doctoral students.  It is the responsibility of the student to secure a Faculty Advisor by the end of the spring semester of the first year. The Faculty Advisor must be a member of the Public Health Graduate Group. The student’s selection is approved by the Public Health Graduate Group Chair. The student and the Faculty Advisor will regularly interact and together develop research projects that will lead to a focus to be pursued in the student’s Doctoral Dissertation. The Faculty Advisor, in the role of a mentor, plans strategies that will support the development of required competencies and provides ongoing informal feedback regarding the student’s progress. In addition, the Faculty Advisor conducts a formal evaluation of the student’s progress in the program at least annually. Therefore, each graduate student must always have a recognized Faculty Advisor who agrees to take on this important role. The Faculty Advisor is Chair of the student’s FAC and oversees the student’s progress in the doctoral program.

The Public Health program has adopted the Graduate Council-approved Mentoring Guidelines, which can be found at <https://senate.ucmerced.edu/sites/senate.ucmerced.edu/files/page/documents/ucm_mentoring_guidelines-_gc_approved_9_23_14.pdf>. For additional U.C. Merced resources on conflict resolution, consult the materials found on the university’s Conflict and Crisis Resolution website (part of the Office of Campus Climate) at <https://conflict.ucmerced.edu/>, and on the Office of Student Rights and Responsibilities website (<https://osrr.ucmerced.edu/>).

## 10a. Doctoral Degree Committees

Faculty Advisory Committee (FAC)

Mentoring and/or guidance of a student are provided by a Faculty Advisory Committee (FAC). This Committee is established jointly by the Faculty Advisor and student, during the fall semester of the 2nd year in the program. The student and members of this Committee should meet once per semester, at a minimum, to provide the appropriate mentoring and/or guidance. This Committee is also charged with formally evaluating the student’s progress in the Graduate Group at least annually, following the completion of each spring semester. The FAC must include at least 3 faculty members: It is expected that at least one member of the FAC will be tenured, either at the level of Associate or Full Professor. At least 2 of the committee members must be Public Health Graduate Group core faculty. Members of the FAC may be replaced by agreement among the student and Faculty Advisor. It is the responsibility of the student to notify the committee member being replaced. The FAC oversees the second-year paper, advancement to candidacy and dissertation research and writing.

Second-year paper stage

At the second-year paper stage, the FAC is charged with advising on and evaluating the student’s second-year paper. The Committee is tasked with awarding either a PhD Pass, Master’s Pass, or Fail. In the event that the 2nd year paper is awarded a Masters Pass or a Fail, the FAC will evaluate the revised paper.

Candidacy stage

At the Candidacy stage, the FAC is charged with determining the readiness of the student to proceed with the Doctoral Dissertation. In addition to evaluating the student's Qualifying Examinations, the FAC reviews the student's GPA, second-year paper evaluations, and annual reviews, which include evaluations from faculty. After a successful review and assurance that all other program requirements have been completed, the FAC recommends the student for advancement to candidacy.Typically, the Candidacy-stage FAC will include some or all the faculty the student expects to include on their doctoral-stage FAC.

To formally convene the Candidacy-stage FAC, the student should initially propose the Committee membership to her/his Faculty Advisor, who will typically serve as Chair; if approved by the advisor, the student should contact the desired members and invite them to join the Candidacy-stage FAC. Students should be aware that faculty members may in some instances be unable or unwilling to serve. The members of each student’s Candidacy-stage FAC are approved by the Chair of the Public Health Graduate Group and the Dean of Graduate Studies prior to the Qualifying Examinations. The membership of the student’s Candidacy-stage FAC is listed on the Graduate Division form *Application For Qualifying Examination* (available at <https://graduatedivision.ucmerced.edu/faculty-staff-resources/forms-publications>)

Doctoral thesis stage

The Doctoral-stage FAC (D-FAC) is chaired by the Candidate’s Faculty Advisor. The remaining Doctoral-stage FAC members are nominated by the Candidacy Committee with the concurrence of the candidate, the doctoral committee Chair, and the Graduate Group Chair or designee, as part of the advancement-to-candidacy process. The D-FAC must be composed of no less than three members of the Public Health Graduate Group. An additional outside member (e.g. of another UC Merced Graduate Group or from another university) can serve as a member if approved by the other members of the committee, the Chair of the Graduate Group, and the Graduate Division. The Candidate should initially propose a D-FAC to her/his Faculty Advisor; if supported by the advisor, the Candidate should contact the desired members and invite them to join the Committee. Candidates should be aware that faculty members may in some instances be unable or unwilling to serve. The composition of the D-FAC is formalized through an electronically-submitted form available from the Public Health Graduate Specialist.

The D-FAC may differ in membership from the Candidacy-stage FAC (and earlier FAC incarnations) to accommodate changes in the Candidate’s research interests and available faculty expertise. Changes to the composition of the D-FAC *after* its initial formation must be approved by the Faculty Advisor, the Public Health Graduate Group faculty, and the Graduate Division.

Changing Committee Members

When changing committee members during or after their 2nd year of the doctoral program, students should fill out a new *Faculty Advisory Committee Appointment Form* (see Appendices) and turn in to the SSHA Graduate Specialist.

# 11. Annual Review Process

Student progress will be evaluated on an annual basis. To this end, the student prepares a cumulative Progress Report prior to the end of the spring semester. The Progress Report must be reviewed by the student’s Faculty Advisory Committee (FACC, which is chaired by the Faculty Advisor. At this meeting, feedback is provided to the student both orally and in writing. Annual Faculty Review continues until the student has completed an approved Doctoral Dissertation. A fall semester Progress Report and student/FAC meeting (taking place in December or early January) may be convened in any year by request of the student, Faculty Advisor, or other member of the FAC. A fall semester Progress Report and FAC meeting *must* be conducted if the student has previously received an Unsatisfactory or Potentially Unsatisfactory evaluation, has not submitted their 2nd year thesis by the required deadline, or has failed their 2nd year thesis, Qualifying Exam, or Dissertation Proposal.

As part of each student’s annual review, a determination must be made whether the student’s progress on the whole is More Than Satisfactory, Satisfactory, Potentially Unsatisfactory, or Unsatisfactory. This determination is then clearly communicated in written form and signed by the faculty member(s) who completed the review. The student also signs the evaluation indicating understanding of the evaluation and is given one copy. The original is placed in the student’s file.

* *More Than Satisfactory Progress*: An evaluation of More Than Satisfactory academic progress is reserved for students whose progress has substantially exceeded expectations appropriate for their stage in the program, as determined from the student’s recent academic record and overall performance. Students whose progress is within range of normative expectations should be given a determination of Satisfactory Progress.
* *Satisfactory Progress*: Satisfactory progress is determined based on both the student’s recent academic record and overall performance. Satisfactory Progress is more than simply avoiding displaying any of the specific behaviors listed below as indicative of Unsatisfactory Progress. It is a subjective judgment made by the Faculty Advisor and members of the FAC based on the quality, quantity, and timeliness of performance in research as well as the other activities described in the Graduate Student Handbook. The Faculty Advisor is expected to communicate their standards in these respects on a continual basis. These standards also provide the framework for the Annual Reviews.
* *Potentially Unsatisfactory Progress*: Potentially unsatisfactory progress is *in part* determined with reference to the Unsatisfactory Progress criteria. Students deemed at risk of meeting ≥1 of these criteria may be judged as making potentially unsatisfactory progress.
* *Unsatisfactory Progress*: Unsatisfactory academic progress is *in part* determined based on explicit requirements, including those outlined in the UC Merced Graduate Division’s *Graduate Policies & Procedures Handbook* (Sect. VI.A.2.1) and reproduced here:
  + An overall grade point average below 3.0; or
  + A grade point average below 3.0 in two successive semesters; or
  + Fewer than 8 units completed and applicable toward the advanced degree requirements in the last two semesters; or
  + Failure to complete required courses or examinations satisfactorily within the period specified by the Graduate Group; or
  + Failure to pass Candidacy or Dissertation Final Examination in two attempts; or
  + Failure to progress academically within the Normal Time to Degree framework specified for the student’s Graduate Group; or
  + The appropriate faculty committee’s evaluation that there has not been satisfactory progress toward completion of the thesis or dissertation.

Note, however, that the professional judgment of the faculty assigned the role to evaluate the student, upon review of all graduate work undertaken by that student, *is paramount*. Faculty may establish more

restrictive criteria than the above minimum criteria.

A judgment of Unsatisfactory Progress can have significant negative consequences for a graduate student. A student who has a GPA less than 3.0 in a single semester is at risk of being disqualified from getting an assistantship unless the employing unit wants them to continue to be employed; in that case, the Graduate Group Chair asks the Dean of the Graduate Division to make an exception. A student who has a D or F in a single course is disqualified from getting an assistantship. A grade of C in a single course is disqualifying unless the employing unit wants them to continue to be employed; in that case, the Graduate Group Chair asks the Dean of the Graduate Division to make an exception. A graduate student who has not demonstrated satisfactory academic progress by any of the other criteria listed above is not eligible for any academic appointment or employment, such as a Teaching Assistantship, and may not receive fellowship support or other awards. The Graduate Division delegates the monitoring of student performance regarding these rules to the Graduate Group and the Registrar.

## 11a. Communication of Potentially Unsatisfactory Progress

Students should be given early warning of potentially unsatisfactory progress. The Annual Review specified above is a minimum. In addition, Faculty Advisors are encouraged to be direct in communicating orally, and in writing as necessary, with students demonstrating difficulties as soon as possible and on a continual basis. For example, course instructors are encouraged to engage in this communication, and to inform the Faculty Advisor when a student is experiencing difficulties during a course, and not wait until the end.

When notices of potential unsatisfactory progress are provided in writing to the student, the written communication should include specific details on areas that require improvement, provide an outline for future expectations of academic progress, and set meeting dates to maintain continuity in advisement. The purpose of the notice of potentially unsatisfactory progress is to provide the student with a reasonable period of time (usually at least one academic semester) in which to make the necessary improvement in their academic status, and successfully complete their graduate study.

In the case of a formal determination of Potentially Unsatisfactory Progress following an Annual Review, criteria must be specified in writing detailing what the student will need to achieve to be removed from this status and the timetable for doing so. This is included in the written feedback provided to the student as part of the formal review. Whenever a student has been deemed to make Potentially Unsatisfactory Progress, the student’s whole FAC needs to review progress at the end of the subsequent semester and determine status at that time. The professional judgment of the FAC, upon review of all graduate work undertaken by that student, is paramount in determining whether the student can or cannot be removed from Potentially Unsatisfactory Progress status. While it is expected that the Faculty Advisor will communicate with the student when in this status to provide guidance and feedback on efforts to meet the specified criteria, it is ultimately the student’s responsibility to achieve progress that can be deemed Satisfactory Progress.

Disqualification based on Unsatisfactory Progress

The process for disqualifying a student based on a determination of Unsatisfactory Progress is described in the Graduate Division Policies & Procedures handbook, which can be found at <https://graduatedivision.ucmerced.edu/current-students/policies-procedures>.

Student Appeals Procedures

Per the Regulations of the Academic Senate Merced Division, a student who is subject to an impending academic disqualification has 30 calendar days (from the date of the Graduate Dean's Notification of Impending Academic Disqualification) to respond in writing to the recommendation for disqualification. Student appeals will be considered only if based upon appropriate cause, such as: (1) procedural error; (2) judgments based on non-academic criteria; (3) apparent personal bias; (4) specific mitigating circumstances affecting academic performance; or (5) discrimination on the basis of race, religion, sex or other protected status. More details on the appeals process are provided in the Graduate Division Policies & Procedures Handbook.

# 12. Qualifying Examinations and Advancement to Candidacy

Graduate students are considered resident graduates, not candidates for a degree, unless admitted to candidacy by the Graduate Division after formal application and satisfactory completion of candidacy requirements. Candidacy requirements comprise:

* Demonstrating a high level of scholarship in full-time study (a minimum of 12 units per semester including research hours) at the PhD level, for at least 4 semesters,
* Completing at least ten 4-unit courses (or 40 units), including:
  + All core required courses (24 units),
  + At least four elective courses (or 16 units),
* A minimum cumulative grade point average of 3.0,
* Passing the Qualifying Exam, which demonstrates readiness to proceed to the dissertation phase.

The Qualifying Exam must be administered by the FAC (candidacy stage) during the 3rd year of graduate study. Failure to do so must be addressed in the student’s next review, which must then involve the student’s entire FAC. Students should submit the Graduate Division’s *Application for Qualifying Examination* form (available at <https://graduatedivision.ucmerced.edu/faculty-staff-resources/forms-publications>), with all committee members’ signatures, at least one month prior to the completion of the Qualifying Exam. In the event that the student does not pass their qualifying examinations in the Spring of his or her third year, he/she may retake them one time prior to the beginning of the 4th year of graduate study.

Qualifying Examinations are intended to determine whether the student possesses the knowledge and skills needed to successfully complete a dissertation research project in their chosen areas of interest. The Qualifying Exam in Public Health consists of proposing, completing, and orally defending a substantial research paper in the student’s chosen topical area. Completion of the written paper constitutes the written portion of the Qualifying Exam. This paper shall represent a review of the student’s topical area and prepare the student for the dissertation research, and be of *publishable quality*. As such the paper must be novel and advance knowledge in the field. It is expected to be longer than a typical course or seminar paper at 35 to 45 double-spaced pages in length, not counting references (11 or 12 pt. font, 1-inch margin). The student is encouraged to connect this paper to the planned dissertation, such that it creates the foundation for and serves in part as the background and rationale for the Dissertation Proposal. [Note: The Qualifying Exam paper is *not* a section of the dissertation.]

As a written exam, the qualifying paper must be solely authored by the student when submitted to the FAC. After completion of the Qualifying Exam, other authors may be added to a later version for submission for publication, as appropriate. Before writing the Qualifying Paper, the student must prepare and obtain approval for a proposal of the paper of approximately 5-8 double spaced pages (not including references, 11 or 12 pt. font, 1-inch margins). This typically follows a process of discussions with the Faculty Advisor to ensure appropriate direction. The proposal should present the objectives of the Qualifying Paper, the rationale for why the topic is novel and will contribute to knowledge in a field, and an outline of the sections planned for the Qualifying Paper, including a list of the most relevant references. The proposal is disseminated to the members of the FAC who then meet with the student as a committee to discuss the proposal. The proposal must be approved by the FAC before the student commences writing the paper. Plan for the process to develop the proposal and the paper to take several months. Plan for the equivalent of three months of full-time work to be needed to complete the Qualifying Paper, after the proposal has been accepted by the FAC.

There is also an oral portion of the exam. The FAC has at least 14 but no more than 28 days to review the Qualifying Paper, and then meets with the student for the oral portion of the examination, in accordance with university and graduate group requirements. The student should schedule a minimum 2-hour block of time for the meeting. During the oral exam, at the discretion of the FAC, the student may first present a brief (20-30 minute) overview of the paper. The FAC will then discuss the subject addressed in the review with the student. The student is expected to be able to answer questions on all aspects of the subject to the satisfaction of the FAC. Following the completion of the oral exam, the FAC makes a recommendation whether to pass the student on the Qualifying Exam. The FAC recommendation is by unanimous vote, leading to one of the following recommendations:

1. *Pass*: Oral and written portions of the Qualifying Exam are passed, and the student may Advance to Candidacy.
2. *Minor Revisions*: The oral portion of the Qualifying Exam is passed, and the written portion passed pending minor revisions, which must be approved by the Faculty Advisor and any Committee member wishing to review such changes. The timeline for revisions will be determined by the FAC at the time the decision is made.
3. *Major Revisions***:** The oral or written portion of the Qualifying Exam is not passed. The student must revise the Qualifying Paper considering any FAC feedback and resubmit the paper within 6 weeks to make and submit those revisions, and the FAC will then have at least 14 but no more than 28 days to review the revisions. A second oral exam must then be held with the student, after which the FAC makes a recommendation on whether to pass the student on the Qualifying Exam. A failure to oral pass either the written or oral portion of this second exam must be addressed in the student’s next Review Progress Report (see below), which must then involve the student’s entire FAC. Any further examination must have the approval of the Graduate Dean.

When the Qualifying Exam is passed, both the written and oral portions, the student is recommended for Advancement to Candidacy as reported to the Graduate Division on the *Qualifying Examination Report* (https://graduatedivision.ucmerced.edu/faculty-staff-resources/forms-publications)*.* This form must be signed by all FAC members. This form is also submitted if the student failed the examination. If the recommendation of the FAC is favorable, the student must file the appropriate paperwork (*Advance to Candidacy for the Degree of Doctor Philosophy Form* and *Conflict of Interest Form*) with the Graduate Division and pay the candidacy fee in order to be officially promoted to Ph.D. Candidacy.

# 13. Dissertation

The Doctoral Dissertation is the culmination of the PhD program, in which the Doctoral Candidate demonstrates the capability to conduct research independently that makes an original contribution to knowledge of a quality that can be published in a reputable scientific journal. The planning and completion of the Dissertation is supervised by the Doctoral Committee Chair, who usually is the Candidate’s Faculty Advisor. The student’s Doctoral Committee approves the Dissertation proposal and evaluates whether the Dissertation has been completed in accordance with high scientific standards.

In overview, the dissertation process starts with the establishment of the Doctoral Committee (DC), which is done when recording Advancement to Candidacy. The Doctoral Candidate submits a dissertation proposal to the DC and defends the proposal at an oral Proposal Defense meeting. This should usually be done within six months of Advancing to Candidacy. If the proposal is passed by the DC, the student undertakes and completes the proposed research. Having completed the research, the student must submit a final written Dissertation to the DC, and defend the Dissertation at an oral defense meeting, which constitutes the Final Examination for the PhD at the conclusion of the oral defense, the DC votes on whether to approve the Dissertation. These stages are presented in more detail below.

## 13a. Dissertation Proposal

The Dissertation Proposal (DP) serves three primary functions. First, it reviews the relevant literature and in so doing defines the area of inquiry of the proposed Dissertation. The Qualifying Exam paper is intended to enable the preparation of this portion. Second, it provides a clear statement of actionable research aims, questions, and/or hypotheses that will be addressed in the Dissertation. Third, it outlines the methodological and analytic approach that will enable the proposed research to address these aims, questions, and/or hypotheses.

The DP should be approximately 20 double-spaced pages, not including references and appendices. The Candidate works with the Faculty Advisor until the latter deems the DP of enough quality to pass to the DC. DC members should make every effort to provide such feedback in a timely fashion but should inform the student promptly if they will be unable to provide such informal feedback. When the finalized DP is submitted, the DC should have at least 7 but no more than 14 days in which to review the DP prior to the Proposal Defense Meeting.

## 13b. Proposal Defense Meeting

The Candidate must consult with the DC to schedule the Proposal Defense Meeting, at which all members of the committee must be present in person (or via conference call under extenuating circumstances such as a DC member being on sabbatical or off-site). The Candidate should schedule a minimum 2-hour block of time for the meeting.

At the Proposal Defense Meeting, the Candidate will present an overview of the proposal research. The DC will then discuss the proposed research with the Candidate. At the conclusion of the Proposal Defense Meeting, the Candidate will be asked to leave, and the DC will deliberate on whether to pass the proposal. The DC recommendation is by majority vote with no more than one dissenting vote, leading to one of the following recommendations:

*Pass*: The proposal is passed, and the Candidate may commence with the proposed research.

*Minor Revisions*: The proposal is passed pending minor revisions, which upon completion must be approved by the Faculty Advisor and any DC member wishing to review such changes.

*Major Revisions***:** The proposal is not passed because major substantive or methodological issues need to be addressed. The Candidate must revise the proposal considering committee feedback and resubmit the proposal within three months. At that time, the Candidate must reschedule the Proposal Defense Meeting and complete it satisfactorily before undertaking any dissertation research. Failure to complete it satisfactorily at a second defense must be addressed in the student’s next Biannual Review, which must then involve the student’s entire Faculty Advisory Committee and will potentially result in an Unsatisfactory Progress evaluation.

## 13d. Dissertation

Following successful defense of the Dissertation Proposal, the Doctoral Candidate undertakes and completes the proposed research under the supervision of the DC.

Although there are no set criteria for dissertation length or content, students are expected to produce a body of work that contains a thorough review of the literature, theoretical innovations, novel data collection and/or analysis, and at least three substantive chapters. One of two formats is typically used. Dissertations should be convertible to one book or three related, but separable articles. The format of the Dissertation manuscript should be approved by all members of the DC, subject to any requirements by the Public Health Graduate Group, the Graduate School, and the University Archives. Candidates prepare the manuscript under the supervision of the Faculty Advisor who requests revisions until s/he judges that the work is ready to be reviewed by the remaining DC members. For additional details regarding expectations, see the [UC Merced Thesis and Dissertation Guidelines](https://graduatedivision.ucmerced.edu/sites/graduatedivision.ucmerced.edu/files/documents/PDFs/ucm_thesis_dissertation_manual.pdf).

Once the dissertation document is complete in the opinion of the student and his or her Faculty Advisor, the Candidate circulates the Dissertation among DC members allowing for a reasonable time frame for the DC to read and review. The DC should provide comments, possibly leading to another revision before the final submission and the scheduling of the Dissertation Defense. DC members should provide these comments in a timely fashion. The complete Dissertation must be provided to the DC members at least 14 days prior to the scheduled defense.

## 13e. Final Examination (Dissertation Defense)

Once all members of the DC have read the dissertation and agreed that it is ready to be defended, the student is expected to negotiate with the members of the DC and schedule a date and time for the defense. Announcement of the oral defense time and location will be made in appropriate forums such as an email list serve or a Public Health bulletin board. All members of the DC must attend the thesis defense in person (or via conference call or videoconference under extenuating circumstances such as a DC member being at a distant site).

The defense of the Dissertation is a capstone event in the student’s graduate career. It consists of an oral presentation of the Dissertation research by the candidate, followed by questions. This portion of the defense is open to the public. The Candidate is tasked with responding to the questions clearly and coherently.

At the conclusion of the public portion of the defense, the Candidate and DC will dismiss the public in order to discuss the dissertation in private. At the conclusion of the committee questions, the Candidate is excused, and the DC deliberates on the quality of the written dissertation and the student’s performance during the defense. The committee makes one of the following recommendations:

*Pass*: The dissertation and defense are of enough quality to warrant the awarding of a PhD degree from the University of California. The committee recommendation for passage must be unanimous.

*Minor Revisions*: The Dissertation is passed pending minor revisions, which upon completion must be approved by the Faculty Advisor and any DC member wishing to review such changes. Upon approval the Candidate is awarded the PhD

*Major Revisions***:** The Dissertation is not passed because major substantive or methodological issues need to be addressed. The Candidate must revise the Dissertation considering DC feedback and resubmit the Dissertation within 6 weeks. At that time, the Candidate must reschedule the Proposal Defense Meeting and complete it satisfactorily to receive a recommendation of Pass.

If the Doctoral Committee recommends awarding the PhD degree, Committee members must sign the *Final Report for the PhD Degree* (available at https://graduatedivision.ucmerced.edu/faculty-staff-resources/forms-publications), the conferral of the PhD, subject to final submission of the approved Dissertation for deposit in the University Archives (see *Graduate Policies & Procedures Handbook,* Sect. VII.B.8, available at https://graduatedivision.ucmerced.edu/current-students/policies-procedures).

# 14. Normative Time to Degree

While time to completion of the degree will vary, a general expectation is that students will complete the majority of their course work and complete the Second Year Research Thesis by the end of their 2nd year, pass their Qualifying Exam by the end of the 3rd year, pass their Dissertation Proposal and Defense by the middle of the 4th year, and defend their dissertation in their 5th year of study.

# 15. Policies Regarding Transfer Students

Courses taken toward a graduate degree at another institution cannot be transferred for credit toward a Ph.D. at UC Merced. However, a course requirement may be waived if a similar course was taken at another institution. This course waiver process is outlined by the Graduate Division and can be found here: <https://graduatedivision.ucmerced.edu/current-students/policies-procedures>

# 16. Procedures for Requesting a Waiver of a Formal Requirement

All requirements outlined in this document must be met by graduate students before the Dissertation Committee will pass the Dissertation and recommend the awarding of the Doctoral Degree. However, under some circumstances, the student may believe that circumstances have made a requirement included in this document unnecessarily burdensome. Under such circumstances, the student may request that requirement be waived or modified. Doing so requires drafting a request letter, which must provide specific reasons why the waiver or modification should be granted. The request should be discussed with and must then be approved by the Faculty Advisor. If approved by the Advisor, the request must be approved by the Public Health Graduate Group or designated graduate sub-committee. In the event that the change involves a candidacy or Dissertation requirement, approval must also be granted by the relevant Candidacy or Dissertation committee. There is no guarantee that requests will be granted.

If the Faculty Advisor does not approve a request for a waiver of a formal requirement, the student may appeal the request to the appropriate committee or to the Public Health Graduate Group faculty. However, students would be well-advised to consult with other faculty prior to filing such an appeal to determine if an appeal has grounds and a likelihood of success.

# 17. Sources of Funding

Public Health graduate students are typically funded through a combination of teaching assistant positions, externally-funded graduate student researcher (GSR) positions, and internal or external fellowships. Graduate students who meet the criteria for appointment may be employed in teaching services (as a Teaching Assistant or a Teaching Fellow) for up to 12 semesters (summer appointments are excluded from these limits). Graduate students are typically guaranteed a certain number of semesters of TA positions (e.g., 8) upon admission to the program, although this may change as UC Merced funding opportunities evolve. Individual faculty members with external grants (e.g., through the National Institutes of Health) may support graduate students on those grants through GSR positions. Students may also be nominated or apply for internal UC Merced fellowships (see <https://graduatedivision.ucmerced.edu/funding/internal>) or external fellowships from [NIH](https://www.nih.gov/), the [Robert Wood Johnson Foundation](https://www.rwjf.org/), the California [Tobacco-Related Disease Research Program](https://www.trdrp.org/), and other funding entities. The Public Health Graduate Group strongly encourages students to apply for such internal and external fellowships; the program offers an annual grant-writing class that supports students in crafting fellowship applications.

Following advancement to candidacy, doctoral students who are not California residents will have their Nonresident Tuition reduced by 100 percent for a maximum of three consecutive calendar years. Any such student who continues to be enrolled or who re-enrolls after receiving the reduced fee for three years will be charged the full Nonresident Tuition that is in effect at that time. However, there are exceptions to this policy for unusual circumstances; please refer to the Graduate Policies and Procedures Handbook at <https://graduatedivision.ucmerced.edu/current-students/policies-procedures>.

# 18. Leaving the Program Prior to Completion of the PhD Requirements

Students cannot be admitted into the program with the intent of solely completing the MSPH/terminal masters’ degree. However, some PhD students may choose to leave the program after completion of their second year, or be judged as not meeting the requirements to continue past the master’s degree. Such a judgement is made by the Faculty Advisory Committee and is based on the following criteria:

* receive a Fail grade on the Second Year Thesis
* receive a Master’s Pass grade on the Second Year Thesis

In addition, students who successfully complete the Second Year Thesis and continue in the program but who subsequently receive two Unsatisfactory Progress evaluations may be recommended to leave the program by their FAC. Students who do not receive Unsatisfactory Progress evaluations but who wish to leave the program for other reasons may do so via the normal Withdrawal process (see <https://registrar.ucmerced.edu/policies/leaving-uc-merced>).

Students who elect or are judged not to meet the criteria for continuing the PhD degree will be notified in writing by the Graduate Group Chair of Public Health. A copy of the letter will be sent to the Vice Provost and Dean of Graduate Education. In some cases a doctoral student may choose to leave the program with a master’s degree only. It is the responsibility of the Public Health Graduate Group to notify the Graduate Division via the Change of Degree form so that the student’s record may be updated to reflect the student’s degree status. This notice must include the student’s written permission to have his/her degree objective changed officially from doctorate to master’s.

# 19. PELP, In Absentia and Filing Fee status

Information about PELP (Planned Educational Leave Program), In Absentia (reduced fees when researching out of state), and Filing Fee status can be found in the Graduate Group Policies and Procedures Handbook, available on the Graduate Division Website:

<https://graduatedivision.ucmerced.edu/sites/graduatedivision.ucmerced.edu/files/page/documents/2020-21_gpph_-_gc_approved_6.30.20.pdf>

# 20. Appendices: Forms

## Faculty Advisory Committee Appointment Form

Student Name (print): \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

Faculty Advisor (print): \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

Faculty Advisory Committee Members: The Faculty Advisory Committee must include at least 3 faculty members, at least 2 of whom must be faculty members in the Public Health Graduate Group, including the Faculty Advisor. Obtain the signatures of the members below indicating their agreement to serve.

Name: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

Signature: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

Name: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

Signature: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

Optional

Name: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

Signature: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

Optional

Name: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

Signature: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

Student and Faculty Advisor must sign indicating their agreement to the faculty advisory committee described above.

Faculty Advisor: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

Student: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

## Progress Towards the Degree Checklist

For self-tracking purposes:

Date Completed Milestone (when indicated, circle Satisfactory *or* Unsatisfactory Progress)

**\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_** Faculty Advisor Assigned (Name: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_)

\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ Progress Report (Spring of 1st Year). Progress: Satisfactory/Unsatisfactory

\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ Faculty Advisory Committee assigned

\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ Second Year Research Thesis Completed

\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ Progress Report (Spring of 2nd Year). Progress: Satisfactory/Unsatisfactory

\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ Candidacy Project Proposal Completed

\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ Progress Report (Spring of 3rd Year). Progress: Satisfactory/Unsatisfactory

\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ UCM APPLICATION FOR QUALIFYING EXAMINATION form must be completed one month before final candidacy exam and sent to Graduate Division.

\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ Candidacy Exam Passed. Complete second page of UCM APPLICATION FOR QUALIFYING EXAMINATION and return to Graduate Division.

\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ Requirements for Advancement to Candidacy Completed. Complete UCM CANDIDACY FOR THE DEGREE OF DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY – PLAN A and submit to Graduate Division.

\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ Required Courses Completed (see specification below)

\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ Teaching Requirements Completed (see specification below)

\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ Progress Report (Spring of 4th Year). Progress: Satisfactory/Unsatisfactory

\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ Dissertation Proposal Completed

\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ Progress Report (Spring of 5th Year): Progress: Satisfactory/Unsatisfactory

\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ Dissertation Defense Completed

## Teaching Requirement Form

Graduate students must serve as teaching assistants for two semester-length classes. This does not need to be for pay, but can be as a volunteer assistant. Prior teaching experience may substitute for one or both of these (see relevant section in GSH).

**Semester Year Course**

\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ \_\_\_\_ First Course: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ \_\_\_\_ Second Course:\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

Teaching a course (as instructor on record) can substitute for the above requirements. Enter information below and write “see below” for semester and year for the requirements above

**Semester Year Course prefix, number and name**

\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ \_\_\_\_ \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

## Graduate Student Progress Report

**Name**:

**Last Semester/Year Completed in Program**:

**Semester/Year Entered Graduate Program at UCM**:

**Major Professor**:

**Faculty Committee**:

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| **Major Steps in Program** (as appropriate) | **Planned for** (Sem./Yr.) | **Completed in** (Sem./Yr.) |
| Pre-Candidacy Project |  |  |
| Qualifying Exam/Admission to Candidacy |  |  |
| Dissertation proposal defense |  |  |
| Dissertation defense |  |  |

**Research Activities since Last Progress Report**:

**Conference Presentations since Start of Graduate Studies** (list presentations in APA format with no additional description; **bold** those added since last Progress Report):

**Publications** **since Start of Graduate Studies** (list in APA format with no additional description; **bold** those added since last Progress Report):

**Research Plans for Next 12 Months** (present in brief bullet format, limit to space provided):

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| **Content Courses Completed** (**bold** those added since last Progress Report) | **Semester/Year** | **Grade** |
|  |  |  |
|  |  |  |

**Any additional information regarding completed courses and grades** (limit to space provided):

**Courses to Complete in Next 12 Months** (course prefix, number and title):

**Teaching/TA Activities** **Completed** (brief bullet format; **bold** any added since last Progress Report):

**Teaching****Plans for Next 12 Months** (brief bullet format, limit to space provided):

*Inserting my name below indicates this is a true representation of my work*:

\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

Student’s name Date

## Faculty Evaluation Report

**Student:**

**Semester/Year:**

**Advisor:**

**Date:**

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Progress in** | **Poor** | **Good** | **Excellent** |
| Research |  |  |  |
| Coursework |  |  |  |
| Teaching |  |  |  |
| **Overall Evaluation** | **Unsatisfactory** | **Marginal** | **Satisfactory** | **More than Satisfactory** |
| *Overall* |  |  |  |  |

**Additional Information for Student:**

**Advisor:**

**“I confirm that I have shared this information with the student and with the committee members”**

**YES \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_**

**Advisor e-sign:**

**Core Course Waiver request form**

**Waiver of Formal Requirement Form (Public Health)**

**Instructions:** Please complete a separate form for each course you are requesting to waive.

Send completed form to Graduate Chair and Graduate Specialist.

Completed forms must be submitted with a **letter justifying why a waiver is warranted**, **transcript** (unofficial accepted), **course syllabi** of the candidate course and the course for which the waiver is requested, and **any supporting documentations** (e.g., letters of support, papers, etc.). Courses may be waived only with both the instructor of record’s and faculty advisor’s approval. Requests should be submitted to instructor of records during the first semester of the PhD program, and at least three (3) days before add/drop period.

**Student information:**

Student name:\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_Student ID:

**Information on course requesting to waive:**

Course number and title:

Instructor(s) of record:

Syllabus: please attach

**Information on course to consider as an equivalence:**

Course title and number:

Term course taken:

Institution:

Syllabus: please attach

**Reason for request:** (Please attach a letter explaining why a waiver should be granted)

Student signature: Date:

Faculty advisor name: Approval: Yes  No

Faculty advisor’s signature: Date:

Instructor of record name: Approval: Yes  No

Instructor of record’s signature: Date:

Comments:

# 21. Appendices: Rubrics

## Second Year Research Thesis Rubric

The Second Year Research Thesis rubric is used to assess student learning as demonstrated in the Second Year Research Thesis document. The Second Year Research Thesis serves as the MSPH Examination for terminal MSPH students. Students receive a single score for the document for each criterion (PLO). Students also receive an overall score for the benchmark. During the closed session of Committee deliberation, the Committee agrees on one score for all seven criteria and the overall outcome.

Committee members should remember that at the Master’s level students are expected to possess a broad field of learning that extends well beyond that attained at the undergrad level, but is not expected to have made a significant original contribution to knowledge in Public Health or to be able to use sophisticated methodological tools to conduct independent research.

Committee members should consider:

1. Are each of the sub-­‐criterion present for the criteria (check off those which are present)?
2. What comments does the student need in order to fully interpret each of the criterion scores?
3. What overall score does the student receive for the overall benchmark (pass, minor revision, or major revision)?

A hard copy of the completed rubric is submitted by the student to the Public Health Graduate Studies Committee for assessment data collection.

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| **Second Year Research Thesis Rubric for Terminal for PhD and MSPH Students**  Serves as the MSPH Exam | | |
| **Criteria\*** | **Score** | **Comments** |
| 1. Demonstrate a comprehensive understanding of Public Health, including phenomena at the biological, psychological, and social levels.   * The research questions synthesize, critique, apply, and/or extend major Public Health issues/domains/theories. * The research question(s) to be addressed is properly situated in the relevant literature * Arguments and hypotheses flow from and/or are consistent with existing state of science/theories * Importance of the project is demonstrated in the context of the existing state of science/theories | 1. Introductory 2. Intermediate\* 3. Advanced 4. Mastery |  |
| 2. Demonstrate topical area expertise in specific scientific domain within Public Health.   * Topical area literature is synthesized appropriately * Arguments and hypotheses contribute to/extend the existing literature * Importance of the project is demonstrated in the context of the specific topical area | 1. Introductory 2. Intermediate\* 3. Advanced 4. Mastery |  |
| 3. Critique and evaluate qualitative and quantitative Public Health research methods.   * Research design is appropriate for the research question(s) * Appropriate data are identified and employed * Reasonable justifications are provided for methodological decisions | 1. Introductory 2. Intermediate\* 3. Advanced 4. Mastery |  |
| 4. Address team science/transdisciplinary aspects of the field or problem   * Where appropriate, paper highlights team science/transdisciplinary approaches in the relevant literature | * Introductory * Intermediate\* * Advanced * Mastery |  |
| 5. Communicate effectively, both orally and in writing, about Public Health concepts, arguments, and methods.   * Paper is clearly and precisely written so that it is fully understandable to Public Health faculty * Where appropriate, the paper makes good use of tables and figures to accurately summarize and convey information | 1. Introductory 2. Intermediate\* 3. Advanced 4. Mastery |  |
| 1. Demonstrate proficiency in the professional skills needed to participate in the intellectual and organizational aspects of Public Health careers.   Written work displays the qualities needed to participate in Public Health careers such as the methods and information are cohesively presented in a way that demonstrates disciplinary norms for writing and citations are employed. | 1. Introductory 2. Intermediate\* 3. Advanced 4. Mastery |  |
| **Result:**  **Pass\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ Minor Revision \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ *Major Revision***  All 6 criteria should be scored on the following scale: 1=introductory, 2=intermediate, 3=advanced, and 4=mastery. All 6 criteria should be reached at the Advanced level. A score of introductory on any criteria results in a revision. | | |

## Dissertation Rubric

The Dissertation Proposal rubric will be completed by the Dissertation Committee during proposal defenses and shared with the Public Health Graduate Studies Committee in order to assist with evaluating the progress of individual students through our program.

Students receive a single score for both the document and oral portions for each criterion (PLO). Students also receive an overall score for the benchmark. During the closed session of Committee deliberation, the Committee agrees on one score for all seven criteria and the overall outcome.

Committee members should consider:

* Are each of the sub-­‐criterion present for the criteria (check off those which are present)?
* What comments does the student need in order to fully interpret each of the criterion scores? and
* What overall score does the student receive for the overall benchmark (pass or fail)?

A hard copy of the completed rubric is submitted by the student to the Public Health Graduate Studies Committee.

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| **Dissertation Proposal and Oral Defense Rubric** | | |
| **Criteria\*** | **Score** | **Comments** |
| 1. Demonstrate a comprehensive understanding of Public Health, including phenomena at the biological, psychological, and social levels.   * The research questions synthesize, critique, apply, and/or extend major Public Health * issues/domains/theories. * The research question(s) to be addressed is properly situated in the relevant literature * Arguments and hypotheses flow from and/or are consistent with existing state of science/theories * Originality and importance of the project is demonstrated in the context of the existing state of science/theories | 1. Introductory 2. Intermediate 3. Advanced\* 4. Mastery | Document: |
| Oral: |
| 2. Demonstrate topical area expertise in specific scientific domain within Public Health.   * Topical area literature is synthesized appropriately * Arguments and hypotheses contribute to/extend the existing literature * Originality and importance of the project is demonstrated in the context of the specific topical area | 1. Introductory 2. Intermediate 3. Advanced\* 4. Mastery | Document: |
| Oral: |
| 1. Critique and evaluate qualitative and quantitative Public Health research methods.  * Research design is appropriate for the research question(s) * Appropriate data are identified * Reasonable justifications are provided for methodological plans | 1. Introductory 2. Intermediate 3. Advanced\* 4. Mastery | Document: |
| Oral: |

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| 4. Address team science/transdisciplinary aspects of the field or problem   * Proposal makes a convincing case for the research question(s) to be addressed using the expertise/perspective of more than one substantive area. * Proposal draws upon previous literature to build a convincing argument for the present study. * Proposal demonstrates the importance of the project in the context of the existing empirical and/or theoretical literature | 1. Introductory 2. Intermediate 3. Advanced\* 4. Mastery | Document: |
| Oral: |
| 5. Design and conduct independent research that makes an original contribution to Public Health knowledge.   * Proposal makes a convincing case for the originality and importance of the research question(s) to be addressed through synthesis and critique of current literature * Proposal presents clear research question/hypotheses * The research design allows for a proper test of hypotheses (if deductive research is employed) | * Introductory * Intermediate * Advanced\* * Mastery | Document: |
| Oral: |
| * Communicate effectively, both orally and in writing, about Public Health concepts, theories, and methods. * Proposal is clearly and precisely written so that it is fully understandable to Public Health researchers * Student presents a brief summary of the proposal that effectively communicates its contents. * Student clearly answers questions and convincingly defends proposal orally | 1. Introductory 2. Intermediate 3. Advanced\* 4. Mastery | Document: |
| Oral: |
| 7. Demonstrate proficiency in the professional skills needed to participate in the intellectual and organizational aspects of Public Health careers.   * Written work displays the qualities needed to * participate in Public Health careers such as the methods and information are cohesively presented in a way that demonstrates disciplinary norms for writing and citations are employed. * Oral work displays the qualities needed to participate in Public Health careers such as the ability to freely but critically exchange ideas in a scholarly setting. Disciplinary norms for professional presentation style are adhered to. | 1. Introductory 2. Intermediate 3. Advanced\* 4. Mastery | Document: |
| Oral: |
| **Result:**  **Pass\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ Minor Revision \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ *Major Revision***  All 7 criteria should be scored on the following scale: 1=introductory, 2=intermediate, 3=advanced, and 4=mastery. All 7 criteria should be reached at the Advanced level. A score of introductory on any criteria results in a revision. | | |

## Dissertation Manuscript Rubric

The Dissertation manuscript rubric is used to assess student learning as demonstrated in the Dissertation document and oral presentation of the document. Students receive a single score for both the document and oral portions for each criterion (PLO). Students also receive an overall score for the benchmark. During the closed session of Committee deliberation, the Committee agrees on one score for all six criteria and the overall outcome.

Committee members should consider:

1. Are each of the sub-­‐criterion present for the criteria (check off those which are present)?
2. What comments does the student need in order to fully interpret each of the criterion scores? and
3. What overall score does the student receive for the overall benchmark (pass or fail)?

A hard copy of the completed rubric is submitted by the student to the Public Health Graduate Studies Committee for assessment data collection.

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| **Dissertation Manuscript and Oral Defense Rubric** | | |
| **Criteria\*** | **Score** | **Comments** |
| 1. Demonstrate a comprehensive understanding of Public Health, including phenomena at the biological, psychological, and social levels.   * The research questions synthesize, critique, apply, and/or extend major Public Health issues/domains/theories. * The research question(s) to be addressed is properly situated in the relevant literature * Arguments and hypotheses flow from and/or are consistent with existing state of science/theories * Originality and importance of the project is demonstrated in the context of the existing state of science/theories | 1. Introductory 2. Intermediate 3. Advanced 4. Mastery\* | Document: |
| Oral: |
| 2. Demonstrate topical area expertise in specific scientific domain within Public Health.   * Topical area literature is synthesized appropriately * Arguments and hypotheses contribute to/extend the existing literature * Originality and importance of the project is demonstrated in the context of the specific topical area | 1. Introductory 2. Intermediate 3. Advanced 4. Mastery\* | Document: |
| Oral: |
| 3. Critique and evaluate qualitative and quantitative Public Health research methods.   * Research design is appropriate for the research question(s) * Appropriate data are identified and employed * Reasonable justifications are provided for methodological decisions | 1. Introductory 2. Intermediate 3. Advanced 4. Mastery\* | Document: |
| Oral |

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| 4. Address team science/transdisciplinary aspects of the field or problem   * The research question(s) to be addressed is properly situated in the relevant empirical literature in at least two substantive areas * Previous literature is synthesized to build a convincing argument for the present study. * Importance of the project is demonstrated in the context of the existing empirical and/or theoretical literature | 1. Introductory 2. Intermediate 3. Advanced 4. Mastery\* | Document: |
| Oral: |
| 5. Design and conduct independent research that makes an original contribution to Public Health knowledge.   * Dissertation makes a convincing case for the originality and importance of the research question(s) to be addressed through synthesis and critique of current literature * Dissertation presents theoretically-­‐motivated research question/hypotheses * The research design allows for a proper test of hypotheses (if deductive research is employed) * Dissertation is of a quality that could be publishable in a peer-­‐reviewed journal or a reputable press with respect to the writing, argument, evidence, and scholarly contribution. | 1. Introductory 2. Intermediate 3. Advanced 4. Mastery\* | Document: |
| Oral: |
| 6. Communicate effectively, both orally and in writing, about Public Health theories, arguments, methods, and concepts.   * Dissertation is clearly and precisely written so that it is fully understandable to Public Health researchers * Where appropriate, the dissertation makes good use of tables and figures to accurately summarize and convey information * Student presents a brief summary of the dissertation that effectively communicates its contents. * Student clearly answers questions and convincingly defends dissertation orally | 1. Introductory 2. Intermediate 3. Advanced\* 4. Mastery | Document: |
| Oral: |
| 1. Demonstrate proficiency in the professional skills needed to participate in the intellectual and organizational aspects of Public Health careers.  * Written work displays the qualities needed to participate in Public Health careers such as the methods and information are cohesively presented in a way that demonstrates disciplinary norms for writing and citations are employed. * Oral work displays the qualities needed to participate in Public Health careers such as the ability to freely but critically exchange ideas in a scholarly setting. Disciplinary norms for professional presentation style are adhered to. | 1. Introductory 2. Intermediate 3. Advanced\* 4. Mastery | Document: |
| **Result:**  **Pass\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ Minor Revision \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ *Major Revision***  All 7 criteria should be scored on the following scale: 1=introductory, 2=intermediate, 3=advanced, and 4=mastery. All 7 criteria should be reached at the Advanced level. A score of introductory on any criteria results in a revision. | | |

## Public Health Qualifying Examination Rubric

The Qualifying Examination rubric is used to assess student learning as revealed in the Qualifying Exam, which consists of proposing, completing, and orally defending a substantial research paper in the student’s chosen topical area. Completion of the written paper constitutes the written portion of the Qualifying Exam. This paper shall represent the student’s topical area (e.g. prevention sciences, environmental health, or health services), prepare the student for the dissertation research, and be of *publishable quality*. As such the paper must be novel and advance knowledge in the field. It is expected to be longer than a typical course or seminar paper at 35 to 45 double-spaced pages in length, not counting references. The student is encouraged to connect this paper to the planned dissertation, such that it creates the foundation for and serve in part as the background and rationale for the Dissertation Proposal.

During the oral exam, at the discretion of the Candidacy Committee (CC), the student may first present a brief (10-­‐15 minute) overview of the paper. The CC will then discuss the subject addressed in the review with the student. The student is expected to be able to answer questions on all aspects of the subject to the satisfaction of the CC.

Students receive an overall score on the Exam. Students must reach a score of advanced or better on the research paper and oral exam in order to pass this benchmark. The members of the Candidacy Committee (CC) will assess the Qualifying Exam using the rubric shown below.

Following the completion of the oral exam, the CC makes a recommendation whether to pass the student on the Qualifying Exam. The CC recommendation is by majority vote with no more than one dissenting vote, leading to one of the following recommendations:

*Pass*: Oral and written portions of the Qualifying Exam are passed and the student may Advance to Candidacy.

*Minor Revisions*: The oral portion of the Qualifying Exam is passed and the written portion passed pending minor revisions, which must be approved by the Faculty Advisor and any CC member wishing to review such changes. The timeline for revisions will be determined by the CC at the time the decision is made.

*Major Revisions***:** The oral or written portion of the Qualifying Exam is not passed. The student must revise the review paper in light of any CC feedback and resubmit the paper within 6 weeks to make and submit those revisions, and the CC will then have at least 14 but no more than 28 days to review the revisions. A second oral exam must then be held with the student, after which the CC makes a recommendation whether to pass the student on the Qualifying Exam.

*Fail:* A failure to oral pass either the written or oral portion of this second exam must be addressed in the student’s next Biannual Review Progress Report (see below), which must then involve the student’s entire Faculty Advisory Committee. Any further examination must have the approval of the Graduate Dean.

The Qualifying Examination rubric is used to assess student learning as revealed in their writing and in response to questions during their oral examination.

The scoring rubric criteria correspond with our overall program learning outcomes as follows:

CROSSWALK BETWEEN PLOs and QUALIFYING EXAM RUBRIC CRITERIA

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Rubric Criteria** | PLO #1  Breadth of Knowledge | PLO #2  Depth of Knowledge | PLO #3  Research Methods | PLO #4  Team Science | PLO #5  Independent Research | PLO #6  Communicate |
| 1: Knowledge of Field | X | X | X | X | X |  |
| 2: Command of Literature | X | X | X | X | X |  |
| 3: Indep. Reasoning | X |  |  |  | X |  |
| 4: Methods |  |  | X | X |  |  |
| 5: Team Science |  |  |  | X |  |  |
| 6: Writing |  |  |  |  |  | X |

A digital copy of the completed rubric is stored by the Public Health Graduate Studies Committee for assessment data collection. We will develop a large sample size for assessing the PLOs without focusing on individual students, but rather trends in student performance on this benchmark. Assessment of the trends will inform developments in this standard and student support.

1. Empirical projects include primary, secondary, or meta-analysis of data. [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. See the UC Merced Graduate Division Graduate Advisor’s Handbook for procedures for granting exceptions. [↑](#footnote-ref-2)