

# Health Policy and Health Services Research PhD

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## COLLEGE OF PUBLIC HEALTH

Learn more about the Doctor of Philosophy in Health Policy and Health Services Research.

### About the Program

The PhD program in Health Policy and Health Services Research is administered by the Department of Health Services Administration and Policy. This program is unique in that it provides students with an opportunity to develop mixed methods research to investigate the development of health policy and its impact on population health, access to care and health services utilization, and reduction in health disparities. The program trains students in the use of qualitative and quantitative research methods using primary data collection and secondary data sets to research the development, implementation and impact of health policy and health services initiatives.

The PhD program in Health Policy and Health Services Research emphasizes health services, economics and outcomes research as well as healthcare administration and leadership in investigating health disparities, public health interventions, and clinical outcomes as the basis to inform health policy. The program trains students to develop, evaluate and implement health policy at multiple levels (i.e., local, state, national, global) and in both private and public institutional settings. The PhD program:

- provides training and experiences that support interdisciplinary learning;
- promotes critical and theory-based problem-solving skills to address public health problems; and
- fosters the development of public health professional values and ethics.

All students in the Health Policy and Health Services Research PhD program complete common core course requirements that include foundational courses in comparative health policy, economics, legal issues and theories of health policymaking, and are introduced to critical public health research methods and statistical techniques. Beyond these core courses, students take specialized courses in their chosen subdiscipline and engage in research and scholarly productivity with faculty members. Students in the program work closely with faculty members to explore key public health issues such as improving the quality and outcomes of healthcare services; examining healthcare costs; addressing health disparities; and developing policy initiatives targeting areas of population health, including aging, chronic disease, mental health, risk behaviors, substance use and violence/injury prevention.

In addition to in-depth didactic training in cross-disciplinary concepts and methods, the PhD program aims to foster the development of public health professional identities and values in its students. Professional development exercises include conference attendance, departmental colloquia and brown-bag presentations, journal clubs, and professional development workshops. Doctoral trainees are also encouraged to take advantage of professional development opportunities offered by the College of Public Health and Temple University broadly, including Dean's seminars, special workshops and seminars on grant writing, methods and teaching. Finally, students learn by working closely with faculty on research and writing papers for publications.

The student experience at Temple University is unique in that opportunities are available to improve community health and reduce public health disparities in one of the largest urban settings in the United States. Many doctoral students collaborate with community-based and healthcare-delivery organizations in Philadelphia while they conduct research projects for their dissertations. The in-person format of the Health Policy and Health Services Research PhD program allows students to work closely with faculty and peers to collaborate on research studies, meet potential mentors and collaborators, develop collegial bonds, and prepare for a future health policy career.

**Time Limit for Degree Completion:** 7 years

**Campus Location:** Main

**Full-Time/Part-Time Status:** Full-time study is required unless permission is received from the PhD Program Director.

**Interdisciplinary Study:** Students are encouraged to develop programs of study that are interdisciplinary in nature, involving coursework across departments, schools and colleges. Research in affiliated units is encouraged and facilitated by the Program Director.

**Affiliation(s):** A number of centers and programs exist within the College of Public Health, Temple University, and the Temple University Health System that are designed to study, develop and evaluate interventions aimed at resolving significant public health problems (e.g., addiction, chronic disease care, ethnic and racial disparities in cancer, obesity, tobacco exposure, violence). These offer opportunities for research placements for doctoral students; assist students in developing papers for publication and presentation at conferences; provide professional socialization; help students define dissertation projects using existing funded studies; and may provide some funding in the form of Research Assistantships.

Faculty and doctoral students are also involved in research with affiliates in the Fox Chase Cancer Center, Fox School of Business and Management, Institute on Aging, Institute on Disabilities, Lew Klein College of Media and Communication, Lewis Katz School of Medicine, Public Health Law Research Program in the Beasley School of Law, School of Podiatric Medicine, and Temple University Health System.

**Accreditation:** The Health Policy and Health Services Research PhD program is fully accredited by the Council on Education for Public Health (CEPH).

**Job Prospects:** Graduates of the PhD program are prepared to become faculty members or researchers in colleges and universities or to hold research and policy-related positions in a wide range of organizations, including health foundations, health systems, pharmaceutical companies and public health departments.

**Financing Opportunities:** Full-time PhD students generally receive financial support through fellowships or assistantships. Information on university-wide support opportunities can be found at <https://grad.temple.edu/admissions/costs-financial-aid-more/university-financial-support>.

Graduate assistantships are sponsored by the College of Public Health:

- Research Assistants (RAs) perform supervised research activities. Research assistantships are frequently supported by faculty grant funding, and it is anticipated the RAs will work with faculty members on new and continuing grant proposals and develop both research and grant-writing competencies.
- Teaching Assistants (TAs) may be assigned to assist in the teaching of courses, with activities that include grading examinations/papers or teaching laboratory sections. Some TAs independently teach undergraduate courses. The purpose, however, is to develop competencies in current pedagogies that prepare students for academic teaching careers.

RAs and TAs provide 20 hours of service per week. Both assistantships carry a stipend and tuition remission of up to 9 credits per academic term within the prescribed course of study for the degree. Consideration for admission with an assistantship requires a description of research and teaching experience; a statement of research and teaching goals; and an identification of areas of interest, including identification of potential faculty mentors and articulation of career goals consistent with the mission and purpose of the Health Policy and Health Services Research PhD program.

## Admission Requirements and Deadlines

### Application Deadline:

*Fall:* December 15

All applicants to the Health Policy and Health Services Research PhD program must apply via the Centralized Application Service for Public Health (SOPHAS). The system can be accessed at <https://sophas.liaisoncas.com/>.

All application materials must be received by the deadline in order to be reviewed by the PhD Admissions Committee. Admission is competitive, and students are admitted only once a year for fall matriculation. Applications are evaluated together after the deadline has passed. Applications that are completed after the deadline are held for review the following year. An important component of the admissions decision is the fit between the applicant's goals, experiences, and interests and the expertise of the faculty in the PhD program.

Applicants should check their application status on the SOPHAS portal often and inquire directly of SOPHAS about receipt of materials. For other questions, please contact the CPH Office of Admissions at [cph@temple.edu](mailto:cph@temple.edu) or 215-204-5200.

### Letters of Reference:

*Number Required:* 3

*From Whom:* Letters of recommendation should be obtained from evaluators who can provide insight into the applicant's academic abilities and talents, as well as comment on the applicant's aptitude for doctoral-level study and research. Recommendations from college/university faculty members are preferred.

**Coursework Required for Admission Consideration:** Applicants are expected to have completed coursework in the behavioral, natural or social sciences related to health. A course each in statistics and in research methods are also highly preferred. The following prerequisites, which do not count toward the PhD, must also be satisfied, either through an MPH degree or course equivalency:

Code	Title	Credit Hours
EPBI 5002	Biostatistics	3
EPBI 5101	Fundamentals of Epidemiology	3
HPM 5006	Political and Economic Aspects of Health	3
SBS 5102	Theoretical Foundations of Health Behavior	3

**Master's Degree in Discipline/Related Discipline:** Nearly all students admitted to the program have a master's degree. Although a master's degree specifically in Public Health is not required, preference is given to applicants who have a background in the health sciences, including behavioral medicine, environmental health, epidemiology, health communication, health psychology, medicine or a public health discipline.

Students accepted without a master's degree are required to complete foundational courses in public health, epidemiology, and biostatistics prior to before beginning doctoral coursework.

**Bachelor's Degree in Discipline/Related Discipline:** A baccalaureate degree is required, although it need not be in Public Health. Preference is given to applicants who have a background in the health sciences, including behavioral medicine, environmental health, epidemiology, health communication, health psychology, medicine or a public health discipline.

**Statement of Goals:** In no more than 750 words:

- identify Health Policy and Health Services Research (HP) as the program for which you wish to be considered and why;
- describe important academic and research achievements and interests; and
- specify how your research interests relate to your ultimate career goals and to ongoing work by faculty members affiliated with the Health Policy and Health Services Research PhD program.

The match between faculty and student interests is important in the admissions decision. Be sure to articulate clearly the linkages among your training goals, the expertise of our faculty, and the training emphasis of the PhD program. For a description of faculty interests, visit the Health Services Administration and Policy Faculty webpage.

**Standardized Test Scores:**

GRE: Required. The median score of recently admitted applicants is 156 verbal and 149 quantitative. Official GRE scores should be sent to SOPHAS using code 0151.

Applicants who earned their baccalaureate degree from an institution where the language of instruction was other than English, with the exception of those who subsequently earned a master's degree at a U.S. institution, must report scores for a standardized test of English that meet these minimums:

- TOEFL iBT: 79 (send officially to SOPHAS using the SOPHAS-specific TOEFL code 5688)
- IELTS Academic: 6.5
- PTE Academic: 53
- Duolingo: 110

**Resume:** Current CV required.

**Writing Sample:** Scholarly articles, technical reports or academic professional papers are desirable. Unless it is a published work, the writing sample should be no more than 10 pages.

**Laptop:** Laptops are integrated into CPH curricula, and all students are required to have a laptop for full participation in class activities; online class sessions; online exam proctoring; and the use of special software, which is used to reinforce the learning objectives and program student learning competencies in certain classes. A laptop that meets the minimum device specifications defined below IS REQUIRED across the board for all undergraduate and graduate students in CPH.

Review the CPH laptop requirement for additional information: <https://cphapps.temple.edu/wiki/it/student/laptop>

**Advanced Standing:** A student enrolled in the Health Policy and Health Services Research PhD program may apply for advanced standing credits for graduate coursework graded "B" or better from an accredited institution. Credits for courses taken as part of a master's degree are considered. Credits for thesis, fieldwork, clinical practice or directed projects/readings cannot be used for advanced standing credit. To be approved for advanced standing, the courses must be deemed appropriate as part of the student's training in the Health Policy and Health Services Research PhD program. The maximum number of advanced standing credits awarded is 9.

## Program Requirements

**General Program Requirements:**

*Number of Credits Required to Earn the Degree: 45*

*Required Courses:*

Code	Title	Credit Hours
<b>Core Courses</b>		
HPM 8005	Theor Hlth Policy Making	3
HPM 8008	Health Economics	3
HPM 8014	Comparative Health Policy	3
HPM 8015	Public Health Policy and Legal Issues	3
HRPR 5001	Current and Emerging Issues in Public Health and Health Professions <sup>1</sup>	0
<b>Research Methods Courses</b>		
EPBI 8012	Multivariable Biostatistics	3
EPBI 8212	Grantsmanship in Health Research	3

HPM 8013	Research Methods in Health Policy	3
<b>Electives <sup>2</sup></b>		<b>18</b>
Select electives in Health Policy Theory:		
HPM 5016	Public Health Advocacy	
HPM 5500	Seminar in Current Issues in Public Health	
POLS 8103	Legislative Behavior	
Select electives in Research Methods:		
EPBI 8201	Structural Equation Modeling	
EPBI 8204	Multilevel Modeling in Interdisciplinary Research	
EPBI 8208	Data Management and Analysis	
POLS 8002	Qualitative Research Methods	
POLS 8112	Research in State Politics	
SBS 8001	Research Methods in Public Health	
Econometric Methods for Health Services Research course		
<b>Research Courses <sup>3</sup></b>		<b>6</b>
HPM 9994	Preliminary Examinations	
HPM 9998	Dissertation Proposal Research	
HPM 9999	Dissertation Research	
<b>Total Credit Hours</b>		<b>45</b>

<sup>1</sup> This common College Core course is required of all incoming graduate students in the College of Public Health. It is available completely online and designed such that students can complete the modules at their own pace over the course of their degree program.

<sup>2</sup> With approval from the faculty advisor, students may select alternate electives.

<sup>3</sup> The Graduate School requires that students complete a minimum of 6 credits that include HPM 9994, HPM 9998, and HPM 9999. Of the 6 credits, at least 2 credits must be earned in HPM 9999.

#### **Minimum Grade to be Earned for All Required Courses: B-**

#### **Culminating Events:**

##### *Area Paper:*

Prior to sitting for the preliminary examinations, students must have successfully published or written a publishable paper in their chosen area of research interest. The purpose of the paper requirement is to demonstrate critical and interpretive knowledge in specialized areas of one's chosen program, as well as a high proficiency in written communication and a capacity to contribute to generalizable knowledge in the field. The student must be the lead or sole author. For students who enter the program without already having published a first-authored, peer-reviewed article, they typically initiate efforts toward this requirement during their first term of residency.

A student cannot advance to the preliminary examinations without passing the paper requirement. Failure to satisfactorily complete the area paper requirement within the specified time frame can result in dismissal from the PhD program. Students entering the PhD program who have already published a peer-reviewed paper related to their programmatic discipline can submit the published document to the Director of Graduate Studies for approval.

##### *Preliminary Examinations:*

Students typically take their preliminary examinations during their third year of residency in the program, after completing the paper requirement. All students are required to take the preliminary examinations prior to completing and defending their dissertation research proposal. The exams should be taken within one term of completing all coursework. Students are required to meet with their mentor and Director of Graduate Studies before the beginning of the term in which they plan to take the examinations to establish eligibility.

The preliminary examinations are designed to test fundamental core competencies of the students' training. The student must register for 1 credit of HPM 9994 in the term in which the examinations are taken. To register for HPM 9994, the student must have completed all coursework or be enrolled in final courses in the term in which the examinations are taken. Note that all Incomplete and/or "NR" grades must have been removed, and the area paper requirement must have been satisfied. Special authorization is required to register.

The preliminary examinations consist of the following components:

- A comprehensive one-week take-home written examination, with an emphasis on the student's concentration, about the scientific foundations as well as social and behavioral sciences underpinnings of public health;
- A methods exam, which is a four-hour in-class examination on research methods and statistics; and

- A two-hour oral examination to give a 30-minute scientific presentation and answer any questions from the Examination Committee. The Committee may also ask the student any questions related to the two written exams.

Students who fail these exams may have one opportunity to take the examinations again. A second failure results in automatic dismissal from the PhD program.

#### *Dissertation Proposal:*

After passing the preliminary examinations, students may enroll in HPM 9998. Students must be enrolled for 1 credit of HPM 9998 each term until they file their dissertation proposal with the Graduate School.

All students must form a Doctoral Advisory Committee (DAC) with the approval of the Director of Graduate Studies. The DAC is composed of at least three Graduate Faculty members: two members, including the chair, must be from the PhD program faculty of the Department of Health Services Administration and Policy. The DAC Chair must be approved as Doctoral Graduate Faculty by the Dean of the College of Public Health and by the Graduate School. The Chair is responsible for overseeing and guiding the student's progress; coordinating the responses of the Committee members; and informing the student and the Director of Graduate Studies annually of the student's academic progress.

To fulfill the requirements of HPM 9998, students must submit a dissertation proposal, successfully defend it orally before their Committee, apply for Institutional Review Board (IRB) approval for the proposed research, and submit the proposal to the Graduate School. Students may enroll in HPM 9998 for only two terms without permission. Students needing more time may, with the support of their advisor, formally petition the Director of Graduate Studies for an extension, although an extension is not guaranteed. Failure to meet these requirements can result in dismissal from the program.

Once the proposal is defended, the student is elevated to candidacy and eligible to register for dissertation credits.

#### *Dissertation:*

The doctoral dissertation is an original theory-based research study that makes a significant contribution to the field of Health Policy and Health Services Research. It should expand existing knowledge and demonstrate the student's mastery of theory and research methods, particularly within a concentration or specialty area. The research should be rigorous, while upholding the ethics and standards of the field. Students are expected to submit their dissertation study for publication and presentation to professional audiences.

To fulfill the dissertation requirement, students must prepare and orally defend the final dissertation in a public meeting. Students must be enrolled continuously in HPM 9999 until their dissertation is successfully defended. The Graduate School requires a minimum of 2 credits of HPM 9999. Students must be enrolled in the term that they graduate.

The Dissertation Examining Committee (DEC) consists of the DAC plus at least one additional external reviewer. The external reviewer must be doctorally prepared. If this person is not a member of the Temple University Graduate Faculty, they must be approved by the Director of Graduate Studies, the Dean of the College, and the Graduate School to take part in the final dissertation examination. The DEC evaluates the student's written dissertation and oral defense, including the student's ability to articulate orally the research question; methodological approach; primary findings; interpretation of the findings; and implications for theory, research and practice. The DEC votes to pass or fail the dissertation and the defense at the conclusion of the public presentation.

If a student needs to change a member of a committee, the new member must be approved by the Director of Graduate Studies and registered with the Graduate School.

Students who are preparing to defend their dissertation should confirm a time and date with their DEC and work with their department's administrative assistant to secure a room. This should be done at least one month in advance of the proposed date. The administrative assistant arranges the time, date and room within two working days. After the time, date and room are secured, the student must send to the Graduate School a completed "Announcement of Dissertation Defense" form, found in TUportal under the Tools tab within "University Forms." This must be submitted at least 10 working days before the defense. The department posts flyers announcing the defense, and the Graduate School lists the defense on its website.

## **Contacts**

### **Program Web Address:**

<https://www.temple.edu/academics/degree-programs/health-policy-and-health-services-research-phd-hp-hphs-phd>

### **Department Information:**

Dept. of Health Services Administration and Policy  
Ritter Hall Annex, 9th Floor (004-09)  
1301 Cecil B. Moore Avenue  
Philadelphia, PA 19122-6005  
publichealth@temple.edu  
215-204-8726

## **Submission Address for Application Materials:**

<https://sophas.liaisoncas.com/>

## **Department Contacts:**

### *Admissions:*

CPH Office of Admissions

[cph@temple.edu](mailto:cph@temple.edu)

215-204-5200

### *Chairperson:*

Huanmei Wu, PhD

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215-204-8163

### *Graduate Program Director:*

Sherief Ibrahim JD, MPH

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