

Social and Behavioral Sciences PhD

COLLEGE OF PUBLIC HEALTH

Learn more about the Doctor of Philosophy in Social and Behavioral Sciences.

About the Program

The Department of Social and Behavioral Sciences administers the PhD in Social and Behavioral Sciences (PhD-SBS). This program provides advanced training in theory, methods and research related to social and behavioral influences on population health that prepares students for advanced research and scholarship. The program provides experiences that support interdisciplinary learning; promote critical and theory-based problem-solving skills to address public health threats; and foster the development of professional values and ethics. Heavy emphasis is placed on scientific foundations, research methods and statistics as well as hands-on research experience.

Coursework and experiential learning emphasize the dynamic interaction of individual difference characteristics, social circumstances and situational factors influencing health-promoting and health-damaging behavior and behavior change. Required research courses, structured research experiences each academic term, departmental professional development seminar presentations, and coursework in teaching and grant writing expand students' knowledge and application of research methods and analytic techniques while facilitating professional development and scholarship. Students choose advanced training opportunities in concentration electives in close consultation with a faculty mentor to ensure proper breadth and depth of training in their emerging areas of expertise. Typically, courses in the PhD program are delivered on campus in the evening, but some courses may be offered in an online or hybrid format.

Students' active engagement in faculty-mentored scholarly activities outside of coursework is expected throughout program residency. These efforts facilitate students' development of an independent research focus that will lead to their dissertation project, research presentations and scientific journal article submissions. For example, a publishable first-authored paper is required within the first two years of residency (i.e., prior to sitting for the preliminary examinations) to facilitate students' focus on scholarship leading to their culminating dissertation research project.

Many opportunities lie in the Department of Social and Behavioral Sciences for research mentorship with internationally renowned faculty affiliated with dynamic research laboratories and centers, including the Center for Obesity Research and Education, Collaborative on Community Inclusion, Health Behavior and Research Clinic, Health Disparities Research Laboratory, Health Psychology Research Group, Mental Health Services Research Lab, Risk Communication Laboratory, Shared Decision Making Lab, Siminoff Research Group, and Social and Behavioral Health Interventions Laboratory. Collectively, centers and labs in the Department of Social and Behavioral Sciences develop, test and evaluate interventions aimed at resolving significant public health problems in high-risk and vulnerable populations. Examples of research content areas in which department faculty are actively involved include cancer control (e.g., smoking cessation); cancer prevention and decision-making (e.g., early detection and screening); cancer survivorship (e.g., online and live support groups); ethnic and racial disparities in cancer and obesity; health communication; healthcare decision-making (e.g., genetic testing, organ transplant, vaccinations); health systems research; obesity prevention and treatment; and violence. Research mentors in these labs offer opportunities for research placements and developing papers for publication and presentation at conferences; provide professional socialization; help define dissertation projects using existing funded studies; and may provide some funding in the form of Research Assistantships.

Students in the PhD-SBS program also are expected to actively engage and collaborate within the academic culture of the department and college. This includes participation in the monthly SBS graduate student seminar series, as well as journal clubs, colloquia and brown-bag research presentations.

Time Limit for Degree Completion: 7 years

Campus Location: Main

Full-Time/Part-Time Status: Full-time study is preferred.

Interdisciplinary Study: Students are encouraged to develop programs of study that are interdisciplinary in nature, involving coursework or scholarly activities across departments, schools and colleges.

Affiliation(s): Students are expected to work in close collaboration with their faculty research mentor in the Department of Social and Behavioral Sciences. In addition, students can consider collaborative research projects across affiliated units within the College of Public Health in coordination with their developing line of research and with approval of their research mentor and the Graduate Program Director. A list of active research centers can be found on the College of Public Health website at <https://cph.temple.edu/departments-research/research-centers>.

Faculty and doctoral students also are involved in research with affiliates across the University, including the Fox Chase Cancer Center, the Fox School of Business and Management, the Institute on Aging, the Institute on Disabilities, the Lewis Katz School of Medicine, the Lew Klein College of Media and Communication, and the School of Podiatric Medicine. Additional research opportunities at Temple University include the Institute for Survey Research, the Office of Institutional Research and Assessment, and the Social Science Data Library.

Job Prospects: Students in the program develop public health content expertise and skills in research, scholarship, teaching and grant writing. Therefore, graduates of the PhD-SBS program are prepared to become faculty members or researchers in colleges and universities or to hold research-related positions in a wide range of organizations, such as agencies promoting community and public health, consulting firms, foundations, healthcare

systems, nonprofits and research centers. Graduates are employed in health systems, hospitals and clinics, public health departments, public health and other healthcare and human service agencies, and universities.

Non-Matriculated Student Policy: Doctoral coursework is open only to students enrolled in the program.

Financing Opportunities: Full-time PhD students generally receive financial support through University fellowships or teaching and research assistantships with department faculty that provide partial to full tuition remission plus a stipend related to hours worked. Typically, University fellowships have provided tuition remission and a stipend for up to four years of residency. For students without fellowships, funding is not guaranteed, but the majority of our students have secured funding through a combination of teaching assistantships, graduate research assistantships, and scholarship support. Twenty hours per week is considered a full-time assistantship.

College of Public Health Graduate Assistantships:

Graduate assistantships are sponsored by the College of Public Health:

- Graduate Research Assistants (RAs) perform supervised research activities. Research assistantships are frequently supported, in part, by a faculty mentor's grant funding for their research. Thus, RA availability can vary from academic year to academic year.
- Teaching Assistants (TAs) support faculty in the teaching of courses, with activities that include grading examinations/papers or teaching occasional lecture sections. Students develop competencies in current pedagogies that prepare them for academic teaching careers. TA opportunities vary by semester depending on undergraduate enrollment and class sizes.

Consideration for admission with an assistantship requires a description of research and teaching experience; a statement of research and teaching goals; and identification of areas of interest, including identification of potential faculty mentors and articulation of career goals consistent with the mission and purpose of the PhD-SBS program.

Offers of admission are generally accompanied by a fellowship offer or information about assistantship support. Students with full funding from another source (e.g., government funding) are given full consideration in the admission process. The Graduate School website details the types of graduate student support.

Admission Requirements and Deadlines

Application Deadline:

Fall: December 15

Admission into the PhD program is highly competitive. Not only must applicants display an exemplary academic record and potential for scholarship, but their research interests and area of emerging expertise must match those of Graduate Faculty who are available to take a new student. Applicants are strongly encouraged to contact the Program Director, Susannah Anderson, PhD (susannah.anderson@temple.edu) prior to application to learn which faculty are interested in mentoring PhD students for the coming year. Thereafter, applicants should schedule a meeting with their potential mentor to discuss research opportunities. All applicants to the PhD-SBS 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. 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 who are designated as "Graduate Faculty" and available to mentor an incoming student.

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 and research experiences 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 natural, social or behavioral sciences related to health. Coursework in statistics and research methods is desirable. 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 or EPBI 5006	Biostatistics Biostatistics and Applied Analysis of Health	3
EPBI 5101	Fundamentals of Epidemiology	3

HPM 5006	Political and Economic Aspects of Health	3
SBS 5002	Program Planning, Theory, and Practice	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 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 the Social and Behavioral Sciences doctorate 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 PhD-SBS 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 and active research, visit the Social and Behavioral Sciences Faculty webpage.

Standardized Test Scores:

GRE: Optional but recommended. The median score of recently admitted applicants is above the 50th percentile on the verbal and quantitative subscales. 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 papers are preferred. Unless it is a published work (e.g., a book chapter or peer-reviewed journal article), the writing sample should be no more than 10 pages.

Laptop: Laptops are integrated into the College of Public Health 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 for all undergraduate and graduate students in the College of Public Health.

Review the College of Public Health laptop requirement for additional information: <https://cphapps.temple.edu/wiki/it/student/laptop>

Advanced Standing: A student enrolled in the PhD-SBS program may apply for advanced standing credits for graduate coursework graded "B" or better from an accredited institution. Graduate coursework taken at an accredited institution prior to matriculation and graded "B" or higher as part of a master's degree program may be accepted for Advanced Standing Credit toward a doctoral degree. 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 PhD-SBS program based on a review of the course syllabus.

Program Requirements

General Program Requirements:

Number of Credits Required to Earn the Degree: 45

Required Courses:

Code	Title	Credit Hours
Core Courses		
HRPR 5001	Current and Emerging Issues in Public Health and Health Professions ¹	0
SBS 8005	Health Promotion in Vulnerable Populations	3
SBS 8009	Health Psychology	3
SBS 8105	Health Communication	3
SBS 8112	Creating Novel Interventions in Public Health	3
Research and Statistics Courses		
EPBI 8012	Multivariable Biostatistics ²	3
EPBI 8201	Structural Equation Modeling ²	3
EPBI 8212	Grantsmanship in Health Research	3
HRPR 5999	Research Experience in Health Professions ³	0
SBS 8001	Research Methods in Public Health	3
Electives		
Select five from the following: ⁴		15
EPBI 5003	Spatial Analysis in Public Health	
GDC 8003	Research Approaches in Communication, Development and Social Change	
HRPR 8002	Qualitative Methods in Health Outcomes Measurement	
SBS 5105	Maternal and Child Health	
SBS 8006	Addictions and Dependencies	
SBS 8018	Obesity: From Genes to Junk Food	
SBS 9083	Readings and Conference in Public Health ⁵	
Research Courses ⁶		6
SBS 9994	Preliminary Examinations ⁷	
SBS 9998	Dissertation Proposal Research	
SBS 9999	Dissertation Research	
Total Credit Hours		45

¹ 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.

² Students may select an alternate advanced statistics course with the approval of the faculty mentor.

³ Students discuss gaps in their training or areas for scholarship development with their faculty mentor prior to completing the first four academic terms in the program. Based on this planning, students engage in a project with a research mentor, as approved by the Director of Graduate Studies.

⁴ With approval from the faculty mentor or PhD Program Director, students may select alternate electives from within the College and across the University. Advising helps students coordinate courses for additional methods training or to satisfy requirements for available certificates, such as the Interdisciplinary Health Communication graduate certificate.

⁵ If selected, SBS 9083 must be taken for 3 credits.

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

⁷ Prior to enrolling in SBS 9994, a paper requirement must be fulfilled by the student who, under the advisement of the primary mentor, submits for review a publishable research article to a peer-reviewed journal.

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 who are entering the PhD program and have already

published a peer-reviewed paper related to their programmatic subdiscipline can request to waive this requirement by completing a waiver application and submitting it along with the published document to the Graduate Program Director.

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 Graduate Program Director 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 SBS 9994 in the term in which the examinations are taken. To register for SBS 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; and
- A methods exam, which is a four-hour in-class examination on research methods and statistics.

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 SBS 9998. Students must be enrolled for 1 credit of SBS 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 Graduate Program Director. 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 Social and Behavioral Sciences. 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 Graduate Program Director annually of the student's academic progress. A fourth, external reader is also required at the time of the final dissertation defense. This person must be a member of the Graduate Faculty at Temple or approved by the Dean of the College to take part in the final dissertation examination. This fourth member is not required to be present at the defense of the proposal.

To fulfill the requirements of SBS 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 have a maximum of one year from the time of completing their preliminary examinations to develop and defend their dissertation proposal. Thus, students may enroll in SBS 9998 for only two terms without permission. Students needing more time may, with the support of their mentor, formally petition the Graduate Program Director for an extension, although an extension is not guaranteed. Failure to meet these requirements can result in dismissal from the program.

Dissertation:

The doctoral dissertation is an original theory-based research study that makes a significant contribution to the field of Public Health. 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 should present their plans for publishing their dissertation as part of their defense. Students must be enrolled continuously in SBS 9999 until their dissertation is successfully defended. The Graduate School requires a minimum of 2 credits of SBS 9999. Students must be enrolled in the course 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 Graduate Program Director, 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 the committee, the new member must be approved by the Graduate Program Director 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 of Social and Behavioral Sciences 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/social-and-behavioral-sciences-phd-hp-sbsc-phd>

Department Information:

Dept. of Social and Behavioral Sciences
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
215-204-5200

Graduate Program Director:

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Chairperson:

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