COLUMBIA | MAILMAN SCHOOL OF PUBLIC HEALTH

ENVIRONMENTAL HEALTH SCIENCES

# DrPH Student Handbook

2024 – 2025 Academic Year

*This handbook has been created to ensure EHS DrPH students are familiar with Department and School procedures and protocol.*

*Important resources:*
*EHS Department website*
*Official MSPH handbook*
*Official School handbook*

*Questions should be directed to Nina Kulacki, Director of Academic Programs, or*
*Greg Freyer Director, DrPH Program, EHS*
*For a detailed academic calendar for 2024-25,*
*please see the Mailman Academic Calendar.*

***Academic Honesty & Honor Code:***
*All DrPH students/candidates* are expected to adhere to the required standards for academic and scientific integrity, which can be found in the* Mailman Student Handbook.

**Definitions:*
*Student refers to those who have not yet taken and passed their qualifying exam.*
*Candidate refers to a student who has completed their qualifying exam and is in the thesis research stage of their program.*

# Table of Contents

# EHS DrPH Program

Our DrPH program is a part-time only program for working professionals. While EHS will continue to have a strong research/thesis requirement for our DrPH students, we are committed to providing the training necessary for individuals to be grounded in the principles of environmental health and to take on a leadership role in public health.

## DrPH Curriculum

All DrPH students take School-wide Core courses to fulfill many of the DrPH competencies required for this CEPH-accredited program. Students take additional courses to fulfill Departmental competencies. DrPH students will complete a practice-based experience (practicum) and write up that experience and include an implementation plan and reflection. DrPH students also conduct research. The research project can be with a faculty member in the EHS Department working within their area of expertise. It could also be with an appropriate individual from outside of our Department or School. Thesis work done with a member outside of the Department requires approval from the EHS DrPH Committee and an EHS faculty mentor.

At the end of the program, DrPH candidates complete a dissertation that meets the criteria for an integrative learning experience (ILE). This culminating experience has two components: 1) the practicum implementation plan and 2) a thesis-based on their research project. The written products are meant to demonstrate the synthesis of foundational and specific EHS departmental competencies. The thesis should demonstrate that the DrPH candidate: conducted independent studies, can communicate effectively – both orally and in writing utilizing critical thinking skills.

## Competencies

The DrPH degree in EHS is designed to train candidates for careers in public health practice and leadership positions in environmental health sciences. There are multiple learning objectives for the DrPH program, aimed at producing a well-trained academic, researcher, and/or leader.

**Foundational Competencies (all DrPH students in Columbia University Mailman School of Public Health (CUMSPH)**

<u>Data & Analysis</u>

1. Explain qualitative, quantitative, mixed methods, and policy analysis research and evaluation methods to address health issues at multiple (individual, group, organization, community, and population) levels.
2. Design a qualitative, quantitative, mixed methods, policy analysis, or evaluation project to address a public health issue.
3. Explain the use and limitations of surveillance systems and national surveys in assessing, monitoring, and evaluating policies and programs and addressing a population's health.

<u>Leadership, Management & Governance</u>

1. Propose strategies for health improvement and elimination of health inequities by organizing stakeholders, including researchers, practitioners, community leaders, and other partners.

2. Communicate public health science to diverse stakeholders, including individuals at all levels of health literacy, for purposes of influencing behavior and policies.
3. Integrate knowledge, approaches, methods, values, and potential contributions from multiple professions, sectors, and systems in addressing public health problems.
4. Create a strategic plan.
5. Facilitate shared decision-making through negotiation and consensus-building methods.
6. Create organizational change strategies.
7. Propose strategies to promote inclusion and equity within public health programs, policies, & systems.
8. Assess one's own strengths and weaknesses in leadership capacities, including cultural proficiency.
9. Propose human, fiscal, and other resources to achieve a strategic goal.
10. Cultivate new resources and revenue streams to achieve a strategic goal.

Policy & Programs

1. Design a system-level intervention to address a public health issue.
2. Integrate knowledge of cultural values and practices in the design of public health policies & programs.
3. Integrate scientific information, legal and regulatory approaches, ethical frameworks, and varied stakeholder interests in policy development and analysis.
4. Propose interprofessional and/or intersectoral team approaches to improving public health.

Education & Workforce Development

1. Assess an audience's knowledge and learning needs.
2. Deliver training or educational experiences that promote learning in academic, organizational, or community settings.
3. Use best practice modalities in pedagogical practices.

Departmental-Specific Competencies

1. Apply the latest applied science methodologies for testing research hypotheses and solving practical problems in environmental health sciences.
2. Communicate effectively in writing and orally the results of research findings to other professionals.
3. Identify significant gaps in the current applied knowledge in environmental health sciences and develop approaches for filling those gaps.
4. Conceive, develop, and conduct original research leading to practical applications in environmental health sciences.
5. Establish, organize, and operate an independent applied research program in environmental health sciences.

# EHS DrPH Requirements

## Course Requirements

The DrPH requires 36 credits of coursework. DrPH students are expected to be continuously enrolled in the program until its completion and are expected to take their courses in a timely fashion. Most of the coursework should be completed in the first two to three years of the program, although a longer timeline is possible. Students can register for research credits, when appropriate, as a part of the 36-

credit requirement for graduation. All students must enroll in Journal Club at least once a year for 6 semesters while in the program. The culminating experience requirement is described below. The process of selecting a research topic and faculty advisor is also described below. The timeline for completion of the DrPH degree is 7 years.

Upon admission to the program, students meet with the Director of Academic Programs and the DrPH Faculty Director. At that time, information and recommendations will be offered regarding coursework, planning ahead for the qualifying exam, and any other academic information in preparation for the student's experience in the program.

All students must register for and take G4010 - RESPONSIBLE CONDUCT OF RESEARCH AND RELATED POLICY ISSUES. The course is typically offered in the spring semester. More information can be found here.

Students are eligible to take their Qualifying Examination once they have completed the bulk of their coursework and have a practicum and thesis proposal. Coursework outside the School and Department requirements should focus on the student's career goals. The curriculum must be approved by the Faculty Mentor and program leadership.

### *Sample Curriculum for DrPH Program*

1) The Molecular Epidemiology Track

The Molecular Epidemiology Track focuses on the molecular mechanisms that underlie epidemiological findings. This focus requires additional grounding in basic biology, including molecular biology and genetics.

The courses in **bold** are required Core Courses of the DrPH. The remaining courses are a suggested curriculum. We recognize that students will take courses most consistent with their career goals. Below is a possible part-time schedule of courses.

| Molecular Epidemiology Track Curriculum | |
|---|---|
| Semester | Courses (36 Credits) |
| Year 1 Fall<br>7.0 Credits | • **P9070 Case Studies in PH Leadership I (CORE) (1.5)**<br>• P8307 Molecular Epidemiology (3.0)<br>• P9370 Journal Club in Environmental Health Sciences (1.0)<br>• P8325 Risk Assessment, Communication, and Management (1.5) |
| Year 1 Spring<br>7.0 or 8.5 Credits | • **P9050 Seminar in Strategic Management (CORE) (1.5)**<br>• **P9040 Seminar in Management and Organizational Behavior (CORE) (1.5)**<br>• **P9060 Essentials in Teaching and Communication (1.5) (can be taken during Year 1 or Year 2 Spring)**<br>• P6360 Analysis of Environmental Health Data (3.0)<br>• P9370 Journal Club in Environmental Health Sciences (1.0) |
| Summer | • Practicum (this is a requirement of the program, but does not have to take place specifically in Summer) |
| Year 2 Fall<br>8.5 Credits | • **P9071 Case Studies in PH Leadership II (CORE) (1.5)**<br>• P9370 Journal Club in Environmental Health Sciences (1.0)<br>• P8335 Quantitative Methods in Biomarkers Research (1.5) |

| | |
|---|---|
| | • P8336 Experimental Methods in Biomarkers Research (1.5)<br>• P6385 Principles of Genetics and the Environment (3.0) |
| Year 2 Spring<br>8.5 Credits | • P8332 Advanced Analytic Methods in EHS (3.0)<br>• P8438 Epidemiology II: Design and Conduct of Observational Epidemiology (3.0)<br>• P8100 Applied Regression (3.0)<br>• P9370 Journal Club in Environmental Health Sciences (1.0)*<br>• QUALIFYING EXAM |
| Post Year 2<br>Summer | • P9370 Journal Club in Environmental Health Sciences every semester until thesis-writing semester |

*Journal Club can be taken for zero credits once students have reached the 36 required credit limit.

2) The Toxicology Track

The Toxicology Track focuses on how humans respond to environmental toxicant exposure. The courses in this track draw on basic biology, organic chemistry, molecular biology and genetics.

Students in the Toxicology Track are expected to take relevant biology courses that will prepare them for their laboratory-based thesis work. Candidates take a full year of Biochemistry and Molecular Biology, a course taught to all graduate students in the Medical School.

The courses in **bold** are required Core Courses of the DrPH. The remaining courses are a suggested curriculum. We recognize that students will take courses most consistent with their career goals. Below is a possible part-time schedule of courses.

| Toxicology Track Curriculum | |
|---|---|
| Semester | Courses (36 Credits) |
| Year 1 Fall<br>7.0 – 10.00 Credits | • **P9070 Case Studies in PH Leadership I (CORE) (1.5)**<br>• P8312 Principles of Toxicology (3.0)<br>• P6385 Principles of Genetics & the Environment (3.0) optional<br>• P8325 Risk Assessment, Communication, and Management (1.5)<br>• P9370 Journal Club in Environmental Health Sciences (1.0) |
| Year 1 Spring<br>8.5 Credits | • **P9050 Seminar in Strategic Management (CORE) (1.5 points)**<br>• **P9040 Seminar in Management and Organizational Behavior (CORE) (1.5 points)**<br>• P8326 Public Heath Epigenetics (3.0)<br>• P8313 Toxicokinetics (1.5)<br>• P9370 Journal Club in Environmental Health Sciences (1.0) |
| Year 2 Fall<br>8.5 – 11.5 Credits | • **P9071 Case Studies in PH Leadership II (CORE) (1.5)**<br>• P8371 Public Health GIS (3.0) (optional)<br>• P9370 Journal Club in Environmental Health Sciences (1.0)<br>• P8308 Molecular Toxicology (3.0)<br>• P8306 Occupational and Environmental Hygiene (3.0) |
| Year 2 Spring<br>8.5 – 11.5 Credits | • **P9060 Essentials of Teaching and Communication (1.5) (can be taken during Year 1 or Year 2 Spring)**<br>• P9370 Journal Club in Environmental Health Sciences (1.0) |

| | |
|---|---|
| | • P8334 Computational Toxicology (3.0)<br>• P8320 Applied Environmental and Industrial Hygiene (3.0)<br>• Any elective (optional) (3.0) |
| Post Year 2 | • P9370 Journal Club in Environmental Health Sciences (1.0)* |

*Journal Club can be taken for zero credits once students have reached the 36 required credit limit.

## Journal Club

All DrPH candidates must attend Journal Club a total of 6 times during their time in the program.

Journal Club satisfies several core competencies for the DrPH including:

- Conceive, develop, and conduct original research leading to practical applications in environmental health sciences.
- Apply the latest applied science methodologies for testing research hypotheses and solving practical problems in environmental health sciences.
- Communicate effectively in writing and orally the results of research findings to the public and other professionals.
- Acquire skills to develop a well-conceived proposal and to create a written proposal aimed at acquiring funding for a project to carry out your proposed studies.
- Compose a research article for submission to a peer-reviewed scientific journal or other high-impact writing, such as on the WHO website.
- Report research findings at professional meetings.
- Summarize research findings for a non-technical audience.
- Identify significant gaps in the current applied knowledge in environmental health sciences and develop approaches to fill those gaps.
- And recognize what is needed to establish, organize, and operate an independent applied research program in environmental health sciences.

As a part of this course, students read primary research papers and present a critical review of their readings. The goal of this course is to teach students to present and debate informative, challenging, and current topics from scientific literature. Each semester, the course topic relates to a specific area of study in environmental sciences. The specific topic is chosen each semester by the course instructor. Some sample topics include the effects of ozone depletion on cells; asthma in the urban environment; recent advances in the use of biomarkers in predicting cancer; health effects of heavy metals in the environment; population epigenetics; waterborne pathogens and disease, and professional development, e.g., leadership and management. Every four years, one semester is devoted to leadership and management training for environmental health scientists.

## Academic Honesty & Honor Code:

All Mailman students are expected to adhere to the required standards for academic and scientific integrity. Please review the latest information on “Turnitin” via the link below. These can be found in the Office of Student Affairs (OSA) Student Handbook statement on Academic Honesty: Honor Code of Academic Integrity.

## Registration

**DrPH Continuous Registration Policy:** RSRH P0001, RSRH P0002, RSRH P0003

After completing coursework, and while preparing the dissertation, a candidate must be continuously enrolled at the University and within the program of study. Students must register for one tuition point in all fall and spring semesters in which they are not otherwise registered for course credits. The one tuition credit point is satisfied in EHS through P9370 Journal Club. In addition, all candidates must also register for a non-credit, no charge continuous registration, RSRH P0002 or RSRH P0003 until the final semester. In the last semester, all students should register for RSRH P0001, a zero-credit course that carries one tuition credit and a full-time status.

## Registration Policies and Procedures

Please refer to the Mailman Handbook found here for all registration policies and procedures.

To view the most updated course listings, please use this link.

**Progress Reporting**

All EHS DrPH students are required to submit a brief progress report at the start of the academic year (see Appendix A). Each student must meet with either their advisor or with the DrPH Faculty Director and Director of Academic Programs if they do not yet have an assigned advisor. Completed reports are to be submitted to the Director of Academic Programs.

**Grades and Pass/Fail Policy**

Students are expected to obtain a grade of B or higher in every course for which they are registered. If a candidate receives a grade below a B, it will be brought to the attention of the EHS Doctoral Committee, and a review will take place to determine the circumstances behind the grade. If a student receives a second grade below a B they will be required to meet with the EHS Doctoral Committee and, if deemed appropriate, could be asked to leave the program.

DrPH candidates in MSPH doctoral programs may take no more than two elective courses for pass/fail, with the prior approval of the department.

## Identifying a Faculty Mentor

Upon entering the program, students will meet with the Director of the DrPH program, Dr. Greg Freyer to determine a program plan and an area of research. DrPH students can identify a research project that is at their place of work, but outside of their actual job or work on a project with a faculty member in the department in the former case an appropriate faculty member will be identified to serve as the departmental mentor. In the latter case the advisor will be the faculty member who the student is doing research with.

## Applied Practicum Experience (APEx)

Regardless of the amount or level of prior experience, all DrPH students are required to engage in an Applied Practicum Experience (APEx) in which students are responsible for the completion of at least one project that is meaningful for an organization and to advanced public health practice.

The work product may be a single project or a set of related projects that demonstrate a depth of competence. The deliverable must contain a reflective component that includes the student's expression of personal and/or professional reactions to the applied practice experience. This may take the form of a journal or other written product, a professional portfolio, or another deliverable that serves to assess the ability of the student to meet Department and School competencies.

The applied practice experience takes place within an organization external to the student's School or program so that it is not merely an academic exercise but an application of learning to a "real world" setting. Relevant organizations may include governmental, non-governmental, non-profit, industrial, and for-profit settings. The Office of Field Practice and individual departments identify sites in a manner that is sensitive to the needs of the agencies or organizations involved, and sites should benefit from Mailman students' experiences. The applied practice experience may be completed within a student's own work setting as long as the applied practice experience differs substantially from a student's current job description and meets the required competencies described below. You will work with your advisor to identify an organization and project.

The applied practice experience must meet a minimum of five (5) foundational and/or concentration-specific competencies that are reinforced and/or assessed through application of skills. One of these competencies must be a School-wide or Department-specific competency in leadership, management, and governance. Competencies for the applied practical experience must be agreed upon by the student, advisor, and applied learning experience preceptor, as specified in the statement of work form.

While there is no minimum number of hours for the applied practice experience, it does require substantive, quality opportunities that address the identified competencies.

Your applied practicum experience will be part of your final culminating ILE, which is described below. A requirement of the program is to pass a Qualifying Exam, which is taken after your coursework and once you have planned your applied practicum experience and developed a plan for a research project. An interim report will be presented and defended by you as part of the Qualifying Exam. More details on the next page.

**Deliverables:**

- Design a qualitative, quantitative, mixed methods, policy analysis, or evaluation project to address a public health issue
- Explain the use and limitations of surveillance systems and national surveys in assessing, monitoring, and evaluating policies and programs and to address a population's health
- Initial practicum proposal, 1-2 pages, with a plan that is submitted for approval for the Qualifying Exam.
- Full proposal Qualifying Exam, 5-7 pages
- Practicum report, ten pages at the time of the Integrated Learning Experience.
- Practicum presentation at a weekly Departmental Seminar the semester following completion.

# Qualifying Examination (QE)

Becoming an expert writer is a major goal of the DrPH program. It is also essential that students be able to orally defend a proposal. To this end, the QE is composed of the written proposal and an oral defense and is to be completed and defended no later than after then May of the third year in the program.

**Written Proposal**

The QE is composed of two writing exercises.

- **The first** is a summary of the practicum with a description of how it fits into public health, particularly the field of environmental health sciences. This must include the mentor(s) name, review the development of the project, the way it contributes to the development of the student's career directory, make clear that it is distinct from any of the student's employment duties and outline how the project contributed to deepening exposure to, or mastery of, specific competencies and skills required by the EHS Department. This report should be 5-7 pages.

- **The second** is a grant proposal that should follow the format of the NIH F31. Students only need to include a Project Summary, Project Narrative, Specific Aims, Significance, innovation, and Approach. The proposal should be written in consultation with the faculty advisor but written by the student and should reflect the work that the candidate will be carrying out with the faculty member. A one-page abstract or summary of the proposal needs to be submitted to the Chair of the DrPH QE Committee for approval prior to writing.

Following the submission of the works, the Chair of the DrPH QE Committee, in consultation with the student and mentor, will schedule an oral defense. The Committee is made up of 3 EHS faculty members and an additional member who can contribute expertise to either the practicum or thesis work. As the QE will test the knowledge base of students within the overall field of EHS and Public Health and, more specifically, on their thesis topic area and coursework, students should anticipate a wide range of relevant questions from the committee members.

Please work with your advisor in creating this. You are encouraged to seek out a peer to get feedback while writing your proposal.

**Format of the Oral Exam**
At the Examination, the student will give a formal presentation of the practicum and thesis proposals, which is followed by a question-and-answer period during which time the candidate defends the validity of their proposal and answers questions related to the proposed area. The student should be prepared to answer questions related to environmental health sciences and their coursework, where it pertains to the subject. The oral presentation should last approximately 15 minutes, with 30-45 minutes of question time to follow. Students can prepare extra slides used to respond to questions they might anticipate, or that contain details that were not in the presented slides.

**After the defense, the Committee will vote to either:**

- Pass – the student will move forward to thesis work as a candidate.
- Conditional Pass – the student will make minor revisions to the proposals that will then be addressed with the thesis advisor.

- Does Not Pass – The student is required to undergo another exam within three months to move forward with thesis work. If the student fails the second exam, then the second failure is final, and the student is not permitted to continue in the program and will not receive the DrPH degree.

## Integrative Learning Experience (ILE)

The combination of your thesis and practicum work is referred to as the integrated learning experience (ILE). After completing the QE, the candidate's focus is to carry out their research project and complete the APEx requirement.

Thesis projects should comprise original research. Therefore, candidates are obligated to perform studies that collect data and complete appropriate analyses of said data. The best measure of the candidate's work is whether the research is deemed worthy of publication in peer-reviewed journals. While publishing is not required, the candidate's goal should be to have at least one publication as the primary author.

Work on the APEx can be carried out simultaneously with the thesis work or in a separate block of time. Ideally, the thesis work and APEx will have overlapping themes. Both will be evaluated separately.

**Advisory and Thesis Committee**

One of the first steps is to choose an Advisory/Thesis Committee in consultation with their advisor within two (2) months of completing the QE. It is required that all Thesis Committees have at least two members that are from the Department. Thus, it is worthwhile to consider the guidelines for the composition of the Dissertation Committee when choosing the members of the Thesis Committee.

The Thesis Committee serves as a resource to the candidate during his or her thesis work. They meet regularly (no less than twice a year) to review the candidate's progress and make recommendations. With the assistance of their faculty mentor, candidates must initiate the scheduling of these meetings. The candidate must also complete a Thesis Committee Form (Appendix B) for each meeting, which requires approval from all Committee members and must be submitted to the Academic Director at the completion of the meeting. The Dissertation Defense Committee design is based on the requirements of the Mailman School of Public Health (see Dissertation Committee Formation below). This committee's role is to oversee the actual defense of the thesis and then to vote on its acceptability as worthy of a DrPH degree.

**Dissertation Committee Composition**

The Dissertation Committee can be the same as the Thesis Committee. Three members must be senior faculty; at least one should be a senior member from the Department, while two members must be from outside the Department. One senior faculty member, who is not the candidate's dissertation sponsor, is designated impartial chair of the ad hoc dissertation committee. Any or all the members can come from the Advisory Committee, but the makeup must include the advisor, two members from within the Department, and two from outside of the Department.

## Dissertation Structure

Several formats are acceptable for a written thesis. There are some standards, however, that are expected, and the format below is a typical representation of the final dissertation. Those elements that

are required by the department are indicated with an (R). There is no specific page requirement, but a typical DrPH thesis is usually 150-200 pages in length, including tables, figures, and references.

One option is to follow the required guidelines, including an extensive Literature Review, and then use publications (including submitted and accepted) as the middle chapters, followed by a Conclusions and Future Directions Section.

(R) Title Page
This contains the thesis title, candidate's name and a statement submitted in partial fulfillment of the Doctoral of Philosophy degree.

(R) Abstract
This is usually a one- to three-page summary of the candidate's thesis work, where the question/hypothesis of the thesis is specified along with a brief outline of their data, results, and conclusions.

(R) Table of Contents
This should state each chapter's title and delineate the subtopics in each. Figures should be listed here as well, preferably in a separate table.

(R) Acknowledgments
This is a brief statement (<1 page) where the candidate often acknowledges the contributions of his/her mentor, committee members, colleagues, other advisors, peers, and family members who assisted in the candidate's ability to successfully conduct his/her research.

(R) Introduction/Literature Review*
This section is an exhaustive review of relevant literature that should build toward the formulation of a hypothesis. It usually begins with a broader perspective of the field of study and subsequently narrows its focus on those topics most relevant to the candidate's thesis work.

Methods*
A comprehensive Methods section is essential to a well-presented and cohesive thesis, particularly since the thesis is often used as a template for instruction by the project's successors. Methods can be included in individual chapters and need not be presented in a separate chapter, especially if the thesis has multiple chapters on different aspects of the research.

Results*
This section should contain multiple chapters. Ideally, each chapter is a publication relative to the thesis for which the candidate is the first author. These can be papers that are already published, in the press, or submitted. If the candidate was a secondary author, then there will need to be a separate write-up that only includes the parts of the paper that represent the candidate's work. Unpublished work should also be included in the thesis as a separate chapter(s), one for each topic. Even if papers make up the thesis, they must still contain separate chapters for an extensive literature review, overall conclusions, and future directions.

Discussion*
In this section, the interpretation of the candidate's results is considered, along with an explanation of how these results can be incorporated into an increased understanding of the field.

(R) Conclusions/Future Directions

In this section, the candidate summarizes his/her findings and draws final conclusions. Future directions and related studies are also proposed.

(R) References
Full references with titles are specified in this section.
*This format can be used for each chapter if papers are published.

**Dissertation Proposal and Defense**

The DrPH dissertation has two parts:

1) the final implementation plan and any data from it, if appropriate
2) the research thesis

Doctoral dissertations should rigorously examine or test hypotheses or concepts that can significantly advance the field of public health. Original data, either from a laboratory, field, or epidemiologic study, is used as evidence supporting the thesis, and the quality of writing must be thoroughly professional.

**Distributing Dissertation Copies to Committee Members**

Dissertation sponsors typically read and provide feedback on multiple drafts of dissertation chapters/papers. Other members of the Committee may read only "near-to-finished" drafts or multiple drafts of selected chapters. Students should speak with their sponsor regarding when to seek input from committee members. The degree of committee member involvement varies substantially, depending on the composition of the committee and the research topic. Once the thesis is deemed ready by the sponsor, a designated "second reader" committee member should critically read the document and have his/her edits incorporated into the document.

**Scheduling and Completing the Defense**

Once all chapters and supporting documents have been completed and both the sponsor and second reader agree that the dissertation is ready to defend, the student distributes the thesis to all committee members. No less than four weeks should be allowed for committee members to read the manuscript. The Associate Director should be notified when the dissertation is in its final state so that a time, date, and place of defense may be arranged. The candidate is responsible for identifying a day and time that works for all dissertation defense committee members while the Academic Associate Director secures a room and advertises the seminar day and time. Remember that faculty maintain busy schedules, and confirming a day and time that works for all committee members can sometimes take a few weeks. Please anticipate such considerations when determining a realistic defense date/time frame.

The Dissertation Defense Form is provided electronically to the advisor prior to the defense and signed by the Dissertation Committee members. This form is submitted by the Academic Associate Director.

The Defense is comprised of two parts: 1) a one-hour public portion that is typically in seminar format and is advertised to all department members and, immediately following, 2) a closed-door portion typically lasting approximately two hours during which the Defense questions the candidate on his/her thesis or related areas of study.

The closed-door defense portion is attended by the student and his/her committee members and generally lasts about 2 hours. The chair of the committee often runs the defense, which begins with a short discussion (without the student present) to determine the general focus of the defense. Next, the

student makes a brief presentation of the dissertation research and major findings. Following the presentation, committee members ask questions about the research and its implications. After the questioning is completed, the student is asked to leave the room while the committee deliberates. Committee members discuss whether the dissertation is adequate, what revisions are required, and whether the dissertation merits an award of distinction. It is the responsibility of the sponsor to communicate with the student about required revisions. Depending on the level of revision needed, the sponsor and/or additional members of the committee will review the revised portions and determine whether the revisions are acceptable.

**Evaluation of Dissertation**

The committee must decide on one of four possible assessments: Pass with Distinction, Pass, Incomplete, and Fail. The evaluation of the committee is recorded on a standard form and saved on a file in the department.

**Pass**

A unanimous vote or a vote with only one dissent in a lower grade constitutes a pass. The dissertation is deemed acceptable, subject to minor revisions. Supervised by his/her sponsor, the candidate corrects the dissertation considering the committee's comments. Upon completion of the required revisions, the candidate is recommended for the degree. All revisions should be completed, and the final dissertation deposited no later than six months from the date of the dissertation defense unless a shorter timeline is agreed upon by the committee and the candidate.

In case of a split vote, the voting sheet and dissertation are submitted to the Director of Doctoral Studies and the OSA for review and final decision.

**Incomplete**

The dissertation is deemed acceptable, subject to major revisions. All revisions must be completed no sooner than three months and no later than one year from the date of the dissertation defense. The amount of time given is at the discretion of the Dissertation Committee. Upon completion and acceptance of the required revision, the defense is considered successful.

Under this scenario, the committee chair shall delegate responsibility for the outcome of the revision to a subcommittee of from one to three members of the original committee. When completed, the major revisions must be submitted to each of the members of the revision subcommittee. If and when each member states in writing that the new text is satisfactory, letters are sent to the Dean's office to change the vote record from "Incomplete" to "Pass."

**Fail**

The dissertation is deemed unacceptable, and the candidate is not recommended for the degree.

In addition to applying for degree conferral on Student Services Online (SSOL), conferral of the DrPH degree requires confirmation of a completed ILE. DrPH students should follow the steps outlined below for defending and depositing their ILE, unless instructed by their department to follow a different process.

**Finalizing the Defense**

1. The Defense of Dissertation form(link is external and opens in a new window) must be submitted to the Office of Enrollment Services(link sends e-mail) by the student's academic department indicating a successful defense of the Integrative Learning Experience (ILE).
2. The Office of Enrollment Services must receive confirmation of successful completion of any required revisions (Minor or Major) to the ILE by the department academic director or chairperson of the committee.
3. Students must complete the Deposit of ILE to ProQuest.

**Deposit of the ILE to ProQuest**

The ILE deposit, not the defense, is the final requirement. Students may only deposit when all revisions are complete and with approval from their academic department.
There are two steps to completing the deposit - these steps can be done in any order, but the deposit is only considered finalized when both steps are complete:

- Complete the required Survey of Earned Doctorates
- Upload and submit a PDF copy of your ILE to ProQuest ETD Administrator
    - There are specific formatting requirements for the ILE following the same guidelines placed on PhD dissertations. Visit the GSAS website to view the guide to formatting.

Faculty and staff do their best to provide feedback regarding formatting and other matters as quickly as possible, but it is the student's responsibility to ensure that all steps of the deposit are completed in time for degree conferral, including a correctly formatted Integrative Learning Experience.

## Time Limit and Monitoring Student Progress on Dissertation Research

Candidates should expect the research component to take at least the equivalent of one year of full-time effort. An overall time limit of seven (7) years for completion of degree requirements and the dissertation is set from the date of first registration following admission into the doctoral program. Students may request a leave of absence from their department. Leaves of absence must be approved by both the department and the Dean of Students. Periods during which the student is formally granted a leave of absence will not be counted in the seven-year limit.

The student, with support from his or her sponsor, may request from the Director of Doctoral Studies and the Dean of Students an annual extension of the seven-year time limit. Such extensions will not automatically be granted but will be looked upon favorably if the candidate can demonstrate that progress is being made towards completing the dissertation: Time Limit and Monitoring Progress of Dissertation.

**Time limit for Final Submission of Dissertation**

As stated above, dissertations approved as pass (with only minor revisions required) must be deposited within six months of the defense date. Dissertations voted as incomplete (approved with major revisions required) must be deposited within one year of the defense date.

# Timeline

**Detailed EHS DrPH Timeline***

| Approximate Time in Program | Action | Outcome |
|---|---|---|
| Fall Semester Year 1 | Meet with Director of Educational Affairs to map out first semester. | • Develop a timeline for DrPH |
| Fall Semester Year 1 | Register for Journal Club and attend Seminar. | • Attendance of Journal Club every semester until writing on dissertation begins. |
| Spring Semester Year 1 | Meet with Director of Educational Affairs to confirm spring semester. | • Spring courses confirmed. |
| Spring Semester Year 1 | Meet with Director of Educational Affairs and/or Academic Associate Director to review an academic progress report at beginning of spring semester. | • Bi-Annual Academic Progress Report is completed, accepted and kept on file. |
| End of Spring Semester Year 1 | Process of selecting a research topic and faculty advisor should begin towards the end of the first year in the program. | • Researching topic areas and meeting with potential faculty advisors as appropriate. |
| Fall Semester Year 2 | Meet with Director of Educational Affairs or new mentor early fall to complete bi-annual academic progress report. | • Bi-Annual Academic Progress Report is completed, accepted and kept on file. |
| Fall Semester Year 2 | Choose a mentor for thesis in preparation for qualifying exam. | • Thesis advisor selected. |
| Fall Semester Year 2 | Select a thesis project topic. | • Topic selected. |
| Spring Semester Year 2 | Actively working on qualifying exam. | • Qualifying exam may be taken as early as end of this semester but must be completed no later than end of the summer.** |
| Spring Semester Year 2 | Meet with Thesis Advisor and/or Director of Educational Affairs to review bi-annual academic progress report at start of spring semester. | • Bi-Annual Academic Progress Report is completed by mid-Feb, accepted and kept on file. |
| Post Year 2 | Within 2 months of completion of the qualifying exam set up a meeting with your thesis committee. This committee is made up in consultation with the sponsor. | • Established thesis committee.<br>• This information is submitted via email to the Academic Associate Director.<br>• First meeting scheduled and completed.<br>• Thesis Committee Form completed and submitted to Academic Associate Director. |
| Post Year 2 | Complete thesis work and meet with thesis committee every six months. | • Met with committee two times in the calendar year.<br>• Submitted a Thesis Committee Form to Academic Associate Director. |
| Post Year 2 | Yearly seminar presentation followed up with a bi-annual Thesis Committee Meeting. This occurs up until dissertation defense. | • Met with committee two times in the calendar year. |

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| | | • Submitted a Thesis Committee Form to Academic Associate Director. |
| End of Year Until Program Completed | Bi-Annual Academic Progress Report is reviewed with primary advisor. | • Academic Progress Report is completed by mid-October and mid-February, accepted and kept on file. |
| Upon Completion of Thesis Work | Finalize Dissertation committee membership (see Dissertation Committee Formation section of this handbook). | • Thesis writing begins.<br>• Feedback received from thesis advisor.<br>• Identify a thesis reader who is a dissertation committee member who is on faculty at Columbia. |
| Thesis Writing Completed | Schedule dissertation defense with the assistance of the Academic Associate Director. | • Defend |
| Post Defense | Make corrections to thesis and deposit with OSA. | • See OSA rules for dissertation deposit.*** |

* This timeline was created as an outline for a full-time student. Part-time students will need to adjust this schedule as needed with the assistance of Dr. Freyer, Nina Kulacki and/or their primary advisor.

** The qualifying exam currently represents a standing committee of 6 EHS Faculty Members: Drs. Freyer (Chair), Perzanowski. Herbstman, Navas-Acien, Pearson and Jack. An additional outside member is added to lend expertise on the topic of the thesis proposal or practicum. Three standing members and the outside member comprise the committee.

*** Upon completion of the qualifying exam you must register for DrPH Continuous Registration and/or Journal Club. Please see the Continuous Registration information in this handbook for more details on this information.

## Appendix A: DrPH PROGRESS REPORT:

# DrPH Progress Report

| **Student Information:** (*This form must be completed by early fall and spring every year in the program*) | | |
|---|---|---|
| **Student Name:** | | |
| **CUID:** | | |
| **Advisor (*Primary*):** | | |
| **Co-Advisor (*if applicable*):** | | |
| **Matriculation Date:** | | |
| **Current/anticipated members of the dissertation committee:** (*5 in total – 3 internal to EHS, including sponsor, chair, and second reader, then 2 external.*) | | |
| *Print names in this column* | *Email confirmation date for each in this column* | |
| | | |
| | | |
| | | |
| | | |
| | | |
| **Semester and Year completing this form:** | | |
| **Qualifying Exam Completed:** | If yes, date: _____ | If no, anticipated date: _____ |
| **Is your thesis committee different than your above stated anticipated dissertation committee?** | Yes<br><br>No | If you responded yes, please explain the rationale for the difference in committee members: |

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| **Have you met with your thesis committee since your last bi-annual review? (*Reminder – Dissertation committee meetings should take place twice a calendar year*):** | Yes<br><br>No | If you responded no, please explain the rationale: |
| **What progress have you made toward your degree over the past semester? (*Do not include progress recorded in last semester's report.*) Please explain any departures from last semester/year's goals.** | | |
| **Itemize the remaining requirements for your DrPH degree, particularly including your dissertation, and include your timetable for completion of each requirement. Indicate which requirements you expect to complete during the next semester.** | | |
| **Please give the projected date for completion of your dissertation for defense:** | | |
| **Please list any peer-reviewed publications you had this semester/year (*including those in progress*).** | | |
| **Please list any domestic or international conferences you attended this year and your role at the conference (*e.g. did you present?*). Please list any other presentation opportunities you have had since your last review.** | | |
| **List any external fellowships you applied for in this past academic** | | |

| | |
|---|---|
| **semester. Indicate which ones were successful and provide the award amount.** | |
| **Section II to be completed by the dissertation sponsor.** | |
| **Comments on student's progress on the dissertation during the last semester (*if not at that point, then address progress on courses and research*).** | |
| **Comments on student's objectives for the next semester.** | |
| **Is the timetable for milestones (*e.g. qualifying exam and/or dissertation*) reasonable? Is the student's projected date of completion realistic?** | |
| **I have met with the student to discuss his or her progress.** | Yes No |
| **We have also discussed possible external funding sources.** | Yes No |

**Affirmed (Sponsor):** _____ **Date:** _____

| **Section III: to be completed by the dissertation sponsor.** |
| --- |
| |

**Student Signature:** _____ **Date:** _____

Appendix B:

# Dissertation Committee Form

| **Student Information** | |
|---|---|
| **Student Name:** | |
| **Advisor (*Primary*):** | |
| **Co-Advisor (*if applicable*):** | |
| **Matriculation Date:** | |
| **Committee Members:**<br>**(IMPORTANT: *List names here & confirm approval of form via email after meeting.*)** | |
| *Print names in this column* | *Email confirmation date for each in this column* |
| | |
| | |
| | |
| | |
| **Meeting details: (*Please use as much space as needed to include specific details.*)** | |
| **Meeting Date:** | |
| **Anticipated Defense Date:** | |
| **Were goals from previous meetings met?**<br><br>**If changes/other details, list here.** | |
| **List specific goals for next meeting:** | |
| **Next meeting planned for date or estimated date here:**<br>**(*Meetings should be held in Oct and Apr unless committee specifies earlier meeting here*)** | |

**Advisor signature:** _____ **Date:** _____

**Co-Advisor signature (*if applicable*):** _____ **Date:** _____

**Student Signature:** _____ **Date:** _____

# Appendix C: Dissertation Defense Form

This form may be found here.