Arnold School of Public Health
UNIVERSITY OF SOUTH CAROLINA

2024-2025

Department of Health Services Policy and Management
DOCTORAL PROGRAM
HANDBOOK

Revised May 2024

This Handbook of the programs, policies, and practices of the Department of Health Services Policy and Management is not an official University document. If there are discrepancies between this Handbook and the University's Graduate Studies Bulletin, the Graduate Studies Bulletin supersedes

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1 Objectives of the Department of Health Services Policy and Management

1.1 Mission

The Department of Health Services Policy and Management's mission is to be actively involved in improving quality, safety, efficiency and effectiveness of health services and health systems locally and globally.

Revised and approved Fall 2021

1.2 Vision

HSPM seeks to excel in graduate education and research in health services and policy research in South Carolina, the nation and in distinct international markets. Through its master's and doctoral programs, it will produce well-trained graduates ready to assume or progress to leadership positions in health services, public health, and research/academic organizations. The Department will serve as a networking/integrating resource for alumni, providers, and leaders in health services in South Carolina and beyond. The Department will offer educational programs that are continually improved to respond to the changing needs of the dynamic health services and policy environment. Through research, teaching, service and consulting, faculty will create a department on the leading edge of health services management, policy, and research.

Revised and approved November 2009

1.3 Goals and Objectives

The Department will implement its vision by providing students in the Master of Health Administration, Master of Public Health, Doctoral program, and other degree programs with the highest quality graduate education based on excellence in teaching, research, and service.

2   The Doctoral Program

2.1   Overview of Program Competencies

Our Doctor of Philosophy (PhD) program seeks to equip doctoral students with the vision, knowledge and skills required to make a substantive impact on health services, health policy and healthcare management through teaching, research, and policy leadership roles.

Upon completion of the degree program, students will be able to:

1. Understand the organization, financing, delivery, and outcomes of health care services in the United States.

2. Propose important and answerable research questions based on identified evidence gaps to advance policy and/or practice.

3. Apply appropriate theoretical and conceptual models from a variety of disciplines to generate testable hypotheses to address contemporary issues in health services research.

4. Recognize the strengths and weaknesses of various research designs and identify appropriate research designs to answer specific health services research questions.

5. Collect primary data or access secondary data appropriate for health services research questions.

6. Use or develop a conceptual model to specify study constructs for health services research questions and develop variables from data to measure these constructs reliably and validly.

7. Be able to apply appropriate quantitative and/or qualitative methods to answer specific health services research questions, correctly interpret study results, and place study results in the broader context of related literature and the identified evidence gap.

8. Lead or work collaboratively in teams within and across disciplines.

9. Effectively translate, communicate, and disseminate the meaning and importance of health services research findings to diverse academic and non-academic audiences, including funding agencies, in written and oral formats.

10. Engage in the ethical and responsible conduct of rigorous and reproducible research.

2.2   Admission Criteria and Application Requirements

1. While applicants with only a baccalaureate degree will be considered, strong preference is given to applicants with a master's degree in public health, health administration, business administration, public administration, public policy, or a related field. Students without previous graduate work in public health or in statistics/biostatistics will be required to complete prerequisites that do not count towards doctoral program credit hours.

2. Official transcripts from all schools or colleges previously attended.

3. Transcripts from non-US institutions must be verified by World Education Services (WES) or equivalent evaluation service. Please submit a comprehensive course-by-course evaluation (WES ICAP). However, transcripts from non-US institutions that are accredited by a US accrediting body need not be verified by WES.

4. Prior graduate and undergraduate coursework with at least a 3.0 grade point average (based on 4.0 scale).

5. The Graduate Record Examination (GRE) and the Graduate Management Admission Test (GMAT)

are optional. If provided, the scores must be sent to

(a)   Institution code: 0780 (U of South Carolina Sch Pub Hlth SOPHAS)

(b)   GMAT ETS DI code: 5861; Program code Doctor of Philosophy-JV2-JW-46

6. For international applicants whose native language is not English, scores from the Test of English as a Foreign Language (TOEFL), IELTS, Intl. Academic Course Type 2 exam, PTE Academic or Duolingo is required. (Summer 2025 is the final application term that Duolingo scores have been approved for use at this time). The minimum acceptable TOEFL score for HSPM is 90, IELTS Intl. Academic Course Type 2, 7, and PTE Academic, 60, or Duolingo scores of 120. A completed degree program in the US, in other native English-speaking countries (e.g., U.K., N.Z., Australia), or from a US-accredited foreign institution in which English is the language of instruction will qualify for a waiver of English proficiency test scores.

TOEFL: Scores should be submitted electronically using the USC Institutional code: 5818.

IELTS: Scores should be mailed directly to the USC Graduate School:

The Graduate School
University of South Carolina
1705 College Street, Suite 552
Columbia, SC 29208

7. Three letters of recommendation from individuals who can assess the applicant's academic and professional performance and abilities.

8. A personal statement that explains why the applicant is interested in pursuing a doctorate in health services research, outlines the applicant's research interests, and describes what appeals to the applicant about our doctoral program, including potential faculty with whom the applicant would like to work.

9. Applicants should consult our program website and our faculty research and biography page to assess whether their research interests align with the mission and objectives of the department, as well as with the research expertise of our faculty members. Applicants may direct any question about the program to our Academic Programs Specialist at hspm@mailbox.sc.edu.

10. A current curriculum vita is required.

11. **Selection procedure**. The PhD Program Committee reviews all applications and recommends selected applicants for an interview. Then, a single interview will be conducted by one or more HSPM faculty members who share the applicant's research interests. Given our apprenticeship model, a tenured or tenure-track HSPM faculty member must agree to mentor a prospective student for the applicant to be admitted to the program. The results of the interview are reported to the PhD Program Director, who makes the admission decision in consultation with the Department Chair and the applicant's proposed faculty advisor.

2.3   Financial Support

2.3.1   Full Support during First Two Years of Study

HSPM offers a competitive financial support package for full-time PhD students in residence in Columbia who are not sponsored by governments or other agencies. Full-time in-residence is defined here to be in Columbia for 10 – 13 credit hours per semester in fall and spring for the first two years of study. In exchange for working 20 hours per week as a graduate research or teaching assistant

during the fall and spring semesters, students are provided a generous stipend, plus full coverage of tuition, fees, and health insurance for the first two academic years. During this period, most of the required doctoral coursework can be completed. Continuation of funding support in Year 2 is subject to satisfactory academic performance (GPA of 3.4 or better) and graduate assistant performance. Students can earn additional income by working as a research assistant during the summer. Outstanding applicants may also be named as Arnold Fellows. Only a select number of doctoral students are awarded this fellowship. Details of financial support are outlined in decision letters sent to applicants recommended for admission.

Financially supported students must not undertake significant outside employment unless approved in advance by the PhD Program Committee.

2.3.2 Financial Support Opportunities After Two Years

Most students find research assistantship positions with faculty on grant-funded research projects to support themselves after the first two years of study (including tuition support if the grant includes such assistance).

In addition to departmental opportunities for financial support, outstanding applicants may be nominated by the Department for competitive university-level scholarships, such as the Presidential Fellowship and the Grace McFadden Fellowship.

2.4 PhD Curriculum

2.4.1 Minimum Credit Hours

The PhD in Health Services Policy and Management requires completion of 60 hours of post-baccalaureate doctoral-level course work, including 12 hours of dissertation preparation. The maximum credit hours permitted for dissertation preparation is 30 hours. Students entering the PhD program with a master's degree must complete 46 hours of post-master's course work, including 12 dissertation hours, subject to the same maximum credit hour limitation for dissertation preparation.

Enrollment in courses must be documented in the Advisement Form that is completed prior to the start of the semester. Students are responsible to schedule advisement meetings with their advisor well in advance of the start of the semester to ensure timely advisement, enrollment, and tuition coverage for the upcoming semester.

2.4.2 Required PhD Curriculum

2.4.2.1 Prerequisites

For students whose master's degree did not include coursework in introductory public health and introductory epidemiology, additional prerequisite coursework (see Public Health Core below) that does not count toward credit hours is required.

For full admission to the doctoral program of study without prerequisite statistics courses, the applicant must show documentation of proficiency in one or more statistical software packages used in our required courses (e.g., STATA, SAS, R). It could be a grade of B or better in a statistics course that used the software, or certification of course completion on the statistical software. Other ways to demonstrate proficiency are to perform data analyses as assigned by the faculty advisor or show job history involving use of statistical software packages. If not documented, the student must take such a course during the first semester of matriculation (e.g., BIOS 709), unless the student takes BIOS 700 in Fall Year 1 due to a lack of prior graduate coursework in statistics or biostatistics.

The prerequisite courses for students without prior coursework in public health and epidemiology, or

prior statistical training are detailed below.

Public Health Core for students without equivalent prior coursework	Credit Hours
Perspectives in Public Health (PUBH 700)	3
Concepts and methods in Epidemiology or equivalent (EPID 700/701)	3
Biostatistics Core for student without prior statistical training	
BIOS 700 (students without an introductory graduate biostatistics course)*	3
BIOS 757 (students without intermediate level graduate statistics)*	3

*Prior coursework must have a grade of B or better

Exemptions: To be exempt from PUBH 700 and EPID 700/701, the student should provide a transcript showing completion of, respectively, a graduate level introductory public health course and a graduate level introductory epidemiology course with a B or better grade. To be exempt from BIOS 700, the student should provide a transcript showing completion of a statistics/biostatistics course with a B or better grade. BIOS 757 can be waived if syllabus review of a previously taken intermediate biostatistics course with a B or better grade shows equivalence with the BIOS 757 syllabus.

Credit Hours: The Public Health Core and BIOS 700 do not count towards the required doctoral credit hours. BIOS 757 can be counted towards electives. The basic course in SAS, Stata, or R (e.g. 1-credit BIOS 709) will count towards elective credits.

2.4.2.2 Total Credit Hours

Students must complete the following Departmental Core courses as well as courses in a concentration area within the first two years of study, unless prerequisite courses are required.

Departmental Core	Hours
Advanced Topics in Health Policy & Management I (HSPM 845) (Health system designs, financing, performance, and outcomes)	3
Advanced Topics in Health Policy & Management II (HSPM 846) (Health care content, theories, design, and delivery)	3
Health Services Research Methods I (HSPM 717) (Introductory econometrics for policy analysis)	3
Health Services Research Methods II (HSPM 719 (Introduction to research design)	3
Advanced Data Structures and Analytic Methods for Health Services Research (HSPM 830)	3
Doctoral Seminar (HSPM 800, one credit hour each)	4
Concentration (designed by student)	9
Approved electives related to HSPM	**20* or 6****
Dissertation	12
Total Credit Hours	**60* or 46****

* If without a master's degree
**If with a master's degree.

The credit hours listed above are minimum requirements. Students may undertake additional credit

hours to strengthen their competencies and knowledge base.

2.4.2.3 Doctoral Seminar (HSPM 800)

Four doctoral seminars of 1 credit each must be completed in sequence with a grade of "satisfactory" (S).

1. **HSPM 800 (Section 001):** Faculty research presentations (Fall, Year 1) - Each session, one faculty member presents their completed or ongoing research, providing an overview of the research area and details of one (or more) research projects. Following the presentation, students submit a reflective summary to the instructor. Seminar 1 (HSPM 800 Section 001) has two goals: 1) to introduce students to faculty research early in the program, generate connections for planning students' own research and seek specialty-specific mentorship, and 2) to present a model of how research works and to familiarize students with the steps of research, which will be elaborated in subsequent sections of HSPM 800. Typically, the faculty presentations will have all or some of the required elements of a typical research proposal/study as appropriate: (a) introduction, (b) specific aims, (c) research strategy (significance and methodology/approach), (d) empirical analysis conducted and (e) results/policy implications/conclusions. Following this exposure to the research process, students will use the winter break to select a potential research topic area of interest based on a literature review and identify specific knowledge gaps to prepare for Section 002.

2. **HSPM 800 (Section 002):** Preparing the specific aims section of an original research proposal to the National Institutes of Health (First half of spring, Year 1) – The seminar goal is to enable students to translate their research interests into a tangible research project with specific aims. It covers: 1) Introduction to NIH mission and goals, and how to craft the specific aims section. 2) Hands-on preparation of successive drafts to finalize each student's specific aims section for a health services research proposal on their chosen topic. 3) Providing and receiving constructive critiques in the spirit of peer review. Fellow students and the instructor serve as reviewers of drafts to provide constructive comments. The final product by the end of the seminar is a 1-page specific aims section of an NIH-R03 proposal, with 2-3 well-developed specific aims of a research study, preparing the student for HSPM 800, Section 3.

3. **HSPM 800 (Section 003):** The study significance and conceptual framework section of the research strategy section of a R03 proposal (Second half of spring, Year 1) – This section covers: 1) Principles and guidelines for preparing an impactful "Project background, significance and conceptual framework" section of an R03 proposal. 2) Hands-on development of drafts of the above sections, 3) Using/developing a theoretical or conceptual framework as applicable to inform their research and using graphics to communicate the planned study briefly. Several theoretical frameworks commonly used in health services research will be reviewed as it applies to students' planned research projects. During this seminar, students will continue to refine their specific aims as they develop a supporting conceptual framework and the study significance for public health and health services improvement.

4. **HSPM 800 (Section 004):** The approach section of the research strategy (Fall Year 2) – This seminar covers guidelines for developing the methods section, including developing drafts covering data sources, variables, analytical approach, and statistical/qualitative research methods to address the specific aims.

The seminar courses are graded as satisfactory (S) or unsatisfactory (U). For a satisfactory grade, the student must complete the requirements specified by the instructor and must have attended the

monthly doctoral research seminars of the semester (not for credit). Attendance at a doctoral research seminar may be excused if justified. To be excused, the student must obtain prior approval by making a written request to their Academic Advisor. If the absence was caused by an emergency, documentation must be provided within 7 days after the emergency has resolved sufficiently for the student to resume classes. Students must provide documentation for excused absences to the HSPM 800 instructors to qualify for a grade of S in HSPM 800.

2.4.2.4   Concentration Area

Every student, with the advice and counsel of their faculty advisor, must identify an area of concentration. This is a set of 3 doctoral-level courses (minimum 9 credit hours) in a specific topic area and/or HSPM-allied methodological courses chosen by the student as their research focus area for doctoral research and post-doctoral research career. The concentration can be in any area of health services, management, health policy, allied field, or health services research methodology including qualitative research, such as Health Policy and Politics, Health Economics and Outcomes Research, Health Equity and Social Determinants of Health, and Organizational Behavior and Management.

No more than 3 credit hours of independent study (HSPM 890) or 3 credit hours of special topics course (HSPM 791) can be used towards the concentration area credit hours. No more than 6 credit hours of independent study can be counted towards the total doctoral coursework credit hour requirement.

2.5   Sequence of Coursework

The course load below is required for students receiving scholarship support unless they are taking BIOS 700 in place of BIOS 757 in the first semester. In such case, BIOS 757 must be taken in the second semester.

Fall Year 1	Credit hours
Advanced Topics in Health Policy & Management II (HSPM 846)	3
Health Services Research Methods II (HSPM 719)	3
Intermediate Biostatistics (BIOS 757; Pre-req: BIOS 700/equivalent, SAS skills)	3
Doctoral Seminar (HSPM 800 Section 001)	1
Potential elective/Concentration area course	3
Complete CITI (Research ethics) training (required in HSPM 719)	0
Fall Year 1 Total	**10-13**

Spring Year 1	
Advanced Topics in Health Policy & Management I (HSPM 845)	3
Health Services Research Methods I (HSPM 717) (Pre-req. BIOS 700/equivalent)	3
Doctoral Seminars (HSPM 800, Sections 002, 003) 1-credit hour each	2
Advanced Data Structures and Analytic Methods (HSPM 830) (Spr. Year 1 or 2)	3
Potential elective/Concentration area course (if not taking HSPM 830)	3

Spring Year 1 Total	11-14

The Qualifying Examination is offered between the end of the Year 1 and the beginning of Year 2.

See the section below for additional details on the Qualifying Examination. This Examination may not occur at the end of Year 1 for students who require additional prerequisites that postpone the completion of HSPM 845, 846, 717 and 719.

Fall Year 2	
Doctoral Seminar (HSPM 800 Section 004, one credit hour)	1
Concentration courses and Elective courses	9-12
Fall Year 2 Total	10-13

Spring Year 2	
Advanced Data Structures and Analytic Methods (HSPM 830) (Spr. Year 1 or 2)	3
HSPM 720 Health Services Research Methods III (Elective) (Treatment effect estimation using observational data)	3
HSPM 791 Applied methods for health services research and policy evaluation (Elective)	3
Other concentration/Elective courses	3
Spring Year 2 Total	12

Comprehensive Exam – Spring Year 2 or Fall Year 3

See section below for additional details on the Comprehensive Examination.

Professional development competency-related activities are required but have no credit hours.

Fall Year 3	
HSPM 899 (dissertation credits)	3-6
Remaining electives	3-9
Fall Year 3 Total	6-12

Professional development competency-related activities, as required.

Spring Year 3	
Remaining electives	3-9
HSPM 899 (dissertation credits)	3-6
Spring Year 3 Total	6-12

After Year 3	

Other electives as desired

HSPM 899 (required to maintain active doctoral student status until dissertation defense)

(Students who are awarded 2-year fellowships should plan coursework to complete the Qualifying Examination at the end of Year 1 and the Comprehensive Examination in Spring Year 2 and aim to achieve doctoral candidacy status in Fall Year 3.)

2.6   Qualifying Examination

Students who have passed all four core courses (HSPM 845, 846, 717 and 719) with a grade of B or better are eligible to take the Qualifying Examination. The Examination must be taken at the first occasion it is offered after the student becomes eligible to do so, at the end of the first year of study, except for justified delays. Justified delays must be documented by the Academic Advisor and PhD Program Director in the student file, which include medical or other documented reasons deemed acceptable by majority vote of the PhD Program Committee and/or delays due to making up required prerequisite coursework during the first year of study.

The Qualifying Examination is a cumulative exam that tests students on the content areas of these courses relating to health systems and services (financing, organization, delivery, and policy), and research methods, including data analysis. The examination is administered as four separate sections: (i) research design (HSPM 719); (ii) introductory econometrics (HSPM 717); as well as health services policy and management cores (iii) HSPM 845 and (iv) HSPM 846. The Qualifying Examination is offered once per academic year, in early summer (May/June), with a retake possible in late July or early August for those who have not passed any part of the examination. Students will be notified at least 30 days prior to the actual examination dates. The Qualifying Examination is administered in-person, on the premises of the Department of Health Services Policy and Management. It is closed book, unless indicated otherwise for a specific section. The examination must be completed on an ASPH computer in Word, but one or more sections may require the use of statistical software for data analysis.

Each section is graded by the faculty member who was the writer of the examination question or instructor of record for the course. Graders are blinded to the student names. If a student receives a failing grade from the primary grader, the submitted work will be given to a second grader. If the grade assigned by the second grader agrees with the original failing grade, that failing grade will be considered final. If the second grader passes the student, a third grader will be requested to independently grade the examination, and this grade will be the final grade. Examination results will be reported as Pass or Fail. The PhD Program Director will notify the student(s) in writing of the final grade for each of the sections within three weeks of the examination. Additional time may be required if multiple re-grading is necessary to determine the final grade.

If a student does not pass one or more sections of the Qualifying Examination, the concerned sections(s) must be retaken the very next time they are offered. If unexpected circumstances delay the retake, students must provide timely documentation of the extenuating circumstances. Without such documentation, failure to retake the exam will result in a default grade of "Fail" on the sections that were to be retaken. Failing any section of the Qualifying Examination on the second attempt will result in termination from the program.

2.7   Comprehensive Examination

Completion of the HSPM 800 seminars (with a grade of "S") and 9 credits of Concentration Area courses, and passing the Qualifying Examination are required to be eligible to take the Comprehensive

Examination. The Comprehensive Examination is organized by the Academic Advisor in consultation with a second Comprehensive Examination Committee Member identified by the Academic Advisor and reviewed by the PhD Program Director. The student must be enrolled in the semester in which the exam is taken. The examination has two components, the written exam and oral presentation. The written component is a take-home examination in which the student is required to write an NIH R03-format proposal on a research topic determined by the Comprehensive Examination Committee (see instructions in Appendix A). In most cases, the Comprehensive Examination Committee Members will assign the research topic in consultation with the student to ensure alignment with the student's research interests.

The students must submit the research proposal within 10 business days of being assigned the topic. The Comprehensive Examination Committee Members will grade the student's work independently and assign a grade of "pass", "fail", or "revise and resubmit" (see grading rubric in Appendix B and feedback form in Appendix C). If both graders agree on "pass" or "fail", the grade is final. If one ember assigns a grade of "revise and resubmit", the student must revise the proposal based on the comments received. If one member assigns a grade of "pass" and the other "fail", the PhD Program Director will arrange a meeting between the two graders to come up with a consensus grade (pass, fail, or revise and resubmit). If the student is asked to resubmit the proposal, the revised version must be submitted no later than 10 working days after the receipt of the grade and the comments. The revised proposal can be graded only as pass or fail. The revised proposal must be completed and graded within the semester in which the initial proposal was submitted.

After passing the research proposal, the student will make an oral presentation to the Comprehensive Examination Committee Members. The oral presentation will be open to all HSPM students and faculty members. The oral presentation must be graded by the Comprehensive Examination Committee Members who will assign a grade of "pass" or "fail". If the grade is "fail", the student will retake the oral presentation within the first month of the following semester.

If the student fails either the written or oral components, the student can retake a new examination with a new topic in the following semester. Failure to pass any part of the examination on the second attempt will lead to termination from the doctoral program.

After passing the Comprehensive Examination, students must submit to the PhD Program Director the Comprehensive Examination Verification Form signed by the faculty members who conducted the examination, available here. The PhD Program Director will forward the form to the Graduate School to admit the student to doctoral candidacy, which enables the student to register for dissertation credits.

2.8   The Doctoral Dissertation

These are the required steps to form a Dissertation Committee and complete the dissertation: 1) Identify a Dissertation Committee Chair; 2) Develop a one-page specific aims note; 3) Establish a Dissertation Committee; 4) Submit the Dissertation Proposal; 5) Successfully Defend the Dissertation Proposal; 6) Conduct the Proposed Dissertation Research; and 6) Successfully Defend the Dissertation.

2.8.1   Identification of a Dissertation Committee Chair

Following successful completion of the Comprehensive Examination, the student must identify an eligible faculty member who agrees to serve as the student's Dissertation Committee Chair as outlined in this section.

The Dissertation Committee Chair must be a current tenured or tenure-track faculty member of the University and a member of HSPM. If the Dissertation Committee Chair leaves the Department after

the Proposal Defense, he or she may continue to serve as the Dissertation Committee Chair if the dissertation is completed within one year, with the help of a Co-Chair selected by the student (with the Co-Chair's and Dissertation Committee Chair's assent). The Co-Chair must meet the eligibility criteria for the Dissertation Committee Chair.

Students entering the doctoral program are assigned to an Academic Advisor based on mutual research interests with a HSPM faculty member. Under most circumstances, the Academic Advisor will become the student's Dissertation Committee Chair. However, for any reason, students may choose a different Dissertation Committee Chair, or the Dissertation Committee Chair may elect to discontinue serving in that role. While we expect these scenarios to be exceedingly rare, if such an occasion arises, the student and/or the Dissertation Committee Chair must notify the PhD Program Director of the proposed change. If the student identifies another eligible faculty member who agrees to serve as the student's new Dissertation Committee Chair, the proposed change may proceed. However, if no eligible faculty member agrees to serve as the new Dissertation Committee Chair, the PhD Program Director will meet with the student and the original Dissertation Committee Chair, separately or jointly, to discuss paths to resolve any potential issues in the student-Dissertation Committee Chair working relationship during the semester in which such issues arose. If despite such an attempt, the student remains without a Dissertation Committee Chair, the student will have one semester to identify a new Dissertation Committee Chair. If no eligible faculty member agrees to serve in this role by the end of that semester, the student will be deemed unable to progress and will be terminated from the program.

2.8.2   Development of a One-Page Dissertation Specific Aims

The student must prepare a short one-page specific aims outlining the essential components of the planned research project and submit it to the proposed Dissertation Committee Chair and secure their agreement to serve in that role.

For efficient proposal development, candidates are advised to use the following structured guide in developing the specific aims:

1. **Importance of Proposed Research:** Explain how the proposed research meets the criteria of original work and significant contribution to health services research.

2. **Aim(s):** Describe the research questions, hypothesis and expected outcomes in substantive terms.

3. **Setting/Participants:** Describe the site(s) of research or data sources with all relevant detail, identify the research subjects/participants and the target population likely to be impacted by the study outcome. For secondary data sources, describe the validity of the data source to answer the research questions.

4. **Research Design, Statistical or Other Analytical Methods, and Main Variables:** Explain the validity of the research design and statistical/other methodologies proposed to conduct the research. Then identify and justify the proposed dependent and independent variables with an appropriate rationale.

5. **Formatting:** The specific aims page should have 0.5" margins on all four sides, single-spaced, in 11-point Arial font without adjustment to the spacing between characters or between lines.

6. **Ethical Conduct of Research, Approval, Institutional Review Board (IRB):** While IRB clearance is sought after final approval of the proposal by the Dissertation Committee, students should demonstrate knowledge of ethical issues that may affect their planned research (subject privacy and confidentiality, data protection, etc.) in a separate document from the specific aims.

2.8.3 Appointment of a Dissertation Committee

The Dissertation Committee must be composed of either 4 or 5 members (including the Dissertation Committee Chair). The Dissertation Committee Chair will work with the student to identify the remaining 3 or 4 Committee Members. Of the 4 or 5 Committee Members, at least 2 must be from HSPM and at least 1 member must be from another academic department at the University of South Carolina, with expertise in the student's selected research area. Selection of an external Committee Member must be consistent with the Graduate School policy on academic qualifications for Doctoral Committee membership. Once the Dissertation Committee is formed, the student must complete a Dissertation Committee Appointment Form and submits it to their Committee Chair for onward processing. Policies on Committee formation and the form can be found here.

The Dissertation Committee must be formed no later than one semester after enrolling in HSPM 899.

2.8.4 Submission of the Dissertation Proposal

At least 30 days prior to Proposal Defense, the dissertation proposal, approved in principle by the Dissertation Committee Chair must be sent to each member of the Committee. All students, regardless of dissertation format (see below), must prepare the proposal with the first three chapters as shown below, to proceed to the Proposal Defense.

1. **Chapter 1:** Introduction and overview, which briefly outlines the importance of the topic and the questions to be examined;

2. **Chapter 2:** Literature review documenting the current literature related to the research topic and study objectives, knowledge gaps and significance of addressing the knowledge gap to be addressed by the dissertation;

3. **Chapter 3:** Study objectives and methods in detail; and

4. **Bibliography.**

2.8.5 Proposal Defense

Once the Dissertation Committee has approved the proposal, the Proposal Defense may proceed. The student provides a 30-45-minute presentation of the proposal to the Committee. The Proposal Defense generally takes up to 2 hours to complete. The Chair of the Dissertation Committee will notify the PhD Program Director of the date and time of defense at least 10 working days in advance. The Doctoral Committee members will deliberate privately to evaluate the performance of the student (pass /fail / revisions required).

The student will be notified of the outcome of the proposal defense after the presentation of the proposal. The student may receive a "pass" on the proposal defense, which allows the student to pursue the dissertation research; a "qualified pass" if the student is asked to complete additional work supervised by the Committee Chair; or "fail." If the student fails the Proposal Defense, he or she must repeat the Proposal Defense after completing additional work on the draft proposal. The Dissertation Committee Members will determine whether a new dissertation topic must be selected or if the current topic is acceptable but needs major revision. Students will have a total of two opportunities to defend their proposals. Failure of the Proposal Defense on the second attempt will result in termination from the program.

2.8.6 Dissertation Writing Phase

2.8.6.1 Definition of a Doctoral Dissertation

The dissertation is a report of an **original research project**, and **significant contribution** to health services research, approved by the candidate's doctoral Dissertation Committee. Clarification of these terms are provided below as they apply to HSPM PhD students:

1. **Original research:** The doctoral candidate will develop an original research question to address an existing knowledge gap. The body of work and intellectual contribution should clearly be the candidate's own work and make a new contribution to the field. Candidates may not employ or otherwise utilize other individuals for the original aspects or content of the dissertation, regardless of whether the candidate supervises the work.

2. **Significant contribution:** The outcomes of the research must advance the current state of knowledge of a demonstrably important aspect of health services research or public health practice as judged by peer scholars. The contribution may stem from new primary data, new analysis of secondary data, or rigorous evaluation of a new policy or public health program. One criterion to judge significance is that the research and its results are deemed by the Dissertation Committee to have sufficient merit to warrant serious consideration for publication by one or more peer-reviewed journals.

3. Doctoral candidates are expected to demonstrate competent application of research methods and statistical tools relevant to the research. As noted, the services of others may not be hired for this purpose.

4. Dissertation proposals will be approved if the Committee Members judge the proposed research to be original, with clear potential to make a significant contribution to science and/or public health policy or practice, and feasible to conduct.

5. All dissertation proposals, questionnaires, and related documents must comply with the ethical conduct of research guidelines that are current at the time of review. All candidates must have a valid current CITI training certification in the responsible conduct of research for the duration of the dissertation research and defense. With the advice of the Dissertation Committee Chair, each student is responsible for submitting all required documentation as requested. <u>The proposal must document clear evidence of formal approval (or exemption) from the USC Institutional Review Board BEFORE any research is undertaken.</u>

2.8.6.2   Dissertation Formats

HSPM dissertations may take one of two formats. The format could be the traditional dissertation monograph or a series of 3 publication-ready manuscripts based on the dissertation research. The dissertation format must be agreed upon either at the time of starting the proposal writing, or latest at the time of Proposal Defense. The student shall adhere to this agreed upon format when writing the dissertation.

1. **Dissertation Monograph**

   The dissertation monograph submitted by HSPM students has a five-chapter format:

   Chapter One: Introduction. An overview statement of the topic to be examined, its importance and research gap to be addressed.

   Chapter Two: Literature Review. A thorough review of all literature pertinent to the topic, organized to lay the ground for, and making the case for the hypotheses to be tested through the research to fill a gap in knowledge, and ending with a statement of the hypotheses in testable form.

Chapter Three: Methods. A complete outline of all methods to be used in carrying out the proposed research including study design, data sources, variables to be studied, data collection/processing, analytic methods to answer the research questions and test each hypothesis.

Chapter Four: Results. A presentation of the results of the research, organized by research question and hypothesis.

Chapter Five: Discussion of findings, Conclusions and Recommendations. A discussion of study findings in relation to the hypotheses and findings of documented research studies, conclusions, implications of the research, study limitations, and recommendations for future research.

2. Manuscripts for Publication Format

Doctoral students are highly encouraged to choose the manuscripts format, with the concurrence of their Dissertation Committee Chair. When submitting the final draft, the usual concluding chapters ("Results" and "Conclusions and Recommendations") will be replaced by 3 manuscripts. Per Graduate School guidelines for a manuscript format dissertation, there will be an additional brief final chapter that integrates the findings and implications of the manuscripts. Manuscript topics will be finalized as part of the Proposal Defense. The dissertation must be reviewed and approved by the student's Dissertation Committee and the Dissertation Committee Chair for the student to pass the Dissertation Defense and for the Graduate School to accept the dissertation as part of the requirements to be conferred the PhD degree.

2.8.7 Dissertation Defense

An essential milestone for doctoral candidates is the successful defense of a dissertation to showcase their original research. Once the research and dissertation writing phases conclude, the student defends the dissertation to the Committee at an oral presentation. The written dissertation and its defense must be approved by a majority of Committee Members (> 50%; e.g., 3 of 4, if a 4-member Committee or 3 of 5, if a 5-member Committee). The Dissertation Defense is organized and conducted as the Proposal Defense, including the prior notification requirement. However, unlike the Proposal Defense, the Dissertation Defense is open to the public. The Dissertation Defense announcement will therefore be posted on the bulletin boards and information emailed to all faculty and students of HSPM and/or on departmental website.

After the oral presentation of the dissertation, there will be a question-and-answer session. Committee Members will ask questions first and then the floor will be open to others in the audience. At the end of the question-and-answer session, the Chair of the Dissertation Committee will excuse others and the Committee evaluates the student's performance. At this stage, the Committee can choose one of the following four options: (a) Accepted as is (b) Accepted with minor revisions, (c) Accepted with major changes required (d) Not accepted as submitted. If the dissertation is accepted with major revisions, all Committee Members must be provided the revised version of the dissertation, and the Committee decides whether to accept the revised version with or without another defense. To successfully complete the program, the second Dissertation Defense must result in a Pass outcome. Failure on the second attempt will result in the termination from the program. The Dissertation Committee Chair will notify the student and the PhD Program Director in writing of the outcome of the Dissertation Defense.

To graduate in the semester during which the Dissertation Defense was conducted, the Defense must be successfully completed by the date specified by the Graduate School, and within 5 years of passing

the Comprehensive Exam. In addition, the Committee-approved and satisfactorily formatted dissertation must be submitted to the Graduate School by the required date. If the deadlines are not met, graduation will be delayed to the subsequent semester, requiring students to register for at least one credit even if the required dissertation credits have been fulfilled.

3   Other Information on the Doctoral Program

3.1   Admission to Candidacy and Z Status

Students are admitted to doctoral candidacy by the Graduate School after passing all required coursework, the Qualifying Examination, and the Comprehensive Examination. At this point, students can register for dissertation credit hours (HSPM 899) under the supervision of a faculty member who agrees to be the student's Dissertation Committee Chair.

When taking HSPM 899, the student is eligible to request "Z-status" enrollment (1-5 credits, less than full-time enrollment) if the student completed all required non-HSPM-899 coursework, the Qualifying Examination, and the Comprehensive Examination. Z-status is also available prior to completion of the Qualifying/Comprehensive Examinations and all non-HSPM 899 coursework if the student qualifies under the Family and Medical Leave Act. Z-status students are considered full-time students irrespective of the number credits enrolled. Students must apply to the Graduate School for Z status with appropriate documentation and approval of their academic advisor and PhD Program Director.

In general, Z status approval is required for the following purposes: a) seeking graduate assistantship with less than full-time enrollment, b) applying for financial aid, c) receiving a scholarship that requires full-time enrollment, d) receiving a tuition supplement from faculty grants or other university sources, or e) visa renewal for international students (See Section 3.3 below). Students who do not fall within the above groups do not need to apply for Z status. Students are not allowed to take more than eight academic semesters of Z-status enrollment without the PhD Program Director's approval. To request Z-status beyond 8 semesters, the student must submit to the PhD Program Director documentation of their scholarly accomplishments while in the program, the progress achieved towards dissertation completion, and the dissertation completion timeline, signed by their Dissertation Committee Chair. An approved extension by the Program Director must be submitted with written justification of the request to the Graduate School. The PhD Program Director may decline to approve the request for Z-status extension if insufficient progress has been made.

3.2   Full-Time versus Part-Time Students

The University of South Carolina defines full-time status for graduate students as enrolling in at least 9 credit hours per semester if without a graduate assistantship. For students with a graduate assistantship, enrolling in at least 6 hours is considered full time.

To ensure that our doctoral students enjoy a cohort experience in which they work together and support each other's progress through the required coursework, HSPM is not accepting students pursuing a doctorate on a part-time basis.

3.3   Course Load for International Students to Maintain Visa Status

To retain valid student visa status, international students are required to maintain full-time status without break throughout their program and remain in good academic standing (GPA >3.0), unless an acceptable reason for a reduced course load exists. There are several acceptable reasons for a reduced course load, including but not limited to obtaining an approved Z status. If you think you qualify for a reduced course load, you and your Academic Advisor must complete a Reduced Course

Load Request Form (available in the ISS Forms Library) and submit via email to iss@sc.edu. Please also refer to Meeting Full-time Enrollment Requirements.

In addition, as an international student, only one online class per semester counts toward full-time enrollment. This means you must be enrolled in mostly traditional classes that require presence in a classroom.

3.4 Transfer Credits

A limited amount of coursework that was **_not_** part of a completed certificate program or graduate degree from USC or another institution may be transferred for credit toward a doctoral degree. The exact number of transfer hours may not constitute more than 50 percent of the hours listed on a program of study, not including dissertation preparation (899) or the equivalent.

Students wishing to transfer coursework must demonstrate that it is relevant to the program and has course content and a level of instruction equivalent to that offered by USC's own graduate programs. To be accepted to a student's program of study, the proposed transfer credit must first be approved by the HSPM PhD Program Committee, then submitted to the dean of the Graduate School for final approval on the Request for Transfer of Academic Credit (G-RTC) form. Only credits with grades of B or better (equivalent to 3.0 on a 4.0 grading scale) may be transferred from another institution into a doctoral degree program. Coursework transferred for credit toward a doctoral degree must be from an accredited institution and must be no more than ten years old at the time of graduation. Transfer credits cannot be revalidated if the 10-year limit is reached as of graduation date. Lapsed transfer credits must be replaced by new coursework at USC approved by the Academic Advisor to complete the required number of doctoral credit hours.

3.5 Doctoral Residency Requirement

The University of South Carolina requires a minimum of three full-time years of graduate study or equivalent to obtain a doctoral degree. At least one year of full-time study (or the equivalent) must be spent in residence at the University of South Carolina in Columbia as described in the next paragraph. The year of residence can be fulfilled by successful completion of two consecutive semesters of 9 or more graduate credit hours per semester on campus, or three consecutive semesters of six or more graduate credit hours per semester. For students provided financial support by the Department, residency at USC Columbia is required for at least two years.

The doctoral residency period starts after matriculation in the PhD program. Enrollment in a summer term (Summer I and II) may be counted as equivalent to a semester. However, enrollment in summer is not required to maintain continuity. Dissertation preparation (HSPM 899), independent study, or directed readings may not be used to satisfy the doctoral residence requirement.

The intent of the residency requirement is to ensure that doctoral students benefit from and contribute to the complete spectrum of scholarly activities on campus, including the educational and professional development opportunities offered on the campus of a comprehensive university.

3.6 Professional Development Requirements

All doctoral students are required to complete the following teaching activities without compensation. These requirements must be completed between matriculation and dissertation Proposal Defense:

1. GRAD 701 (0 credits)
2. At least one presentation in the HSPM doctoral student research seminar series

3. At least one lecture in a structured course, supervised by the faculty of record; **OR** service as a second reader for at least one MHA or MPH residency project; **OR** service as a representative to the Dean's Student Advisory Council (DSAC).

4. While not required, students interested in faculty careers are encouraged to seek out opportunities to serve as a teaching assistant, participate in workshops offered by the Center for Teaching Excellence, and apply to the CTE's "Preparing Future Faculty" certification program (at no extra cost). Students are also encouraged to serve as judges at the University of South Carolina's annual Discovery Day showcasing student research and at the South Carolina Academy of Sciences Science Fair for high school and middle-school students of the Midlands region. Both events occur in the spring.

The student must submit a letter with documentation of completion of all professional development requirements to the PhD Program Director prior to graduation.

3.7 Research Engagement Requirement

All doctoral students are required to participate in departmental research activities. A student may work on funded/other research projects with their Academic Advisor or other faculty with or without compensation. In addition, students must complete the following research-related requirements without compensation. These requirements must be completed between the time of matriculation and the Dissertation Defense.

1. CITI training in research ethics (Fall Year 1), at the minimum, the Social and Behavioral Responsible Conduct of Research certification.

2. Research dissemination, satisfied with one of the following activities:

   (1) Present at least one poster or oral presentation at a state, regional, national, or international conference based on mentored research, OR

   (2) Publish an article in a reputable peer-reviewed journal as a first or significant contributing author.

The requirements above must be satisfied before scheduling the Dissertation Defense date. The student must submit a letter with documentation of completion of all research engagement requirements to the PhD Program Director prior to graduation.

3.8 University of South Carolina Community Courses

The University of South Carolina offers a set of online education courses in accordance with federal mandates and as part of our commitment to fostering a safe and healthy community. All doctoral students are required to complete the following three courses:

1. ***Sexual Assault Prevention*** presents realistic and interactive skill-building scenarios related to interpersonal violence.

2. ***Diversity, Inclusion & Belonging for Students*** helps students better understand and celebrate the diverse USC campus community.

3. ***Mental Well-being*** educates students on critical topics on social and emotional well-being that they may face on campus and provides strategies on how to manage them.

Part 1 of each course will be available beginning **mid-July** and should be completed no later than **mid-September**.

After completing Part 1 of each course, students will be notified via email to take Part 2. The deadline

for completing Part 2 will be **in mid-November**.

To access the courses, students will use the online platform Self Service Carolina after advisement and registration for coursework in the Fall Semester of Year 1. Log-in information will be sent directly to incoming students and links to information will be posted on the Community Education Page located on the Graduate School's website under New Students.

For technical assistance, students should contact tech support using "Help" within the course or by visiting support.everfi.com. Questions about the requirements can be directed to the Substance Abuse Prevention and Education Office at sape@sc.edu.

3.9   Time Limits

Doctoral students must complete their studies and Dissertation Defense within 10 years of matriculation. Otherwise, they will need to repeat coursework or revalidate courses based on the requirements set by the current instructor of the course. If formerly required courses are no longer offered, a substitute course will be identified by the PhD Program Director and must be taken to replace expired coursework.

Graduation with award of the doctoral degree must occur within 5 years of the semester of completing the Comprehensive Examination, or the student must retake the Comprehensive Examination based on the requirements of the Doctoral Graduate Student Handbook applicable at the time of the retake. Students who do not plan to enroll for at least one credit hour for 2 or more consecutive major academic semesters (summer not included) must take an approved leave of absence before each semester, up to the Graduate School-prescribed limit for such approved absences. In the absence of an approved leave of absence, students will be required to apply to the Graduate School for readmission if they have not enrolled for at least one credit hour per semester for 2 or more consecutive major academic semesters (summer not included). If readmitted, the new academic rules, standards, coursework, and degree requirements effective at readmission will supersede the requirements in effect at initial admission.

4   Student Responsibilities and Code of Ethics

All USC students and in particular students enrolled in HSPM programs are required to demonstrate the highest ethical standards, both academic and professional. All USC students are bound by and held accountable to the code of academic integrity, available here and are required to commit to observe the Carolinian Creed at all times.

4.1   Academic Standing, Academic Probation and Termination

The PhD Program Director, in consultation with the respective Academic Advisors, will maintain general oversight of the academic performance of doctoral students/candidates. Please see Appendix D for a form to track student progress to graduation.

4.1.1   Academic Standing

Doctoral students must maintain minimum cumulative GPA of 3.0 (or B average) to continue in the doctoral program and to graduate from the program. If a student receives a grade of C or lower in any of the Departmental Core courses, the course(s) must be repeated. Students with a graduate assistantship who earn a grade of C or lower in any course will be asked to reduce their graduate assistantship hours during the following semester to increase their focus on coursework and may place their departmental funding at risk.

4.1.2 Academic Probation

Students will enter academic probation if any of the following scenarios arise.

1. If their cumulative GPA falls below 3.0 in any semester;

2. If the student receives a U in HSPM 800, HSPM 899 or another pass/fail graduate course;

3. If the student receives less than a B in any Department Core Courses or Prerequisites (which will require the student to retake the class); or

4. If the student receives a C or lower grade in graded graduate courses other than the Departmental Core Courses or Prerequisites.

Being placed on Academic Probation requires development of a written remediation plan by the student, which must be approved by the Academic Advisor and the PhD Program Director. The plan should document the timeline and roadmap to overcome the academic challenges and to restore good academic standing going forward.

Note that other than HSPM 899 (dissertation credits), a grade of U in any graduate course (e.g., doctoral seminar, HSPM 800) is counted as an F in the cumulative grade point average. An S grade, however, does not count towards GPA. Courses/credits with grades below C, and grades of WF or U will not be counted towards the required credits for graduation.

4.1.3 Academic Termination

HSPM aims to provide a supportive environment for learning and will work with the students through remediation plans when a student is placed on Academic Probation. However, unfortunately, satisfactory completion of the program requirements is necessary to advance to candidacy and to graduate from the program with a doctoral degree. Therefore, Academic Termination from the HSPM doctoral program will occur in the event of any of the following circumstances:

1. If the student receives any combination of two course grades of U or C (or lower) in graduate courses;

2. If the student receives a grade of C (or lower) in the same Departmental Core or Prerequisite Course twice;

3. If the student fails to pass any part of the Qualifying Examination, Comprehensive Examination, Proposal Defense, or Dissertation Defense on the second attempt;

4. If the student fails, within one semester, to find a willing Dissertation Committee Chair after disengaging from the initial Dissertation Committee Chair;

5. If the student violates the Graduate School's [Academic Integrity Policy](#).

HSPM recognizes that Academic Termination entails serious consequences. Therefore, students facing academic difficulties are highly encouraged to proactively engage with their course instructors and address the difficulties before they receive the final course grade of U or at or below C. Students should also consult with their Academic Advisor when facing academic difficulties to receive counsel on remedial measures, such as withdrawing from a course, adjusting graduate assistantship obligations, or other measures. If necessary, students may withdraw from a course before the WF deadline, the date when a W (Withdrawal) translates into a WF grade (Fail grade) in the transcript and the GPA.

4.2 Leave of Absence

If personal circumstances justify a **leave of absence** for the remaining part of the semester, students may take an approved leave of absence (with documentation) for up to two major semesters. Absence for an academic semester (i.e. not enrolling for credit in fall or spring) requires completion of appropriate Graduate School paperwork to obtain the leave of absence in advance. Absence of such documentation results in loss of active student status and requires approval by the department and the Graduate School to resume coursework/dissertation. See also the section on Time Limits.

4.3 Academic Integrity

Students are expected to adhere to all requirements of the Carolinian Creed. Please note that the student is held accountable to this Creed even if violated inadvertently. Any episode of dishonesty, cheating, or plagiarism in any form will result in a grade of fail for the assignment, course, Qualifying Examination, Comprehensive Examination, or dissertation, and may, at the discretion of the relevant faculty member(s), PhD Program Committee, and Department Chair, result in termination of the program. A second episode of violation of academic honesty is grounds for immediate dismissal from the program. In addition to specified items qualifying as violation of integrity in the Carolinian Creed, within HSPM, misappropriating (e.g., taking examination questions or answers from the examination room), sharing, or receiving information on course assignments/examinations/Qualifying /Comprehensive Examination questions or answers is a serious violation that will result in a failing grade and termination from the program. All academic integrity violations will be reported to the USC Office of Academic Integrity. Students are encouraged to refresh their understanding of the appropriate use of citations when drafting papers and course assignments to avoid inadvertent plagiarism.

4.4 Professional responsibility in graduate assistantship and internship roles

Graduate assistantships and internships are intended to serve as an extension of the teaching and research mission of the Department, by facilitating students to gain work experience in public health, health services, or research environments for future career roles. In all on- or off-campus graduate assistantships, students represent the Department, and as such, must always comport themselves with professionalism and integrity.

Appendix A: Comprehensive Examination: R03 Proposal Preparation Instructions

(detailed guidelines will be provided along with the topic)

- **Title of proposal:** Limited to 81 characters (includes spaces and punctuation marks).
- **Project Summary (Abstract):**
  - No longer than 30 lines of text.
  - Summary of the proposed activity suitable for dissemination to the public.
  - Briefly state the specific aims and research design.
  - Provide information on study significance (i.e., the gap the study is addressing and the public health significance).
- **Project Narrative:**
  - No more than 2 or 3 sentences.
  - Describe the relevance to public health.
  - Be succinct and use plain language appropriate for a lay audience.
- **Specific Aims:** 1-page limit, single spaced, Arial 11-point font, narrow margins (1/2 inch) required. The Specific Aims page does NOT count toward your Research Strategy, which has a 6-page limit. Concisely state the goals of the proposed research. Summarize the expected outcomes, including impact of research on fields involved. Succinctly list objectives of proposed research (e.g., to test a hypothesis, create a novel design, solve a specific problem, etc.).
- **Research Strategy:** Prepare a 6-page document excluding the bibliography (font and other formatting as above). This section includes the following headings: Significance, Innovation, and Approach.
- **A. Significance:** (i) Explain the importance of the problem or critical barrier to progress in the field that the proposed project addresses, (ii) Explain how the proposed project will improve scientific knowledge, technical capability, and/or clinical practice in one or more broad fields, (iii) Describe how the concepts, methods, technologies, treatments, services, or preventative interventions that drive this field will be changed if the proposed aims are achieved.
- **B. Innovation:** (i) Explain how the application challenges and seeks to shift current research or clinical practice paradigms, (ii) Describe any novel theoretical concepts, approaches or methodologies, instrumentation, or intervention(s) to be developed or used, and any advantage over existing methodologies, instrumentation, or intervention(s). (iii) Explain any refinements, improvements, or new applications of theoretical concepts, approaches or methodologies, instrumentation, or interventions.
- **C. Approach:** (i) Describe the overall strategy, methodology, and analyses to be used to accomplish the specific aims of the project. Include how the data will be collected, analyzed, and interpreted, (ii) Discuss potential problems, alternative strategies, and benchmarks for success anticipated to achieve the aims.

Appendix B: Comprehensive Examination R03 Proposal Grading Rubric

(Comprehensive examination), Points for each criterion are shown.

The proposal will be graded on the extent to which it satisfies each element of the sections shown below.

The sum of all scores will be the grade for the exam. A total score >70 is required for a "pass" grade.

Title of proposal: Limited to 81 characters including spaces and punctuation marks (-1 point if not in compliance)	
Project Summary (Abstract): No longer than 30 lines of text. (-1 point if not in compliance) Summarize the proposed activity suitable for dissemination to the public. (0-1) Briefly state the specific aims and research design. (0-1) Provide info on the significance (literature gap study and the public health significance). (0-2)	4
Project Narrative: No more than 3 sentences. (minus 2 if not in compliance) Describe the relevance to public health. (0-2) Write succinctly and use plain language appropriate for a lay audience. (0-2)	4
Specific Aims: 1 page (Do not exceed 1 page; -2 if not in compliance with page limit) Concisely state the larger purpose that the proposed research will serve. (0-4) Summarize the expected outcomes including impact of research on fields involved (0-4) Succinctly list the specific aims/objectives of the proposed research (0-4)	12
Research Strategy: 6 pages. (Do not exceed 6 pages; minus10 points if not in compliance)	
Significance: • Explain the importance of the problem or critical barrier to progress in the field that the proposed project addresses, (0-10) • Explain how the proposed project will improve scientific knowledge, technical capability, and/or clinical practice in one or more broad fields, (0-10) • Describe how the concepts, methods, technologies, treatments, services, or preventative interventions that drive this field will be changed if the proposed aims are achieved. (0-10)	30
Innovation: At least one of the 3 items should be addressed in the innovation section. (0-10): • Explain how the application challenges and seeks to shift current research or clinical practice paradigms (i.e. addresses innovative hypothesis or critical barriers). • Describe any novel theoretical concepts, approaches or methodologies, instrumentation, or intervention(s) to be developed or used, and any advantage over existing methodologies, instrumentation, or intervention(s). • Explain any refinements, improvements, or new applications of theoretical concepts, approaches or methodologies, instrumentation, or interventions.	10
Approach: • Describe the overall strategy (0-10) • Detail proposed methodology including data source, collection method and variables (0-10) • Propose analyses to be used to accomplish the specific aims of the project and interpretation (0-10) • Identify potential problems, alternative strategies, and benchmarks for success anticipated to achieve the aims (0-10)	40
Total Score	100

Appendix C. Written Review Template to Respond to Comprehensive Examination R03 Proposal Submitted by the Students

Comprehensive Examination (R03 Format Guidance)

Principal Investigator(s):
Reviewer Name:
PRELIMINARY OVERALL IMPACT SCORE (From 1 to 9):_____

Overall Impact

Reviewers will provide an overall impact score to reflect their assessment of the likelihood for the project to exert a sustained, powerful influence on the research field(s) involved, in consideration of the following review criteria and additional review criteria (as applicable for the project proposed).

Strengths

-

Weaknesses

-

INDIVIDUAL CRITERION SCORES: (Score from 1 to 9)

Reviewers will consider each of the review criteria below in the determination of scientific merit and give a separate score for each. An application does not need to be strong in all categories to be judged likely to have major scientific impact. For example, a project that by its nature is not innovative may be essential to advance a field. -

Significance:_____ Innovation:_____Approach _____

Significance:

- *Does this study address an important scientific area or critical barrier to progress in the field of health services research? If the aims of the application are achieved, how will scientific knowledge or clinical practice be advanced?*
- *What will be the effect of this study on the concepts, methods, technologies, treatments, services, or preventative interventions that drive health services research?*
- *Is there a strong scientific premise for the project?*

Strengths

-

Weaknesses

-

Innovation:

- *Is the project original and innovative? For example: Does the project challenge current research and seek to shift existing research or clinical practice paradigms; address an innovative hypothesis or critical barrier to progress in the field of health services research?*
- *Does the project develop or employ novel concepts, approaches, methodologies, interventions, tools, or technologies for the proposed area of study?*

Strengths

•

Weaknesses

•

Approach:

- *Are the overall strategy, methodology, and analyses well-reasoned and appropriate to accomplish the specific aims of the project?*
- *Are potential problems, alternative strategies, and benchmarks for success presented? If the project is in the early stages of development, will the strategy establish feasibility, and will any particularly risky aspects be managed?*
- *Have the investigators presented strategies to ensure a robust and unbiased approach, as appropriate for the work proposed?*
- *Have the investigators presented adequate plans to address relevant biological variables, such as sex, for studies in human subjects?*

Strengths

•

Weaknesses

•

Appendix D. Doctoral Student Progression Tracking form (Fall 2021 onwards)

Name of Student: _____

Course number	Course title	Semester / Year	Instructor	Credit hrs	Grade/ waived
Public Health Core courses					
PUBH 700	Perspectives in Public Health			3	
EPID 701	Introduction to Epidemiology			3	
BIOS 700	Introduction to Biostatistics			3	
Doctoral core courses					
HSPM 845	Advanced topics in HSPM I			3	
HSPM 846	Advanced topics in HSPM II			3	
HSPM 717	Introductory methods for Econometric analysis			3	
HSPM 719	HS Research Methods II			3	
HSPM 830	Advanced data structures and analytic methods			3	
BIOS 757	Intermediate Biometrics			3	
HSPM 800	Doctoral Seminar			1	
HSPM 800	Doctoral Seminar			1	
HSPM 800	Doctoral Seminar			1	
HSPM 800	Doctoral Seminar			1	
Concentration area courses (3 courses for PhD)					
				3	
Electives					

Qualifying Exam (first attempt) date:			Qualifying Exam (second attempt) date:		
HSPM 845; HSPM 846	HSPM 717; HSPM 719		HSPM 845; HSPM 846	HSPM 717; HSPM 719	
Pass/Fail; Pass/fail	Pass/Fail; Pass/Fail		Pass/Fail; Pass/Fail	Pass/Fail; Pass/Fail	

Comprehensive Exam					
Attempt 1 date		Pass/Fail	Attempt 2 date:		Pass/Fail

Other courses not counted towards doctoral program					

Dissertation	Semester, Year	Semester, Year	Semester, Year	Semester, Year	Semester, Year
HSPM 899					

Teaching and Research requirements (For PhD program only)			Completed?	Semester	Year
Professional development requirements. Record Yes if	(a) TA training (mandatory)				
	(b) Teaching 1 session, mentored				

completed and Semester and year in which complete	(c) Presented doc. student seminar			
Research requirement	(a) Research involvement			

Final defense date: _____, **Graduated:** Semester _____, Year _____

(Public Health Core courses are not required with prior equivalent coursework). Public Health Core and BIOS 700 are not counted towards doctoral program credit hours.

Appendix E. Resources for Students

Logistics and Administrative

Housing (On- & Off-Campus)

International Accelerator Program
Off Campus Living and Neighborhood Relations

Key Dates: USC Academic Calendar

Tuition and Fees

Graduate School Forms for Students

HSPM Doctoral Program Handbook on the Web

Scholarship & Professional development

University of South Carolina Community Education (required for all students)

Graduate School Resources for all graduate students

Improve your pedagogical skills – Center for Teaching Excellence and Event Calendar

Campus life and Miscellaneous

Student organizations

Campus recreation

Recreational events

Mental health, crisis counselling, allied health resources

Health Services Policy and Management
Arnold School of Public Health
UNIVERSITY OF SOUTH CAROLINA

Discovery Building, Suite 300
915 Greene Street
Columbia, SC 29208
sph.sc.edu/hspm