

## ADVISING AND MENTORING

### ACADEMIC ADVISING

As a student at Pitt Public Health, you have many resources beyond your academic advisor that can contribute to your academic development. Advising systems vary among departments, but you should be able to take advantage of all of the following.

### DEPARTMENTAL ADVISING

Program directors, department student services staff, and assigned faculty advisors are students' main resources for course advising, registration, and initial mentoring. As you progress through your program, you may acquire other formal mentors for your research, your practicum, etc.

The course registration process varies among departments, but in most cases you are required to meet with your academic advisor, who will sign your enrollment form. The department student services staff will take that form and either register you in your classes or activate your self-registration.

For detailed information on course and credit requirements, make sure you talk to an authoritative source. It never hurts to double check with the Office of Student Affairs, especially if you are doing something complicated like pursuing multiple degrees or transferring credits.

### COURSE REGISTRATION PROCESS

Although the process varies among departments, the school has two general options:

1. [Self-registration](#)
2. Registration by departmental staff

Both options require that you:

1. Meet with your academic advisor
2. Have your enrollment form signed
3. Send the form to your department student services staff, who will either have your self-registration activated or complete the registration process for you.

Prior to enrollment, check course descriptions, course schedules, course evaluations, and detailed registration instructions at [publichealth.pitt.edu/courses](https://publichealth.pitt.edu/courses).

When you are considering elective courses, don't forget to check past [course evaluations](#).

## **GRIEVANCE PROCEDURES**

The first step to resolving any dispute should be a professional discussion with the faculty member involved. The next step is a discussion with the chair of your department. In situations in which it is uncomfortable to talk to those individuals, you can raise issues with the Associate Dean responsible for academic oversight. Your departmental student services staff can also be a good source of advice.

## **HOW TO GET THE MENTORING YOU NEED**

The relationships you build at Pitt Public Health will be important during and after your tenure here. This section of the handbook offers some starter advice on how to develop these relationships.

## **HOW TO DEVELOP MENTORING RELATIONSHIPS**

Start by thinking about what your own needs are and what you hope to get from your mentors. Ask yourself: *What were my objectives for entering graduate school? What kinds of training do I need? What skills do I want to develop?*

## **FIND POTENTIAL MENTORS**

Next, locate potential mentors within and outside of your program, department, and school. Research the work of these faculty and see if their interests match or complement yours. You can also talk to senior students about their advisors and mentors. Then, reach out to potential mentors and ask to meet with them. Be patient and professional when requesting these initial appointments; most faculty are eager to help but may not be available immediately. Good topics for this initial conversation depend on whether you are looking for a primary mentor or supplementary contacts. In either case, it's a good idea to start with mutual research or practice interests and professional goals.

## **DEVELOP THE RELATIONSHIP**

Working with your mentor is as much your job as it is their's. It is important to have regular meetings to discuss your work and get feedback from your mentor, but it is also important to regularly re-examine your own strengths, skills, and expectations for written work.

## **COMMUNICATE EXPECTATIONS FOR WRITTEN WORK**

Be clear with your mentor about expectations for authorship, timelines and deadlines. Some mentors will work with students on very rough drafts or informal documents, while others expect students to produce more polished work before they

look at it. In either case, do your own proofreading—don't expect your mentor to be your copy editor!

### **SECONDARY MENTORS AND ADVISORS (INCLUDING STUDENTS!)**

To get the maximum benefit from your time at Pitt Public Health, reach out to other faculty and students, practicum advisors, Career Services, etc. Ideally you will graduate with a rich network of contacts who will provide you with mentoring and support for many years to come.

### **HOW TO BUILD YOUR PROFESSIONAL SKILLS**

Your in-classroom and out-of-classroom experiences at Pitt Public Health should give you a strong set of professional skills by the time you graduate. You need to take an active role in this process and seek opportunities to enhance your skills whenever you can. We hope you will use all of the resources described below in addition to many others.

### **OPPORTUNITIES TO IMPROVE YOUR COMMUNICATION SKILLS**

Your written and oral communication skills will be your primary career asset. In order to hone these skills, you can...

- Get feedback from instructors on your course writing and presentations
- Volunteer to give as many presentations as you can
- Participate in Pitt Public Health's [Dean's Day](#)
- Present posters and talks at professional meetings and local symposia
- Take a course on scientific communication and/or grant writing

### **INTERNAL AND EXTERNAL SPEAKERS**

You'll see many listings for seminars, speakers, and other events that excite you, and many times your reaction will be "that sounds fantastic, but I'm so busy." **Make the time at least several times a term to go to these events anyway.** They are an invaluable opportunity to expose yourself to new possibilities, new ideas, and new people. Sit in the front row. Ask questions. Introduce yourself to the speaker. Use the opportunity to network within and outside the school. During your first and second terms, take advantage of the access to external guest speakers during [Grand Rounds](#) events.

### **OFFICE OF CAREER SERVICES**

Pitt Public Health Career Services provides a number of opportunities and resources for students, including:

- Career development workshops and employer information sessions

- One-on-one career counseling appointments, including resume and CV reviews, cover letter reviews, and interview preparation
- Access to [Handshake](#), a career platform used by the University of Pittsburgh where students can search for job, internship, and fellowship opportunities
- A [job search toolkit](#) on the careers section of the website
- Access to over 80 Pitt Public Health [alumni mentors](#)
- Social Media: The [Pitt Public Health Alumni & Student Network](#) on LinkedIn and the Career Services [Facebook](#) page

To schedule a one-on-one counseling appointment, view upcoming workshops/events, and access the online job board and other career-related resources, log into [Handshake](#) using your Pitt username and password. To learn more about Pitt Public Health Career Services, visit [publichealth.pitt.edu/careers](http://publichealth.pitt.edu/careers).

## GETTING READY TO GRADUATE

At the [Pitt Public Health graduation Web page](#), you'll find information on forms, logistics, and important dates for graduation. Familiarize yourself with this material before your last term. Deadlines for graduation applications are also listed.

Make sure you have done the following *well before* the term in which you plan to graduate:

1. If your work involves data, policies, or experiences from an outside agency, organization, or practicum site, ensure that you follow the guidelines and check if you are required to have a member of the agency, organization, or site on your committee. If you're using data or experiences from a project at the Allegheny County Health Department, you must include your health department preceptor as a member of your committee.
2. Make sure your essay/thesis/dissertation committee is in place and has been approved.
3. Familiarize yourself with essay/thesis/dissertation format requirements and deadlines for defenses.
4. Meet with your academic advisor and your department student services staff to make sure you have met all [academic requirements](#).
5. Be sure you are **registered for the term in which you want to graduate**.

## PITT PUBLIC HEALTH STUDENT DEFENSE/ PRESENTATION POLICY

Doctoral defenses, master's thesis defenses, and essay presentations must occur at least three (3) days before the end date of the term in which the student intends to graduate.

## QUICK LINKS

### STUDENT SERVICES STAFF

Behavioral and Community Health Sciences  
- [Paul Markgraf](#)

Biostatistics - [Renee Valenti](#)

Environmental and Occupational Health -  
[Bryanna Snyder](#)

Epidemiology - [Lori Smith](#)

Health Policy and Management - [Jessica Dornin](#)

Human Genetics - [Noel Harrie](#)

Infectious Diseases and Microbiology - [Erin Schuetz](#)

Multidisciplinary MPH - [Renee Valenti](#)

### OFFICE OF STUDENT AFFAIRS

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## COURSE AND CREDIT REQUIREMENTS

### SCHOOL-LEVEL REQUIREMENTS

#### REQUIRED COURSES

Each degree program requires a different set of courses. A compiled list of current school-level requirements including detailed information in biostatistics requirements can be found on the [Detailed Policies and References page](#).

Students should consult with their departments about these requirements, as some departments may have additional stipulations.

#### EXEMPTION FROM REQUIRED COURSES

Exemptions from school-level required courses are made on a case-by-case basis. These are based on attainment of CEPH competencies through coursework and completion of course(s) at [an accredited school of public health](#). These courses may or may not be accompanied by advanced standing credits.

To apply for an exemption, students must complete an [MPH Core Course Exemption form](#), explicitly listing the competencies on which the exemption is based. The form must be signed by the student's advisor and the core course instructor before it is submitted to the Office of Student Affairs. If advanced standing credit is being requested, a [Course Credits Accepted Form](#) must also be filed.

DrPH students with an accredited MPH degree may be exempted from all MPH requirements except [Public Health Grand Rounds](#). [MPH Core Course Exemption forms](#) must be completed and submitted to the Office of Student Affairs.

MS and PhD students can be exempted from Essentials of Public Health (PUBHLT 2011) by submitting the [Essentials of Public Health exemption form](#) to the Office of Student Affairs.

#### SCHEDULING

[Advance scheduling information for school-level required MPH courses](#) is available. Most courses are offered twice per year. Students should plan their schedules carefully with their advisors to ensure that it will be possible to complete the necessary courses.

#### GRADE REQUIREMENTS

A grade of B or better is required for all core courses.

*If a student earns a grade below a B, they should meet with their advisor to discuss the grade. In these cases, the student is strongly encouraged to re-take the course. However, the final decision will be left to the advisor and the student.*

*If a student earns a grade below a C, they must repeat the course. The Educational Policy and Curriculum Committee (EPC) via the Office of Student Affairs will email a memorandum notifying the student and their advisor of the policy. Students have a maximum of two attempts to achieve a grade of C or better in a core course.*

See the [Pitt Public Health probation and dismissal policy](#) for further details on minimum grade requirements.

### **GPA REQUIREMENT FOR CERTIFICATE STUDENTS**

Students enrolled in public health graduate certificate programs and a public health degree program must maintain cumulative GPA of 3.0 or higher in the certificate program courses. Students enrolled only in a public health graduate certificate program must maintain a minimum 2.0 GPA or higher, as required by the certificate program director.

### **DEAN'S PUBLIC HEALTH GRAND ROUNDS COURSE**

[PUBHLT 2022 \(the Dean's Public Health Grand Rounds\)](#), is a required, non-credit course for all Pitt Public Health students. Two terms are required for graduation. Note that the course is offered only in the fall and spring terms. Students should register for Grand Rounds in the first two consecutive terms they are enrolled.

Students are exempt from this course if they...

- are only in a certificate program
- are in a formal joint degree program
- complete a Pitt Public Health degree program, fulfill the two semester PUBHLT 2022 requirement, and enter a second Pitt Public Health degree program without a break in enrollment. The summer term does not count towards continuous enrollment.

### **NON-CREDIT REQUIREMENTS**

All students must complete the online [Academic Integrity Module](#) during their first term of study.

All students are also required to complete "[Preventing Discrimination and Sexual Violence: Title IX, VAWA, and the Cleary Act for Faculty and Staff](#)," an online training module administered through the University of Pittsburgh's Office of Diversity & Inclusion.

Most students are also required to complete various research ethics modules. A list of other modules required for research and practice at Pitt are outlined on the [resources for research and practice Web page](#).

## DEPARTMENTAL REQUIREMENTS

### DEPARTMENTAL AND ELECTIVE COURSEWORK

#### REQUIREMENTS AND EXEMPTIONS

Course requirements other than those stated above are established and enforced by individual departments and/or programs. Exemptions are handled at the departmental level. Departmental procedures for exemptions should include a written (paper or electronic) record that clearly states the justification for the exemption.

#### ELECTIVES

Departments may restrict or suggest choices for elective course credits. Refer to your program handbook and get advice from faculty and students.

### COURSES AT OTHER PITT SCHOOLS

Pitt Public Health students may take courses in other schools within the University of Pittsburgh. Course schedules are available in the complete [University time schedule of classes](#) or in the Student Center of [My Pitt](#). Whether or not these credits can be applied to their degree at Pitt Public Health depends on several factors.

In general, graduate-level credits taken at the University of Pittsburgh outside of Pitt Public Health may be applied to degrees as long as they are relevant to the degree being pursued. Check with your advisor.

A maximum of 6 upper-level undergraduate credits may be applied with advisor permission, provided that credits are earned while enrolled as a degree-seeking student at Pitt Public Health. Credits taken as an undergraduate or non-degree student will not be considered.

### COURSES AT OTHER COLLEGES AND UNIVERSITIES

Pitt Public Health students may register for courses as part of the [Pittsburgh Council on Higher Education program](#). Registration for these courses must often be done earlier than standard Pitt deadlines. The student must be registered full-time (FTDR or 9 credits minimum) at Pitt Public Health before requesting cross-registration at another school. Cross-registration is allowed in the fall and spring terms only. The [registration form](#) is available online; however, a hard copy with all the necessary signatures must be taken to the [Office of the Registrar](#).

## TOTAL CREDIT REQUIREMENTS

In addition to required courses, each degree or certificate also has a minimum number of required credits. These should be clearly stated in program handbooks. Transfer or advanced standing credits (see below) can count towards this total credit requirement. Credit sharing for students in two or more programs is also possible (see below). The number of credits that can be shared or transferred is limited.

## COURSE SCHEDULING PREFERENCE FOR VETERAN STUDENTS

Students who have served in the military and have registered with the Office of Veterans Services at the university are granted a priority enrollment appointment to enroll in classes prior to the standard enrollment period. See registrar's [Veteran Student Course Scheduling Policy](#) for complete details.

## GRADES AND ACADEMIC STANDING

### MINIMUM GRADE POINT AVERAGE

Students who fail to make satisfactory progress may be subject to academic probation, suspension, and/or dismissal. Students who have completed at least 9 quality point credits and whose GPA falls below 3.00 will be placed on academic probation. Notification occurs via a memorandum to the student and advisor from the Educational Policy and Curriculum Committee via the Office of Student Affairs. Full-time students have 2 semesters and part-time students have 18 credit hours to bring their GPA to at least 3.0. Students on probation are not eligible to take the PhD preliminary evaluation, the MS or PhD comprehensive examination, or to graduate.

### GRADES

Letter grades A, B, C, and D are considered passing grades. A letter grade of F is a failing grade.

### G, NG, AND I GRADES

G grades indicate incomplete coursework due to extenuating circumstances occurring at the end of a term. If a situation arises prior to the end of the term which prevents students from completing their coursework, they are expected to withdraw from the course or resign from the term and re-register for the course(s) in a future semester.

G grades must be resolved within one year or will automatically change to NG. NG grades cannot be reversed. A student who receives an NG grade will have to re-register for the course if it is required for graduation.

The Educational Policy and Curriculum Committee (EPCC) notifies students that they are approaching the maximum permissible number of G grade credits at 9 credits of

G grades. In instances where students accumulate 15 credits of G grades, they become unable to register until most or all G grades are resolved. Students should work with the instructor who assigned the G grade(s) to get them resolved.

Special studies courses, thesis or dissertation credits and other courses that are normally not graded at the end of one term receive I grades. See the [probation and dismissal policy](#) for details.

## ENROLLMENT REQUIREMENTS

### FULL-TIME REGISTRATION

Full-time registration is 9-15 credits. More than 15 credits is considered an overload and will incur additional tuition charges.

### REGISTRATION IN THE TERM OF GRADUATION

All degree-seeking students must be registered for at least one credit or FTDR in the term of graduation. See the graduation Web site for details.

### LAPSES IN REGISTRATION

Students who do not register for three consecutive terms are considered inactive and must [re-apply via SOPHAS](#) if they wish to re-register.

### INTERNATIONAL STUDENT REQUIREMENTS

Students with visas should contact the [Office of International Services](#) (OIS) and be sure to follow the enrollment requirements. Generally, full-time registration (9 credits or FTDR) is required. International students who have completed most course requirements can petition OIS for permission to take a reduced load.

## ACADEMIC INTEGRITY AND PLAGIARISM

All individuals (students, faculty, post-doctoral researchers, and staff) at Pitt Public Health abide by the [University's policy on academic integrity](#) as well as the Pitt Public Health academic integrity procedures.

All students are required to complete the online academic integrity module in the first term of enrollment at Pitt Public Health by the deadline established by the Office of Student Affairs. See the [Academic Integrity and Plagiarism Web site](#) for further details and instructions.

### PITT PUBLIC HEALTH'S POLICY FOR STUDENT COMPLETION OF STUDENT ACADEMIC INTEGRITY MODULE

*Policy revised June 8, 2010 and submitted to EPCC for a vote, approved by EPCC on June 14, 2010 with revisions | approved by Pitt Public Health Council July 2010*

Pitt Public Health Policy for Student Completion of Student Academic Integrity Module Effective August 30, 2010, all enrolled students at the Graduate School of Public Health are required to complete the Student Academic Integrity Module by the last day of the month of September. This is to ensure that Pitt Public Health students are familiar with the University of Pittsburgh's academic integrity policy, and to prevent violations of academic integrity.

Students will be deemed to have completed the module satisfactorily by scoring 80% or higher on the module assessment. Those who have not successfully completed the module assessment with a qualifying score of 80% or higher by the first business day of October will not have the advising hold removed from their student registration account. This hold does prevent registration for the subsequent semester's classes. The hold will be removed only after the student demonstrates satisfactory completion of the module. All new students enrolled in a program (certificate, degree, or non-degree) will be required to complete the Student Academic Integrity Module during their first semester. Students who enter with non-degree status, and are later admitted into a certificate or degree program within one academic year of having completed this instruction will not be required to repeat it. In summary, students will be required to complete this module only once unless significant changes in University or School policy require recertification.

The Office of Student Affairs will establish a deadline for completion of the module for each subsequent term so as not to disadvantage students in the registration process. Students will be notified of this date through Office of Student Affairs communications and their respective department student services staff.

The student's department student services staff will be required to monitor student completion of the module and ensure that the certificate of completion is filed in the student's academic file housed in the department. Department student services staff will notify the Office of Student Affairs if students do not complete the module by the deadline.

## **TRANSFER CREDIT FOR PRIOR GRADUATE WORK**

### **GENERAL**

Transfer or advanced standing credits must be based on specific, prior graduate-level coursework relevant to the degree the student is pursuing. Advanced standing credit will be awarded only for graduate courses in which a grade of B (or equivalent) or better was earned. Other restrictions also apply. Note that only block credits, not course equivalency, can be awarded.

Advanced standing request forms ([Course Credits Accepted Form](#)) must be signed by your advisor and submitted to the Office of Student Affairs.

Credits for degrees earned outside the U.S. are considered based on a [WES](#) evaluation and may depend on country and institution within country.

### **CREDIT TOWARD DEGREES AT PITT PUBLIC HEALTH**

The number of credits that can be transferred from coursework at another graduate institution depends on whether or not the credits were applied to another degree and the type of degree being sought at Pitt Public Health. In all cases, credit transfer requires approval from the department granting the degree.

### **CREDIT AWARDED FOR PRIOR CLINICAL DEGREES**

Credits earned for clinical degrees (e.g. MD, DDS, nursing) may be subject to stricter limits. In particular, clinical degrees that are earned without a prior college degree (e.g. nursing bachelor's degrees, many non-U.S. medical degrees) may be deemed non-graduate credits.

## **ADDING A SECOND DEGREE, OR A CERTIFICATE, OR CHANGING DEPARTMENTS OR DEGREES**

### **COMBINED DEGREE PROGRAMS**

Pitt Public Health participates in several formal [combined degree programs](#). Requirements for these programs include all or most of the requirements of the two separate programs.

- **Dual programs** exist within a single school.
- **Joint programs** exist between two or more schools.
- **Cooperative programs** are administered by two or more institutions.

Before registering for courses for any combined degree program, students must be admitted to both programs.

### **PURSUING TWO INDEPENDENT DEGREE PROGRAMS SIMULTANEOUSLY**

In addition to the formal combined programs, students may pursue two independent graduate degrees simultaneously. Rules for credit sharing must be followed.

### **CURRENT STUDENTS: HOW TO APPLY TO A NEW PITT PUBLIC HEALTH PROGRAM**

Current students must send an email of intent to the [Pitt Public Health Admissions Office](#) in order to transfer programs or add an academic program or certificate to their study plan. The email of intent should include:

1. Your name

2. Your current program
3. Details on the changes you would like to make
4. The term in which you would like the change to occur

Further instruction will be forwarded to you once the Admissions Office receives your email of intent. Note that eligibility depends on department requirements.

## **CREDIT SHARING AMONG TWO OR MORE DEGREES AND/OR CERTIFICATES EARNED SIMULTANEOUSLY**

Students wishing to pursue two or more programs simultaneously should consult with all programs involved and with the Office of Student Affairs about credit requirements. Complex credit-sharing arrangements may require special approval from the Provost. This does not apply to students enrolled in formal University of Pittsburgh joint or dual programs.

### **MASTER'S DEGREE AND DOCTORAL DEGREE**

Students simultaneously pursuing a master's and doctoral degree at the University of Pittsburgh may generally share up to 24 credits between the two programs. There may be limitations to this rule if the doctoral program is completed first. If the two degrees are in the same department, it may be possible to apply all master's degree credits toward the doctoral degree. Students should consult with their department(s) about specific departmental requirements.

### **TWO MASTER'S DEGREES**

Students pursuing two master's degrees at the University of Pittsburgh simultaneously (not joint or dual degrees) may generally share up to 6 credits between the two programs.

### **DEGREE AND CERTIFICATE**

Students pursuing both a degree and a certificate should consult with both programs about credit sharing. University and school rules allow all certificate credits to be applied toward the degree, but individual programs may impose stricter limitations. There may be exceptions if the certificate is started before the degree or if the certificate and degree are awarded by different schools.

### **MORE THAN TWO PROGRAMS**

Any student pursuing more than two programs (degrees or certificates) should consult with the Office of Student Affairs about credit sharing.

### **COMBINING CREDIT SHARING WITH ADVANCED STANDING**

In general, it is not possible to both share credits among simultaneous degrees and also receive advanced standing credit for prior work. Students who are pursuing simultaneous degrees and also seeking advanced standing credits for prior work should consult with the Office of Student Affairs.

## STATUTES OF LIMITATIONS

The following are the statutes of limitations for the degree programs offered in Pitt Public Health:

- Doctoral programs: 10 years
- MPH programs: 5 years
- MHA program: 5 years
- MS programs: 4 years

To request an extension to the statute of limitations, students must first talk to their program director or advisor. They will advance the request to the department chair who will submit a written request to the Office of Student Affairs.

Students with questions about this process should consult with the Office of Student Affairs.

## QUICK LINKS

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Infectious Diseases and Microbiology - [Erin Schuetz](#)

Multidisciplinary MPH - [Renee Valenti](#)

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# RESEARCH, PRACTICE, AND EXAM REQUIREMENTS

## PRACTICUM REQUIREMENTS

### MPH AND DRPH STUDENTS

All MPH and DrPH programs in Pitt Public Health require a practicum of at least 200 hours. Specific requirements vary by program. All programs have a process for helping students identify appropriate practica, establishing expectations, and evaluating the practicum and any competencies based on this experience. Forms for evaluating MPH practica are on the Pitt Public Health [forms](#) page.

### MPH-SPECIFIC REQUIREMENTS

Effective for students who matriculated in or after fall 2018, the following school-level requirements must be met for academic credit:

- Identification of a minimum of five competencies to be attained through activities during the practicum, three of which must be from the [MPH Foundational Competencies](#) and up to two of which can be from their program's advanced competency list.
- A minimum of two deliverables to be identified and completed at the end of the experience. These items are to be completed for the benefit of the organization and agency.

Effective for students who matriculate in or after fall 2019:

- Use of school-provided e-Portfolio to track competencies, archive deliverables, and provide overall assessment of the practicum experience by advisor and/or other department faculty.

These requirements must be completed for each practicum experience.

### DRPH-SPECIFIC REQUIREMENTS

Effective for students who matriculated in or after fall 2018, the following school-level requirements must be met for academic credit:

- Identification of a minimum of five competencies to be attained through activities during the practicum.
- A single project or a set of related projects that demonstrate a depth of competence.

Effective for students who matriculate in or after fall 2019:

- Use of school-provided e-Portfolio to track competencies, archive deliverables, and provide overall assessment of the practicum experience by advisor and/or other department faculty.

These requirements must be completed for each practicum experience.

### **ACADEMIC DEGREE STUDENTS**

Programs other than the MPH and DrPH may also require practica or clinical experiences. Students should consult with their program handbook about specific requirements.

### **CERTIFICATIONS FOR WORKING WITH CHILDREN AND OTHER LEGAL REQUIREMENTS**

Students who will be working with children in the course of their practicum experience will need appropriate clearances. Please discuss these requirements with your advisor and practicum supervisor well in advance, as clearance processes can be lengthy.

Some practicum sites may also require specific site agreements or other legal arrangements. Other practica experiences may include a research component, for which you will need to complete the appropriate research modules (see below).

### **RESEARCH REQUIREMENTS**

All doctoral degrees and most MS degrees in Pitt Public Health include a research component. In these cases, the process of choosing a research advisor is critical. Start this process early in consultation with your advisor and other mentors. Be sure that you are aware of your program rules and expectations. Consult your advisor or program director for specifics.

### **EVALUATION OF STUDENT RESEARCH PROGRESS**

Student research progress should be evaluated regularly in a formal process – at least once a year for doctoral students, preferably twice. Processes differ among departments. Students with GSR appointments should refer to the [TA and GSR policy](#) for specific requirements.

Evaluations of research progress for the purposes of academic standing should be clearly differentiated from evaluations of job performance in a GSR. Depending on the situation, it is possible for a student to have acceptable employment performance but not make the necessary progress toward thesis research; or, conversely, to have unacceptable job performance but acceptable academic research progress.

### **GENERAL RESEARCH TRAINING REQUIREMENTS**

The University maintains a resource for researchers and the training requirements specific to different groups. View the [Research Conduct and Compliance Office Training Web site](#). Students are advised to verify the specific modules required by their department, research mentor, and/or academic advisor with the appropriate parties.

### **ONLINE RESEARCH INTEGRITY MODULE**

This module is required for all University of Pittsburgh students who are conducting research. You will be alerted by your research mentor, academic advisor, or other departmental representative if this module is a requirement for your work.

To access the module, create an account on the University of Pittsburgh's [HSConnect site](#). Find the modules and additional information on the [Pitt CITI Access Portal](#).

### **EXAMINATION REQUIREMENTS**

Students must follow [requirements for exam committee memberships](#). Students in provisional admission status are not permitted to sit for preliminary or comprehensive exam. Further policies on exam re-takes and appeals can be found in the [Pitt Public Health probation and dismissal guidelines](#). When each milestone exam is completed, a [Report on Requirements form](#) must be signed by the committee and the department chair and returned to the Office of Student Affairs. In some departments, it is the student's responsibility to bring this form to the exam. Check with your departmental student services staff for specific details.

### **MS DEGREES**

Per University of Pittsburgh policy, all MS degrees require a comprehensive examination and a thesis defense. These take different forms in different Pitt Public Health departments. Consult your program handbook for specifics.

### **DOCTORAL DEGREES**

All doctoral degrees require a preliminary examination, a comprehensive examination, a dissertation overview, and a dissertation defense. Many Pitt Public Health programs combine the comprehensive examination and the dissertation overview. Consult with your department and advisor for program specifics.

### **OTHER DEGREES**

Most other degrees do not require comprehensive examinations, but consult with your advisor and program handbook to confirm.

### **MULTIPLE DEGREES**

Students pursuing multiple degrees independently must complete all examinations for each degree; combining examinations is not allowed.

## ESSAY, THESIS, AND DISSERTATION REQUIREMENTS

All Pitt Public health degree programs require a final written product, which can be an essay, a thesis, or a dissertation, depending on the program. You should talk to your advisor and other mentors early on to make sure you understand what is expected. Some programs maintain thesis or essay handbooks. [Students can consult the detailed format requirements and rules for committee composition](#). Final submission instructions are on the [graduation Web site](#).

### MPH DEGREES

MPH programs may require an essay or a thesis, or they may give students a choice of the two formats. Consult with your advisor and your program handbook to ascertain differences and expectations.

For students who wish to base their essay/thesis on practicum/internship experiences with the Allegheny County Health Department (ACHD), please note that your essay/thesis requires approval from your ACHD preceptor/site supervisor. In addition, a member of the ACHD must serve on your essay committee. If your ACHD preceptor/site supervisor is unable to serve, a representative of ACHD will be selected for you.

### MS DEGREES

All MS degrees at Pitt Public Health require a thesis and thesis defense. In some programs, this takes the form of an original, publishable research project. In others, it may be a policy paper, literature review, or applied data analysis. MS degrees generally do not involve a thesis proposal or overview, but some departments may require one.

### DOCTORAL DEGREES

All doctoral degrees at Pitt Public Health require a dissertation and a defense of that dissertation. **For PhD degrees**, this is a major body of original research. **For DrPH degrees**, it may take the form of an applied policy analysis or similar product. The dissertation may be a single unified document, or it may take the form of published or publishable papers. Be aware of the two dissertation formats and discuss them with your advisor. Either your department or your advisor will determine which formats are permissible.

### MULTIPLE DEGREES

Students pursuing multiple degrees independently must complete the essay/thesis/dissertation requirements for each degree separately; combined documents are not allowed.

### **PUBLIC DEFENSE ANNOUNCEMENTS**

MS thesis defenses are not required to be public, but the official decision is at the department's discretion. Doctoral defenses are required to be public, and have very specific publicity requirements. Consult the [graduation Web site](#) for more detailed information.

### **VIRTUAL MILESTONE MEETINGS AND DEFENSES**

[Tips for Using Zoom for Essay, Thesis, Dissertation Meetings and Defenses](#)

updated April 9, 2020

## DETAILED POLICIES AND REFERENCES

### PITT PUBLIC HEALTH POLICIES AND DOCUMENTS

#### SCHOOL-LEVEL REQUIRED (CORE) COURSES

##### Master of Public Health (MPH)

The MPH core curriculum provides the foundational knowledge and competencies that all public health professionals need. Based on the [CEPH core competencies](#), it covers the following broad areas: evidence-based approaches to public health, public health and health care systems, planning and management to promote health, policy in public health, leadership, communication, interprofessional practice, and systems thinking.

MPH students are required to complete the coursework for PUBHLT 2033 (Foundations in Public Health) during their first fall term of enrollment. If credit limit for the fall term is an issue, please consult with your advisor.

Students must complete all other core courses before taking PUBHLT 2035 (Applications in Public Health) although exceptions can be made for students who need to take their last remaining core course simultaneously with the Applications course. Exceptions are granted by permission of the course instructor.

PUBHLT 2015: Public Health Biology (2 credits)  
BIOST 2011\*: Principles of Statistical Reasoning (3 credits)  
BIOST 2041\*: Introduction to Statistical Methods I (3 credits)  
EPIDEM 2110: Principles of Epidemiology (3 credits)  
BCHS 2509\*\*: Social and Behavioral Sciences and Public Health (3 credits)  
EOH 2013\*\*\*: Environmental Health and Disease (2 credits)  
HPM 2001: Health Policy and Management in Public Health (3 credits)  
PUBHLT 2022†: The Dean's Public Health Grand Rounds (0 credits)  
PUBHLT 2033: Foundations in Public Health (1 credit)  
PUBHLT 2034: Public Health Communications (2 credits)  
PUBHLT 2035: Applications in Public Health (2 credits)

*\*Students are required to take either BIOST 2011 or BIOST 2041. Selection of BIOST course(s) should be done after consultation with your advisor. For full information, view the biostatistics core requirements.*

*\*\*Not required for BCHS students*

*\*\*\*Not required for EOH students*

*† Two terms required. Offered fall and spring.*

## Master of Health Administration (MHA)

PUBHLT 2011: Essentials of Public Health (3 credits)

PUBHLT 2022†: The Dean's Public Health Grand Rounds (0 credits)

† *Two terms required. Offered fall and spring.*

## Master of Science (MS)

PUBHLT 2011: Essentials of Public Health (3 credits)

EPIDEM 2110: Principles of Epidemiology (3 credits)

PUBHLT 2022†: The Dean's Public Health Grand Rounds (0 credits)

† *Two terms required. Offered fall and spring.*

## Doctor of Public Health (DrPH)

Students seeking a DrPH take the same school-wide core as MPH students, unless they enter with an MPH degree from an [accredited school or program of public health](#), in which case they are only required to take the following:

PUBHLT 2022†: The Dean's Public Health Grand Rounds (0 credits)

† *Two terms required. Offered fall and spring.*

## Doctor of Philosophy (PhD)

EPIDEM 2110: Principles of Epidemiology (3 credits)

PUBHLT 2011: Essentials of Public Health (3 credits)

PUBHLT 2022†: The Dean's Public Health Grand Rounds (0 credits)

† *Two terms required. Offered fall and spring.*

## BIostatistics Core Course Policy

### PURPOSE

The purpose of this policy statement is 1) to clarify the distinction between requirements for professional public health degrees, academic public health degrees, and non public health degrees (as defined by The Council on Education for Public Health (CEPH), and 2) to delineate a revised policy for biostatistics core courses for Pitt Public Health professional degrees.

### PITT PUBLIC HEALTH DEGREE TYPES

For the purposes of CEPH accreditation, there are three types of degrees offered by Pitt Public Health: professional public health degrees (all MPH and DrPH degrees),

non public health degrees (MHA and MS in Genetic Counseling), and academic public health degrees (all other MS and PhD degrees).

### **POLICY FOR ACADEMIC PUBLIC HEALTH AND NON-PUBLIC HEALTH DEGREES**

Neither CEPH nor Pitt Public Health requires any specific biostatistical training. Thus, statistical requirements for each of these degree programs are at the discretion of the department offering the degree, though degree programs as a whole need to be approved by the Educational Policy and Curriculum Committee (EPCC), by the University, and by CEPH.

### **POLICY FOR PROFESSIONAL PUBLIC HEALTH DEGREES**

For MPH and DrPH degrees, Pitt Public Health and CEPH require that all students take or be formally exempted from a course that addresses the core biostatistical competencies necessary for a public health professional degree. This requirement can be met by either of the following, though many departments have more specific requirements. Students should choose between these options in close consultation with their advisors.

1. BIOST 2011
2. BIOST 2041
3. In special circumstances and with the permission of both the student's advisor and the Department of Biostatistics, other introductory statistics courses may be substituted for the above. However, any course or course sequence that is substituted must cover the relevant CEPH competencies [MPH Foundational Competencies 2, 3, and 4].

March 2012 | Amended July 2018

### **MILESTONE COMMITTEE COMPOSITION RULES**

#### **GENERAL NOTES REGARDING ALL COMMITTEES**

- Each department in the school maintains a list of [core educational faculty](#). These are defined as faculty of the University of Pittsburgh who are heavily involved in the educational mission of the department as demonstrated by at least some of the following actions: teaching courses or having significant involvement in courses led by others, participating on a routine basis in a journal club, mentoring students in independent studies and master's essays, serving on curriculum committees, or serving on examination or dissertation committees. Faculty with primary appointments in the department are automatically considered core faculty. The Office of Student Affairs keeps record of the core faculty lists and

updates them periodically. The departments bear the responsibility of meeting with core faculty once a year to update them on any changes in policy or procedures and to provide them with academic program manuals.

- Research associates *who are involved in the educational program of the department* may be listed as core faculty and allowed to serve on all committees at departmental discretion.
- All rules below are intended as school-wide minimum standards; individual departments are free to implement requirements that are more stringent.
- Individuals who do not have University of Pittsburgh faculty appointments may serve on committees only in addition to the minimum required numbers of University of Pittsburgh faculty. A list of the graduate faculty for the University of Pittsburgh (as referenced below) may be found on the [provost's Web site for graduate studies](#).

## **RULES FOR COMMITTEE COMPOSITION**

### **PhD Qualifying Exam**

- The committee must consist of at least three University of Pittsburgh faculty members.
- The committee chair must be on the core faculty list of the student's department.
- Half or more of the members must be on the core faculty list of at least one Pitt Public Health department.
- Half or more of the members must have graduate faculty status.
- One of the Pitt faculty on the committee must not be on the core list from the student's department.

### **PhD Comprehensive Exam**

If the comprehensive exam takes place at the same time as the dissertation proposal, then the rules for the dissertation committee apply. If the comprehensive exam is taken separately from the dissertation proposal, then the comprehensive exam committee can be composed according to the rules either for the qualifying exam committee or according to the rules for the dissertation committee, at the discretion of the department.

### **PhD Dissertation Overview and Proposal Committee**

If the overview/dissertation proposal meeting takes place separately from the comprehensive examination, composition rules for the dissertation committee apply.

### **PhD Dissertation Committee**

- The committee must consist of at least four University of Pittsburgh faculty members.
- At least two members must be on the core list of some Pitt Public Health department.
- The majority of members must have graduate faculty status.
- One of the Pitt faculty on the committee must not be on the core list from the student's department.
- If thesis work includes internship/practica experience, including data and policies, from the Allegheny County Health Department the committee must include a preceptor from the Allegheny County Health Department. If the preceptor is an adjunct faculty member, they count as a faculty member. If they do not hold an adjunct appointment, they must be added in addition to all faculty on the committee.

### **MS Comprehensive Exam**

The rules are the same as for the PhD qualifying exam, except that graduate faculty status is not required.

### **MS or MPH Thesis Committee**

- The committee must consist of at least three University of Pittsburgh faculty members.
- Half or more of the members must be on the core faculty list of at least one Pitt Public Health department.
- One of the Pitt faculty on the committee must not be on the core list from the student's department.
- If thesis work includes internship/practica experience, including data and policies, from the Allegheny County Health Department the committee must include a preceptor from the Allegheny County Health Department. If the preceptor is an adjunct faculty member, they count as a faculty member. If they do not hold an adjunct appointment, they must be added in addition to all faculty on the committee.

The same rule as for the MS comprehensive exam, except that the thesis committee chair need not be on the core list of the student's department.

### **MPH and MHA Essay**

- The committee must consist of at least two University of Pittsburgh faculty members.

- Members must have primary appointments in different University departments (at least two departments represented).
- At least one member must be on the core list of some Pitt Public Health department.
- If thesis work includes internship/practica experience, including data and policies, from the Allegheny County Health Department the committee must include a preceptor from the Allegheny County Health Department. If the preceptor is an adjunct faculty member, they count as a faculty member. If they do not hold an adjunct appointment, they must be added in addition to all faculty on the committee.

## DrPH

Rules for composition of all committees are the same as for the PhD, except that all committees must have a majority of members who are on the core list of at least one Pitt Public Health department.

## DETAILED ESSAY, THESIS, AND DISSERTATION RULES

**Before you start:** In addition to these format instructions, be sure you are aware of the following:

- general requirements for the research and document as specified by your department and your advisor, and
- rules regarding committee or readers.

**Before you finish:** Early in the semester in which you intend to graduate you should start looking at the detailed information on how to submit the electronic essay, thesis, or dissertation on Pitt Public Health's [graduation information page](#). Questions should be directed to the school's Office of Student Affairs.

**Generic research document outline:** Many students have found the following description of the [components of a typical thesis/dissertation](#) helpful as they begin to plan the layout of the document. Some essay writers may also choose to use this format.

**Other sources of format information:** You will also find it useful to refer to a style guide such as Strunk and White's *Elements of Style* or the *Chicago Manual of Style*. Consult with your department and/or advisor about recommended style guides.

**Bibliography:** You may find it useful to use software such as [Endnote](#) for managing your bibliography.

**ETD (electronic thesis and dissertation) Web site:** Your basic source for format instructions is the [University's ETD Web site](#). This includes [instructions](#), templates, forms, [support](#), and a portal to view all University of Pittsburgh theses and dissertations that have been submitted in the past. However, there are some minor differences in format requirements between the general University guidelines and Pitt Public Health. Some instructions on the University ETD site may conflict with Pitt Public Health instructions, in which case you should follow the school instructions outlined in the sections below.

**MPH/MHA essay format:** The preferred method for formatting your essay is to use this [template](#). If you do not use the template, be sure that your essay formatting follows [ETD guidelines](#). However, the essay sections should be ordered and numbered as in the table below, which is slightly different from the university ETD instructions. In addition, you do not need bookmarks in the essay. Your final essay can be deposited as a Word document or as a PDF.

#### **Required order and numbering of pages for essays:**

1. [Title page](#): Small Roman numeral i assumed, but not numbered
2. [Committee page](#): Small Roman numeral ii
3. [Copyright](#): Small Roman numeral iii
4. [Abstract](#): Small Roman numeral continuation
5. Table of contents (including appendix titles): Small Roman numeral continuation
6. List of tables (if any): Small Roman numeral continuation
7. List of figures (if any): Small Roman numeral continuation
8. Preface/Acknowledgments (optional, and if used should be brief): Small Roman numeral continuation
9. Body of essay: Start with Arabic numeral 1 and continue
0. Appendices (if any): Arabic numeral continuation (If there is more than one appendix, denote them with letters, e.g. "Appendix A, Appendix B." Separate cover sheets for each appendix are not required, although each appendix must begin at the top of a new page. The heading for each appendix is centered without punctuation. The appendix title can either follow the heading or it can be centered below.)
1. Bibliography: Arabic numeral continuation

**Thesis and dissertation format:** Follow the [ETD guidelines](#), be sure the title page, committee page, and abstract page have the information as noted in the examples below. You may also use this [template](#) for formatting your thesis or dissertation. In addition, Pitt Public Health requires more complete bookmarks than the University guidelines indicate (see below).

[Thesis or dissertation title page](#)

[Thesis or dissertation committee page](#)

[Thesis or dissertation abstract page](#)

**Bookmarks:** MPH/MHA essays do not need to have bookmarks. Theses and dissertations MUST include complete bookmarks. All items in the thesis or dissertation, beginning with the title page and ending with the bibliography, must be bookmarked. This includes headings/subheadings, heading numbers, committee member page, abstract, table of contents, list of tables, list of figures, preface, acknowledgements, appendices, etc. See the [ETD bookmark help sheet](#) for instructions on how to insert bookmarks. The following notes may also be helpful.

Note 1: The following sections will hyperlink in the pdf conversion: table of contents, list of tables, and list of figures. You may either create drop-down lists for the items belonging in the list of tables and the list of figures or nest the table and figure bookmarks under the heading they fall under.

Note 2: Any bookmarks or links already in place before the thesis/dissertation is converted from an MS Word document to a PDF document will automatically be tagged “inherit zoom,” a feature that ensures that the destination window is displayed at the magnification level the reader uses when viewing links or bookmarks. If you add bookmarks or links after the document has been converted, you will have to manually change them to “inherit zoom” using the following instructions:

1. Right-click on bookmark or link and choose “properties”
2. Choose “actions” tab
3. Click “edit”
4. Change zoom to “inherit zoom”
5. If multiple bookmarks/links need to be changed, click through them individually
6. Close bookmarks (press minus sign so that a plus sign appears)
7. Save
8. **NEW: In late fall 2019, the ETD Support adjusted the revised template so now if you “save as ” it will give you bookmarks (don’t need Adobe Acrobat prof software). Directions: “save as type” your word document and pick from the drop down “PDF” (\*.pdf), then under this there will appear an “Options” box, under “Include non-printing information” check “Create bookmarks using” –“Headings” is greyed out—but when you click in the box it appears; then “Ok”, then “Save”.**

**Using published papers in your essay, thesis, or dissertation:** Some departments and advisors allow students to submit published or publication-ready manuscripts as

thesis or dissertation chapters. Such papers may be included either in the body of the document or in the appendix. They must be based on work done during the student's enrollment at Pitt Public Health. In general, the student should be the primary author on such a paper, but that is not absolutely required. The thesis or dissertation should include a preface listing the authors, the full citation (if published), and the role of the student in the work.

The articles must be logically connected by added text and be integrated into the document in a coherent manner. They must be presented in a manner consistent with the remainder of the text, i.e., identical typeface, paper, margins, and consistent numbering of tables, figures and footnotes. Bibliographic citations should be integrated with those for the rest of the document. Everything must be consistent with [University ETD guidelines](#).

If your article is already published or in press, you will need permission from the publisher in order to reuse the article, unless you own the copyright (see below).

**Copyright general information:** The following links contain helpful information on copyright rules.

1. [Copyright Information for Graduate Students Writing a Thesis or Dissertation](#)
2. The University Library System's [copyright page](#).

**Use of copyrighted material:** When using text, tables, or figures from a published work, whether your own article or that of another author, you must receive the permission of the journal in which it was published. As a courtesy, you should also request permission of the author. Sample templates for contacting publishers are available [here](#). Many journals have on their Web sites a "copyright permission request form."

A copy of the letter or email giving you permission to use the article, table, or figure must be submitted along with other documents that you submit for your thesis or dissertation. Do not incorporate the permission letter into the paper.

Effective for summer graduations: you will no longer need to complete the ProQuest Agreement. The University has adopted the ProQuest Paragraph option (replacement for completing online form) effective immediately for all students submitting a Master's thesis or Doctoral Dissertation in D-Scholarship (Note: Previously, Master's theses were being sent to CompuCom to be made into microfilm).

Students will agree to release their thesis or dissertation to ProQuest within the D-Scholarship system. A new page has been added in D-Scholarship as part of the

submission process.

- Students will no longer be required to complete the ProQuest electronic form. Further, students will no longer need to submit proof of completion to you as part of their thesis/dissertation package.
- ProQuest will not harvest the thesis or dissertation until it is released from the repository. In other words, ETDs that are embargoed within the Pitt community, will not be harvested by ProQuest until that embargo has expired. Similarly, students' ETDs that have been approved to be kept in the dark archive for one year, will not be harvested by ProQuest until that embargo has expired.
- Any additional services that a student wishes to purchase from ProQuest will be done directly with ProQuest. No checks or money orders should be submitted to you or the University's Registrar's office.

AGREEMENT TAB in D-SCHOLARSHIP reads as follows: (click [here](#) for a screenshot)

I understand and agree that my master's thesis or PhD dissertation will be made available in the ProQuest Dissertation & Theses Database (PQDT), which reaches 3,000 universities with over 200 million searches annually, and supports discovery through major subject and discipline indexes (SciFinder, MLA, MathSciNet, PsycINFO, ERIC, etc). ProQuest provides these services at no charge, and is a non-exclusive distribution of your doctoral dissertation. You will be eligible for a royalty based upon sales of the full-text of your work in all formats. More information is available [here](#).

\*University Honors College Undergraduate theses are not shared with ProQuest

By clicking on Next I agree to these terms and conditions.

### **SCHOOL-WIDE MPH ESSAY / THESIS COMPLETION POLICY**

#### **Requesting committee chair/main reader and/or faculty advisor and additional committee members/readers:**

Students will confer with their academic advisor or other designee about the essay/thesis in the semester prior to the one in which they plan to graduate.

Students will request faculty members to serve as committee members/readers no later than the end of the semester prior to the one in which students plan to graduate.

#### **Timeline for submitting drafts to committee members/readers:**

The chair/main reader and student together will determine the timeline for

submitting drafts, as many as are needed, so that the student can produce a high-quality paper and graduate on time, without putting undue pressure on readers.

**Students will submit the final version of the essay/thesis to committee members/readers** at least two (2) weeks prior to...

- the defense date, in the case of the thesis, or
- the final upload date, in the case of the essay.
- **only** the director of the program can request the Office of Student Affairs to grant an extension to complete work on the thesis/essay. The Office of Student Affairs will not grant extensions directly in response to student or advisor requests. After the readers/committee members have indicated their final approval of the essay/thesis by turning in the fully-signed ETD form for theses and the Essay Approval Form to Student Affairs, students may work directly with the Office of Student Affairs on formatting issues and any extensions that may be required for those.
- not adhering to this timeline can result in the failure of the student to graduate in the desired semester, necessitating registration for an additional credit in another semester.

### **Expectations**

- Students are expected to keep their main advisor apprised of all correspondence and discussion with their thesis committee members or essay readers.
- Students and their thesis advisor/essay main reader should discuss the process for getting feedback from other readers.
- While quality of the paper and extent to which feedback from outside readers is incorporated are up to the discretion of the student's department, there is an expectation that papers will be of high quality and that feedback from all readers will be reviewed and considered.

The master's essay/thesis is a scholarly work that reflects the student's acquisition of knowledge, ability to synthesize information into a well-organized, coherent document, and development as a professional.

### **INDEPENDENT DEVELOPMENT PLAN (IDP) POLICY**

A Graduate Student Career Development Plan, also known as an Independent Development Plan (IDP), is a tool for helping students and advisors outline and discuss short-term and long-term objectives to guide the student's professional development. Pitt Public Health doctoral students and advisors are required to complete an IDP at least annually, typically timed to coincide with the required

annual doctoral committee meeting. An IDP template is available at [www.publichealth.pitt.edu/IDP](http://www.publichealth.pitt.edu/IDP), but students and advisors may substitute any other form that meets the same purpose (e.g. department-specific templates or templates provided by professional societies).

Completed IDP forms should be kept in student files at the department level. They should be treated as confidential student records. The Report on Requirements form for the doctoral preliminary exam and dissertation overview includes a checkbox that the committee should use to certify that an IDP has been completed within the six months prior to the exam date.

IDPs are intended as a career development tool, and are not a substitute for a GSR evaluation that assesses job performance. For students whose GSR is closely tied to their dissertation research, it may be possible to combine the two, but it is still necessary to assess academic development and job performance separately.

IDPs are not required for master's students, but they are highly recommended. The template at [www.publichealth.pitt.edu/IDP](http://www.publichealth.pitt.edu/IDP) is suitable for master's students as well as doctoral students.

## **PROBATION AND DISMISSAL GUIDELINES**

### **SCOPE**

The provisions of this policy pertain to dismissal and probation for academic reasons and are developed in conformance with the University Council on Graduate Study's [Regulations Governing Graduate Study at the University of Pittsburgh](#) ("Regulations"). This policy aims to provide a means of establishing and maintaining basic standards and requirements for graduate work at the Graduate School of Public Health and is applicable to all Pitt Public Health students.

The Pitt Public Health Academic Standards and Performance Policy consists of the School-wide Probation and Dismissal Policy (SPDP), auxiliary policies established by Pitt Public Health departments to address specific items not covered by the SPDP, and university-wide academic policies. Pitt Public Health departmental policies, although they may differ in details, must conform to the fundamental principles of the SPDP, and may not be more lenient than the SPDP. Policies not covered by the SPDP must be consistent with university-wide policies regarding admission, registration, and graduation requirements. Each department may develop its own policies for probation and dismissal. However, these department-specific policies must be approved by the Pitt Public Health Educational Policies and Curriculum Committee (EPCC) and provided to students upon admission to the degree program; and updates/changes must be provided to students in a timely manner. If

departments do not specify such requirements, the SPDP applies. If the SPDP does not specify such requirements, the University-wide policies apply. As a rule of thumb, departments may not retroactively enact policies affecting currently-enrolled students without the approval of EPCC.

Policies and procedures pertaining to non-academic performance are covered by the University of Pittsburgh's Student Code of Conduct and/or Academic Integrity guidelines. Students are subject to the dismissal for breaches of the Student Code of Conduct and/or Academic Integrity guidelines, and cases are adjudicated through the specific processes related to student conduct and academic integrity.

## **PERIODIC REVIEW AND DOCUMENTATION**

All academic difficulties described should be documented in writing at each stage and should begin as soon as problems arise. The requirement for documentation applies to all degrees, academic programs, and academic shortcomings. Maintaining documentation of student academic problems is primarily, although not exclusively, the responsibility of the student's academic advisor and the student's department. The absence of documentation, however, will not preclude academic remedies from being imposed upon students in appropriate cases. All students should be given periodic departmental reviews of academic progress and constructive feedback. As problems are documented, students should receive written notice of documented problems, as well as the opportunity to respond to written notice.

## **REASONS FOR DISMISSAL FROM PITT PUBLIC HEALTH**

### **1. Failure to maintain minimum grade point average (3.00)**

A Pitt Public Health student whose cumulative grade point average (GPA is the same as QPA) falls below 3.00 is immediately placed on academic probation, and the student, their academic advisor as well as department student services representative, EPCC representative, and chairperson are notified by the EPCC in the form of an email the Office of Student Affairs. Students should work with the instructor who assigned the G grade(s) to get them resolved.

A student on probation may be permitted to take additional coursework over no more than two terms as a full-time student (part-time students may complete a maximum of an additional 18 credit hours) to reach a cumulative GPA/QPA of 3.00. Students whose GPA/QPA is sufficiently low so as to make it impossible to achieve the GPA/QPA 3.0 standard according to these timeframes may be dismissed without the additional coursework.

## **2. Failure to meet school minimum grade requirement for Pitt Public Health core courses and required departmental courses**

All master's and doctoral students must meet Pitt Public Health minimum grade requirements for both school-wide core courses and courses required by their department. The minimum grade requirement for school-wide core courses is a C.

Students who are otherwise eligible are granted two opportunities to register for and achieve at least a C in school-wide core courses. Students who are otherwise eligible also have a maximum of two opportunities to register for and achieve the minimum required grade for departmental core courses. The minimum grade requirement for those courses is established by departments.

## **3. Failure to make normal progress towards degree (completion of courses)**

Except in unusual circumstances (e.g. medical leave of absence), students may not accumulate more than 15 credits of unresolved G grades. A student approaching 15 credits of unresolved G grades will receive a memo from EPCC, and the student and their academic advisor will be asked to develop a plan for timely resolution of the grades.

A student will not be permitted to register for additional credits until the G grades are converted as a result of completion of course work. Because the University requires resolution of G grades within one year, requests for change of G grades more than a year old must be accompanied by an appeal in support of the request from the student's department and must be approved by Pitt Public Health's Office of Student Affairs before they are submitted to the registrar's office.

## **4. Failure of master's or doctoral program examinations**

The University regulations pertaining to master's and doctoral degrees describe the requirements for master's and doctoral examinations. Departments may determine the format and content of the examinations within the broad University guidelines and should provide students with formal written guidelines, and each department is responsible for specifying the procedure for administration of the master's comprehensive examination. Master's students on provisional status may not take a comprehensive examination ([Regulations, "Comprehensive Examination"](#)).

Examining committees for the doctoral overview/prospectus meeting and the final doctoral defense should be unanimous in their recommendation that a student be passed ([Regulations, "Doctoral Students"](#)).

If the committee does not vote unanimously to pass a student, the matter will be sent to the department chair, and, if necessary, to the Pitt Public Health dean for resolution. Students who fail a doctoral or master's examination (doctoral overview or defense: less than unanimous vote to pass; other exams: see department standards), will be permitted one re-take of the examination. If a student fails a re-take, the student's department chair, if they feel that a second re-take is justified, may appeal to the Pitt Public Health dean on the student's behalf. If the student's department chair feels that a second re-take should not be granted, the student may appeal for a second attempt by submitting a letter to the chair of the school's Educational Policies and Curriculum Committee (EPCC). The EPCC has a detailed procedure for administering this process. More specific rules governing program examinations may be covered by department-specific academic performance policies.

## **5. Inability to conduct research or to perform according to professional standards**

*Inability to Conduct Research:* Faculty are responsible for guiding the research of a Pitt Public Health student accepted for participation in their research project, and for meeting the advising requirements set forth in the University of Pittsburgh's document, "Elements of Good Academic Advising." However, no faculty member is obliged to accept a specific student as a member of their research team. The student, not the faculty advisor, is expected to...

- design and plan the research project;
- conceptualize and formulate the hypothesis and methodology;
- perform data analysis; and
- write an acceptable essay, thesis, or dissertation.

If a student is judged by Pitt Public Health faculty members to be unable to conduct independent research as appropriate to the discipline, the student may be dismissed.

Primary responsibility for determining whether a student has demonstrated the ability to apply research methods and to conduct independent research as appropriate to the discipline rests with the student's academic and research advisors (including the master's or doctoral committees). However, in order that evaluation of a student's work be fair and objective, failure to demonstrate the ability to conduct research must be well-documented by the faculty advisor(s) and reviewed by...

- a committee convened by the department chair and consisting of other departmental faculty and students; or
- if the student has already formed one, the doctoral committee.

Upon the recommendation of these committees, the department chair must notify the EPCC of their decision to dismiss the student, and provide the documentation for the EPCC to review. If a majority of the elected faculty EPCC members concurs, the EPCC chair will notify the department chair, who must notify the student of their dismissal, and the reasons for dismissal.

*Inability to Perform According to Professional Standards:* Faculty who are responsible for supervising Pitt Public Health students during professional activities are required to ensure that the student is able to perform according to professional standards. The student is expected to...

- participate in professional development activities, including but not limited to involvement in professional associations;
- behave in a manner consistent with the norms of the discipline / professional field during a field placement, practicum, or residency.

Primary responsibility for determining whether a student has demonstrated the ability to perform according to professional standards rests with the student's academic and field placement advisors. However, in order that the evaluation of a student's work be fair and objective, failure to demonstrate the ability to perform according to professional standards must be well-documented by the faculty advisor(s) and reviewed by: a committee convened by the department chair and consisting of other departmental faculty and students. Upon the recommendation of this committee, the department chair must notify the EPCC of their decision to dismiss the student, and provide the documentation for the EPCC to review. If a majority of the elected faculty EPCC members concurs, the EPCC chair will notify the department chair, who will notify the student of their dismissal and the reasons for dismissal.

## **PROBATION AND DISMISSAL PROCESS AND GENERAL APPEALS PROCESS**

Both the Pitt Public Health Office of Student Affairs and the EPCC chair are available for consultation regarding school policies. Any school faculty member can request the department chair to review a Pitt Public Health student's performance.

Subsequently, the department chair should contact the EPCC chair to request a review, and provide the EPCC chair with documentation to support the department's decision. The EPCC will review the documentation and notify the department chair regarding its support of the decision. If the EPCC concurs with the decision to dismiss, the EPCC chair will notify the department chair. The department chair will contact the student who is being dismissed to inform them of the action. The department chair must identify which of the reasons for dismissal is applicable. If

the EPCC disagrees with the department's decision to dismiss a student, the matter is referred to the Pitt Public Health dean for resolution.

A student may appeal a decision to dismiss by filing a written appeal with their department chair. The department chair must then bring the appeal to the attention of the EPCC, which will meet with the department chair and student's academic advisor to discuss the basis for dismissal. The EPCC must then provide its recommendation to the Pitt Public Health dean, who will approve or reverse the department's decision to dismiss the student. The dean's decision is final, and this appeal exhausts all remedies available to the student.

The EPCC must create an ad hoc committee to provide objective feedback on dismissal cases *related to inability to conduct research or to perform according to professional standards*. The department chair will bring the student's appeal to the attention of the EPCC, which will set up an ad hoc committee to review documentation consisting of at least one faculty member and at least one student from the same Pitt Public Health department, and at least one faculty member and at least one student from outside the department (i.e., at a minimum, an ad hoc committee must consist of two faculty and two students). If the ad hoc committee disagrees (by majority vote) with the department's decision to dismiss, the EPCC chair will contact the Pitt Public Health dean to approve or reverse the department's decision.

## **ACADEMIC INTEGRITY PROCEDURES**

### **STUDENT OBLIGATIONS**

A student has an obligation to exhibit honesty and to respect the ethical standards of the profession in carrying out their academic assignments. Without limiting the application of this principle, a student may be found to have violated this obligation if they...

- Refer during an academic evaluation to materials or sources, or employs devices, not authorized by the faculty member.
- Provide assistance during an academic evaluation to another person in a manner not authorized by the faculty member.
- Receive assistance during an academic evaluation from another person in a manner not authorized by the faculty member.
- Engage in unauthorized possession, buying, selling, obtaining, or use of a copy of any materials intended to be used as an instrument of academic evaluation in advance of its administration.
- Act as a substitute for another person in any academic evaluation process.

- Utilize a substitute in any academic evaluation proceeding.
- Practice any form of deceit in an academic evaluation proceeding.
- Depend on the aid of others in a manner expressly prohibited by the faculty member, in the research, preparation, creation, writing, performing, or publication of work to be submitted for academic credit or evaluation.
- Provide aid to another person, knowing such aid is expressly prohibited by the faculty member, in the research, preparation, creation, writing, performing, or publication of work to be submitted for academic credit or evaluation.
- Present as one's own, for academic evaluation, the ideas, representations, or words of another person or persons without customary and proper acknowledgment of sources.
- Submit the work of another person in a manner which represents the work to be one's own.
- Knowingly permit one's work to be submitted by another person without the faculty member's authorization.
- Attempt to influence or change one's academic evaluation or record for reasons other than achievement or merit.
- Indulge, during a class (or examination) session in which one is a student, in conduct which is so disruptive as to infringe upon the rights of the faculty member or fellow students.
- Fail to cooperate, if called upon, in the investigation or disposition of any allegation of dishonesty pertaining to a fellow student.
- Violate the canons of ethics of the [Principles of the Ethical Practice of Public Health](#).

## PROCEDURES FOR ADJUDICATION

No student should be subject to an adverse finding that they committed an offense related to academic integrity, and no sanction should be imposed relating thereto, except in accordance with procedures appropriate for disposition of the particular matter involved. The degree of formality of proceedings, the identity of the decision maker or decision makers, and other related aspects properly reflect such considerations as the severity of the potential sanction, its probable impact upon the student, and the extent to which matters of professional judgment are essential in arriving at an informed decision. In all cases, however, the objective is to provide fairness to the student as well as an orderly means for arriving at a decision, starting first with the individual faculty member and then designated administrative officers or bodies.

**These guidelines are not meant to address differences of opinion over grades issued by faculty in exercising good faith professional judgments of student work.**

They are meant to address matters in which a faculty member deals with a student regarding an alleged breach of academic integrity. In matters of academic integrity, the succeeding procedural steps must be followed:

- Any member of the University community may bring to the attention of the faculty member a complaint that a student has failed, in one or more respects, to meet faithfully the obligations specified in the above Section I.
- Acting on their own evidence, and/or on the basis of evidence submitted to the faculty member, the faculty member will advise the student that they have reason to believe that the student has committed an offense related to academic integrity, and the student will be afforded an opportunity to respond. If the accused student and the faculty member accept a specific resolution offered by either of them, the matter shall be considered closed if both parties complete and sign a written agreement to that effect using the [Report of Possible Academic Integrity Violation by a Student](#) form and submit it to Pitt Public Health's Office of Student Affairs. The Office of Student Affairs will maintain a written record of the form, signed by the student and the faculty member. These records are not to be added to the student's individual file, and they are to be destroyed when the student graduates or otherwise terminates registration. Pitt Public Health's Office of Student Affairs may provide such information on an individual student for the following uses:
  1. To a faculty member who is involved with a student integrity violation at the initial stage and who wishes to use this previous record in determining whether a resolution between the faculty member and the student or an academic integrity board hearing may be most appropriate, especially in the case of repeat offenders; and
  2. To the Pitt Public Health Academic Integrity Hearing Board (AIHB) after a decision of guilt or innocence has been made in a case, but before a sanction has been recommended.
- If an agreed-upon resolution between the faculty member and the student cannot be reached, the faculty member will file a written statement of charges with Pitt Public Health's Office of Student Affairs, who serves as the school's academic integrity administrative officer and support staff for the Pitt Public Health AIHB. Such statement should set forth the alleged offenses which are the basis of the charges, including a factual narrative of events and the dates and times of occurrences. The statement should also include the names of persons having personal knowledge of circumstances or events, the general nature and description of all evidence, and the signature of the charging party. If this occurs at the end of a term, and/or the last term of enrollment, the "G" grade should be

issued for the course until the matter is decided. In situations involving the student's last term before graduation, degree certifications can be withheld pending the outcome of the hearing, which should be expedited as quickly as possible.

- Pitt Public Health's Office of Student Affairs will transmit the written statement of charges to the student, together with a copy of these regulations.
- The letter of transmittal to the student, a copy of which shall also be sent to the faculty member or charging party, will state a time and place when a hearing on the charges will be held by the chair of the Pitt Public Health AIHB.
- In proceedings before the Pitt Public Health AIHB, the student shall have the right...

1. to be considered innocent until found guilty by clear and convincing evidence of a violation of the student obligations of academic integrity;
2. to have a fair disposition of all matters as promptly as possible under the circumstances;
3. to be informed of the general nature of the evidence to be presented;
4. to confront and question all parties and witnesses except when extraordinary circumstances make this impossible;
5. to present a factual defense through witnesses, personal testimony, and other relevant evidence;
6. to decline to testify against themselves;
7. to have only relevant evidence considered by the school AIHB;
8. to have a record of the hearing (audio tape), at their own expense, upon request.

- The hearing should provide a fair inquiry into the truth or falsity of the charges, with the charged party and the faculty member or charging party afforded the right to cross-examine all adverse witnesses. At the level of the Pitt Public Health AIHB, legal counsel shall not be permitted, but a non-attorney/law student representative from within the University community shall be permitted for both faculty and students. A law student cannot be used as a representative at a hearing of the University's board.
- Any member of the University community may, upon showing relevancy and necessity, request witnesses to appear at the hearing. Witnesses who are members of the University community shall be required to appear, and other witnesses shall be requested to appear, at a hearing. When necessitated by fairness or extraordinary circumstances, the chair of the school AIHB may make arrangements for recorded or written testimony for use in a proceeding.

## Hearing Procedure

- The hearing will be conducted as follows:

1. The chair of the Pitt Public Health AIHB will not apply technical exclusionary rules of evidence followed in judicial proceedings nor entertain technical legal motions. Technical legal rules pertaining to the wording of questions, hearsay, and opinions will not be formally applied. Reasonable rules of relevancy will guide the chair of the AIHB in ruling on the admissibility of evidence. Reasonable limits may be imposed on the number of factual witnesses and the amount of cumulative evidence that may be introduced;
2. The alleged offense or offenses upon which the complaint is based shall be read by the chair of the school AIHB;
3. Objections to procedure shall be entered on the record, and the chair of the Pitt Public Health AIHB shall make any necessary rulings regarding the validity of such objections;
4. The charging party shall state their case and shall offer evidence in support thereof;
5. The accused or representative(s) for the accused shall have the opportunity to question the charging party;
6. The charging party shall be given the opportunity to call witnesses;
7. The accused or representative(s) for the accused shall be given the opportunity to question each witness of the charging party after they testify;
8. The charging party shall inform the chair of the Pitt Public Health AIHB when their presentation is completed, at which time the AIHB members shall be given an opportunity to ask questions of the persons participating in the hearing;
9. The Pitt Public Health AIHB shall recess, and the AIHB chair shall make a determination as to whether the charging party has presented sufficient evidence to support a finding against the accused if such evidence is uncontroverted. The parties may be required to remain in the hearing room during the recess or may be excused for a time period set by the chair of the AIHB;
0. Depending upon the determination of the chair of the Pitt Public Health AIHB, the matter shall be dismissed or the accused shall be called upon to present their case and offer evidence in support thereof;
  1. The accused may testify or not as they choose;
  2. The charging party shall have the opportunity to question the accused if the accused voluntarily chooses to testify;
  3. The accused or representative(s) for the accused shall have the opportunity to call witnesses;
  4. The charging party shall have the opportunity to question each witness of the accused after they testify;

5. The accused shall inform the chair of the Pitt Public Health AIHB when their presentation is complete, and the AIHB members shall have an opportunity to ask questions of the accused as well as the accused's witnesses;
  6. The chair of the Pitt Public Health AIHB shall have an opportunity to address the board on University regulations or procedure in the presence of all parties, but shall not offer other comments without the consent of all parties; and,
  7. The hearing shall be continued and the members of the board shall deliberate in private until a decision is reached and recorded.
- A suitable record (audio recording) shall be made of the proceedings, exclusive of deliberations to arrive at a decision.
  - The proposed decision, which shall be written, shall include a determination of whether the charges have been proven by clear and convincing evidence, together with findings with respect to the material facts. If any charges are established, the proposed decision shall state the particular sanction or sanctions to be imposed. Prior violations or informal resolutions of violations may be considered only in recommending sanctions, not in determining guilt or innocence. Once a determination of guilt has been made, and before determining sanctions, the chair of the Pitt Public Health AIHB should find out from Pitt Public Health's Office of Student Affairs whether prior offenses and sanctions imposed have occurred.
  - The proposed decision shall be submitted to the Pitt Public Health dean, who will make an independent review of the hearing proceedings. The dean may require that the charges be dismissed, or that the case be remanded for further proceedings whenever they deem this to be necessary. Upon completion of such additional proceedings, if any, and within a reasonable time the dean shall issue a final decision. The dean may reject any findings made by the Pitt Public Health AIHB adverse to the student, and may dismiss the charges or reduce the severity of any sanction imposed, but the dean may not make new findings adverse to the student or increase the severity of a sanction, except in the case of repeat offenders of the Academic Integrity Guidelines.
  - The chair of the school AIHB shall then transmit to the charged party and the accusing faculty member copies of all actions taken by the AIHB and the dean. If a sanction is imposed, the notice to the student will make reference to the student's opportunity, by petition filed with the provost, to appeal to the University Review Board.

## **TIMELINESS**

It is the responsibility of all parties, including administrative officers, to take prompt action in order that charges can be resolved quickly and fairly. Failure of the faculty member to utilize these procedures diligently may constitute grounds for dismissal

of charges. Parties have the right to seek review by the Provost or to petition the University Review Board for an appeal from a decision of the Pitt Public Health AIHB or investigatory committee within five (5) working days of the date of the decision letter.

## **SANCTIONS**

The alternative sanctions which may be imposed upon a finding that an offense related to academic integrity has been committed are the following:

- Dismissal from the University without expectation of readmission.
- Suspension from the University for a specific period of time.
- Reduction in grade, or assignment of a failing grade, in the course in which the offending paper or examination was submitted.
- Reduction in grade, or assignment of a failing grade, on the paper or examination in which the offense occurred. The schools can add other sanctions approved by the school dean and the provost. Such sanctions must be made known to students.

In administering sanctions, academic units must strive to achieve consistency in their application. That is, within the same units, the same sanctions should be applied for the same offenses, unless extenuating circumstances can be documented, e.g., the student is a repeat offender. The imposition of such sanctions may be considered by the school in the preparation of any report concerning a student submitted to a government agency, accrediting body, or other person or institution in accordance with the requirements of law or the written consent of the student.

## **ACADEMIC INTEGRITY HEARING BOARD**

The Pitt Public Health Academic Integrity Hearing Board (AIHB) shall be composed of both faculty and students and consist of: at least twelve persons, including one faculty representative from each school department, Pitt Public Health's Office of Student Affairs, the associate dean responsible for student affairs, the associate dean responsible for academics, and two Pitt Public Health students. Faculty representatives are also members of the Pitt Public Health Educational Policy and Curriculum Committee (EPCC). The two student representatives are representatives to the EPCC who have been selected by the EPCC to serve on the AIHB. Assistant and associate dean responsible for student affairs, and the associate dean responsible for academics are ex-officio members. In order to ensure continuity and orderly turnover of members, faculty representatives will serve staggered terms of

either two or three years, and students will serve for one year. All will be familiarized with the AIHB guidelines.

## **REVIEW AND APPEAL**

A student or faculty member may seek to have a dean's final decision (or a determination that the charges are not subject to adjudication) reviewed by the Provost, who may seek the advice of the University Review Board, or the student may appeal to the University Review Board, whose recommendation shall be made to the Provost. The action of the provost, taken with or without the advice of the University Review Board, shall constitute an exhaustion of all required institutional remedies.

### **University of Pittsburgh Pitt Public Health Academic Integrity Policy and Hearing Procedures**

#### ***Faculty Obligations and Student Rights***

A faculty member accepts an obligation, in relation to their students, to discharge their duties in a fair and conscientious manner in accordance with the ethical standards generally recognized within the academic community, (as well as those of the profession). Without limiting the application of the above principle, members of the faculty are also expected (except in cases of illness or other compelling circumstance) to conduct themselves in a professional manner, including the following:

- To meet their classes when scheduled.
- To be available at reasonable times for appointments with students, and to keep such appointments.
- To make appropriate preparation for classes and other meetings.
- To perform their grading duties and other academic evaluations in a timely manner.
- To describe to students, within the period in which a student may add and drop a course, orally, in writing, or by reference to printed course descriptions, the general content and objectives of a course; and announce the methods and standards of evaluation, including the importance to be assigned various factors in academic evaluation and, in advance of any evaluation, the permissible materials or references allowed during evaluation.
- To base all academic evaluations upon good-faith professional judgment.
- Not to consider, in academic evaluation, such factors as race, color, religion, sex, sexual orientation, age, national origin, and political or cultural affiliation, and life style, activities, or behavior outside the classroom unrelated to academic achievement.

- To respect the confidentiality of information regarding a student contained in University records; and to refrain from releasing such information, except in connection with intra-University business, or with student consent, or as may be permitted by law.
- Not to exploit their professional relationship with students for private advantage; and to refrain from soliciting the assistance of students for private purposes in a manner which infringes upon such students' freedom of choice.
- To give appropriate recognition to contributions made by students to research, publication, service, or other activities.
- To refrain from any activity which involves risk to the health and safety of a student, except with the student's informed consent, and, where applicable, in accordance with the University policy relating to the use of human subjects in experimentation.
- To respect the dignity of students individually and collectively in the classroom and other academic contexts.

### ***Grievance Procedures***

Any member of the University community having evidence may bring to the attention of first the department chair and later, if necessary, the associate dean responsible for student affairs, a complaint that a faculty member has failed, in one or more respects, to meet faithfully the obligations set forth above. The chair or associate dean, at their discretion, will take such action by way of investigation, counseling, or action--in accordance with applicable University procedures--as may appear to be proper under the circumstances. The faculty member's and student's interest in confidentiality, academic freedom, and professional integrity in such matters will be respected.

### ***Individual Grievances***

In order to provide a means for students to seek and obtain redress for grievances affecting themselves individually, the following procedures should be followed. These are not intended and shall not be used to provide sanctions against faculty members.

### ***Procedures***

Where an individual student alleges with particularity that the actions of a faculty member have resulted in serious academic injury to the student, the matter shall (if requested by the student) be presented to the Pitt Public Health Academic Integrity Hearing Board (AIHB) for adjudication. Serious academic injury includes, but is not necessarily limited to, the awarding of a lower course grade than that which the

student has earned or suspension from a class. **However, this is not intended to address normal grading decisions of faculty in exercising good-faith professional judgment in evaluating a student's work.** It is the responsibility of the student, before seeking to have a grievance adjudicated, to attempt to resolve the matter by personal conference with the faculty member concerned, and, if such attempts are unavailing, to call the matter to the attention of first the department chair and later, if necessary, the associate dean responsible for student affairs for consideration and adjustment by informal means. If a matter remains unresolved after such efforts have been made, the following grievance procedures shall be employed:

- The aggrieved student will file a written statement of charges with Pitt Public Health's Office of Student Affairs.
- If Pitt Public Health's Office of Student Affairs determines in consultation with the associate dean responsible for academic affairs that the charges are subject to adjudication under the terms of the Academic Integrity Guidelines, they will transmit the charges to the faculty member and to associate dean responsible for student affairs, together with a copy of these regulations.
- The letter of transmittal to the faculty member, a copy of which shall also be sent to the student, will state the composition of a committee convened by the associate dean responsible for student affairs that has been named to meet with the involved parties to make an informal inquiry into the charge. The purpose of this committee is to provide a last effort at informal resolution of the matter between the student and the faculty member.
- The committee shall meet with the faculty member, the student, and others as appropriate, to review the nature of the problem in an attempt at reaching a settlement of the differences. This is not a formal hearing, and formal procedural rules do not apply. Upon completion of this meeting, if no mutually agreeable resolution results, the committee may produce its own recommendation for a solution to the conflict.
- Should the committee recommend that the faculty member take some corrective action on behalf of the student, its recommendations shall be provided to the faculty member. As promptly as reasonable and at least within five (5) working days after the faculty member receives the recommendations of the committee, the faculty member shall privately take that action which they elect, and so advise the student and the chair of the committee of that action.
- Should the committee conclude that the faculty member need not take corrective action on behalf of the student, this finding shall be forwarded to both the faculty member and the student.
- If the student elects to pursue the matter further, either because they are dissatisfied with the resulting action of the faculty member or the conclusion of the committee, they should discuss this intent with the chair of the committee,

who should review the procedures to be followed with the student. If the student wishes to proceed with a formal hearing, the chair of the committee shall advise the chair of the school AIHB that the case appears to involve a student's claim of serious academic injury, and that the formal hearing procedure must be initiated.

- The formal hearing should provide a fair inquiry into the truth or falsity of the charges, with the faculty member and the student afforded the right to cross-examine. At the level of the Pitt Public Health AIHB, legal counsel shall not be permitted, but a representative from within the University community shall be permitted for both faculty and students.
- A suitable record (audio recording) shall be made of the proceedings, exclusive of deliberations to arrive at a decision.
- The proposed decision, which shall be written, shall include a determination of whether charges have been proved by clear and convincing evidence, together with findings with respect to the material facts. If any charges are established, the proposed decision shall state the particular remedial action to be taken.
- The proposed decision shall be submitted to the Pitt Public Health dean, who will make an independent review of the hearing proceedings. The dean may require that the charges be dismissed or that the case be remanded for further proceedings whenever they deem this to be necessary. The dean may limit the scope of any further proceedings or require that part or all of the original proceedings be reconvened. Upon completion of such additional proceedings, if any, the dean shall issue a final decision. The dean may reject any findings made by the school AIHB, may dismiss the charges, or may reduce the extent of the remedial action to be taken. If the dean believes the remedial action to be taken may infringe upon the exercise of academic freedom, they will seek an advisory opinion from the Senate Committee on Tenure and Academic Freedom (TAF) before issuing their own decision. The decision of the dean shall be in writing, shall set forth with particularity any new findings of fact or remedies, and shall include a statement of the reasons underlying such action.
- The dean shall then transmit to the faculty member and to the student copies of all actions affecting them taken by the hearing authority and the dean. Suitable records shall be maintained as confidential and retained in the Office of the Dean.

### ***Remedial Action***

Remedies on a student's behalf should usually be those agreed to willingly by the faculty member. Other remedial action to benefit a student may be authorized by the dean only upon recommendation of the Pitt Public Health AIHB and limited to: allowing a student to repeat an examination; allowing a student to be evaluated for work that would otherwise be too late to be considered; directing that additional opportunities be afforded for consultation or instruction; eliminating a grade that

had been assigned by a faculty member from the transcript; changing of a failing letter or numerical grade to a "pass" or "satisfactory" grade, so as not to adversely affect a student's grade average; allowing a student to repeat a course without penalty, schedule and program permitting.

If some action is contemplated that might be deemed to infringe upon the academic freedom of the faculty member, the dean will seek an advisory opinion from the Senate Committee on TAF. In such cases, TAF may identify other acceptable remedies or render such advice as may be appropriate in the particular situation.

No action detrimental to the faculty member will be taken, except as in strict accordance with established University procedures. An adjustment hereunder in the student's behalf shall not be deemed a determination that the faculty member was in any way negligent or derelict.

### ***Review and Appeal***

A student or faculty member may seek to have a dean's final decision (or a determination that the charges are not subject to adjudication) reviewed by the provost, who may seek the advice of the University Review Board, or the student may appeal to the University Review Board, whose recommendation shall be made to the provost. The action of the provost, taken with or without the advice of the University Review Board, shall constitute an exhaustion of all required institutional remedies.

If any such determination may be deemed to have a possible adverse effect upon the faculty member's professional situation, the faculty member may seek the assistance of the Tenure and Academic Freedom Committee of the University Senate.

### ***Timeliness***

It is the responsibility of all parties, including administrative officers, to take prompt action in order that grievances may be resolved quickly and fairly. While no explicit time limit could apply to all cases, failure to use diligence in seeking redress may constitute grounds for denial of a hearing or other relief, especially if prejudice results. Parties have the right to seek review of the provost or to petition the University Review Board for an appeal from a decision of the Pitt Public Health AIHB or investigatory committee within five (5) working days of the date of the decision letter.

### ***Investigatory Committees and Hearing Boards***

The informal investigatory committees shall consist of three to five faculty selected by associate dean responsible for student affairs and one or two students from the EPCC. The Pitt Public Health AIHB shall be composed of both students and faculty and shall consist of seven faculty, one representing each department, two students, and three ex-officio members. The faculty and students are representatives to the Pitt Public Health EPCC, and the ex-officio members are the assistant and associate dean responsible for student affairs, and the associate dean responsible for education. The associate dean responsible for student affairs will select individuals to serve in particular cases.

### ***Grievance Procedures Against Senior Administrators***

A student complaint of arbitrary or unfair treatment against the principal officer of an academic unit (e.g., the dean) should be made to the provost or appropriate senior vice chancellor. There must be a prompt review and decision on the grievance. Members of the faculty who may be called upon to review and advise on the grievance should be drawn from outside the jurisdiction of the administrator against whom the charge is made.

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### **Footnotes**

1. There may be instances where the charging party may more appropriately invoke the University of Pittsburgh Student Code of Conduct and Judicial Procedures. This may occur where the alleged wrong mainly involves factual determinations and not academic issues.
2. If the faculty member elects not to pursue a complaint submitted by a member of the University community, the complaint can be submitted to an individual appointed by the dean who can pursue the matter in place of the faculty member.
3. The University Review Board and its jurisdiction are described at the end of this document.
4. In implementation, the decision of the Provost shall be binding also on matters of interpretation of codes and procedures, determination of serious injury, and determination that an allegation is subject to adjudication by the procedures provided herein.
5. Pitt Public Health recognizes that what is expected of faculty hereunder is intended to provide students with a notion of what is required in the course, and how they will be evaluated; a general statement of broadly defined parameters would

therefore suffice. If a course is deemed experimental in content, evaluation techniques, or grading practices, the students should be so advised. By academic evaluation is meant a measurement or grading of a student's academic performance, such as in written or oral examinations or papers, research reports, or class or laboratory participation.

6. If the student charges such discrimination, the assistant or associate dean for student affairs will consult with the University's affirmative action officer to ensure compliance with civil rights legislation and regulations. In such cases, the University Senate Tenure and Academic Freedom Committee may be consulted at any time.

7. References or recommendations may be given in good faith by a faculty member on their own behalf, without documentation of a student's consent if it may be reasonably perceived that the student initiated the request for a recommendation, in response to apparent bona fide inquiries, such as those from institutions which state that the student has applied for employment, for admission to graduate academic unit, or for a professional license. See fuller statements concerning University records in the [Student Code of Conduct and Judicial Procedures](#).

8. Students are advised that other University policies may more appropriately apply to a given grievance or avenue of redress, including, but not necessarily limited to, the [Anti-Harassment Policy Statement](#).

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## UNIVERSITY REVIEW BOARD

The University Review Board (URB) is the duly authorized appellate body which serves as an advisor to the provost and senior vice chancellor and the chancellor. (Regional campuses may establish similar appellate bodies which serve as an advisor to their President and whose appellate jurisdiction shall be limited to nonacademic matters). The URB may exercise appellate jurisdiction for academic and non-academic matters and shall have sole appellate jurisdiction for matters originating from judicial bodies within the University Student Judicial System. The URB shall also exercise limited jurisdiction for matters referred directly from the chancellor and the provost, the senior vice chancellor for the health sciences, or the vice provost and dean of students. The University Review Board may meet from time to time for the purpose of orienting new members and reviewing prior decisions and shall meet at such other times as are necessary to conduct appellate hearings.

## URB STRUCTURE

The URB shall be a standing body of fifteen members of the University community appointed for staggered terms of two years. Appointment shall be made in the following manner:

- Five faculty members elected by the University Senate.
- Five graduate and professional students appointed by the Graduate and Professional Student Association.
- Five undergraduate students:
  1. two appointed by the General Studies Student Council; and
  2. three appointed by the Undergraduate Student Government Board.

A matter properly submitted for review shall be heard by a review board of five members of the URB. Review boards shall be composed as follows:

- In academic cases, three faculty members and two students.
- In non-academic cases, two faculty members and three students.

### **URB MODERATOR**

An attorney appointed by the chancellor who shall serve as URB moderator is authorized to...

- Conduct the administrative and procedural operations of the URB.
- Determine the appropriateness and completeness of petitions to the URB in consultation with one student and one faculty member of the URB.
- Provide advice and assistance to members of the University community regarding the processing of an appeal.
- Select members from the URB membership to serve on review boards.
- Moderate all proceedings before the URB.
- Serve as legal advisor to the URB.
- Provide legal advice related to URB proceedings and recommendation, if requested, to the chancellor or other referring authority.

### **BASIS FOR APPEAL**

The URB shall hear an appeal whenever requested by the chancellor, provost and senior vice chancellor, senior vice chancellor for the health sciences, or the vice provost and dean of students. The URB shall also hear appeals on the petition of a faculty member, student, or student organization when either petition, together with supporting documentation, presents a substantial question within the scope of review of the URB and either the prior adjudication or action resulted in...

- Suspension or dismissal from the University for violation of the Student Code of Conduct.
- Suspension or dismissal from the University or the imposition of a serious academic sanction for violation of academic integrity standards.
- Grant or denial of a remedy in an academic grievance proceeding.
- Suspension or dismissal from the University residence halls.
- Procedural rulings or substantive interpretations which have an important continuing impact upon the University Student Judicial System or the University community.

## **SCOPE OF REVIEW**

The scope of review of the URB shall be limited to consideration of the following questions:

- Whether rights affirmed by the Board of Trustees have been denied.
- Whether the adjudicatory process of an initial hearing was conducted fairly and in conformity with properly prescribed procedures.
- Whether the adjudication was supported by substantial evidence.
- Whether the regulations involved were lawful and proper and whether they were properly applied in the particular case.
- Whether the sanction or remedy imposed was in due proportion to the gravity and nature of the conduct.

## **URB PROCEDURES**

Any faculty member or student adversely affected by the decision of a judicial body within the University Student Judicial System may institute an appeal before the URB by filing a petition in the office of the URB moderator. A petition must set forth the following:

- The name and address of the petitioner adversely affected by the prior adjudication.
- The name and address of the respondent.
- The result of the prior adjudication.
- One or more of the questions within the scope of review of the URB.
- A statement supporting, through factual narrative and argument, the petitioner's position. The Moderator, in consultation with one student and one faculty member of the URB, shall review petitions and determine whether all requirements set forth for the filing of an appeal are satisfied and whether the petition sets forth the basis for an appeal and raises a question within the scope of review.

Upon receipt of a properly filed petition, the moderator shall notify the parties that an appeal has been instituted. Notice shall include...

- A copy of the petition.
- A copy of the relevant regulations and procedures.

After determining the appropriateness and completeness of a petition and allowing a reasonable amount of time for preparation and review of any documents and recordings, the moderator shall schedule an appeal. All parties shall receive written notification of the time, date, and place. The moderator shall convene a review board at the time, date, and place scheduled, and the appeal shall be conducted under the procedural guidance of the moderator.

*\* The URB, at its discretion, may elect to decide an appeal based on the submission of briefs by the parties without oral argument. In such cases, the Moderator will provide written instruction to the parties.*

## **POSTPONEMENT OF SANCTION PENDING APPEALS**

A sanction or remedy which has been recommended by a judicial board and approved by the appropriate administrative officer may be postponed upon petition by the affected party or parties upon a determination that pending the final examination of an appeal it would be unfair not to postpone imposition of the sanction or remedy.

Persons wishing to postpone a sanction or remedy may petition the URB by separate petition setting forth reasons why the imposition of a sanction or remedy would unfairly prejudice a party. Petition for postponement shall be reviewed by the moderator, one student, and one faculty member of the URB. The criteria to be applied in determining whether to postpone a sanction or remedy are as follows:

- Whether the issues raised in the appeal may be resolved in favor of the petitioning party.
- Whether the petitioning party will be unfairly prejudiced pending a final determination of the appeal by the immediate imposition of the sanction or remedy.
- Whether the responding party will be unfairly prejudiced by the postponement of the sanction or remedy.

All decisions regarding the postponement of sanctions shall be made within five (5) days of the receipt of such a petition and shall be communicated to all parties in writing through the office of the Moderator.

## **REPRESENTATION**

A party may be represented or assisted by whomever they wish, but only one representative may take an active part.

## **ARGUMENT FORMAT**

Each party in interest shall be given ample time to present their position. In support of a position, a party may refer to any records, documents, or recordings from a prior proceeding and may present an oral or written argument.

Each party may question the other about their argument. Members of the URB may question the parties. The URB shall make factual findings and shall render a final adjudication in the form of a written opinion. A majority shall control all decisions, but there may be an accompanying minority opinion.

## **URB ACTION**

The URB may remand a matter to the initial adjudicatory authorities for further proceedings if it determines there are insufficient written findings or prejudicial procedural error. In other cases, the URB shall render a written opinion and recommend action to the chancellor, provost and senior vice chancellor, senior vice chancellor for the health sciences, or the vice provost and dean of students, accompanied by the complete record. The moderator shall be responsible for promptly communicating any formal action of the URB to the parties, transmitting remanded cases to the initial adjudicatory authorities, and forwarding the recommendations to the chancellor and his or her representatives.

## **ACTION BY THE CHANCELLOR OR OTHER REFERRING AUTHORITY**

The chancellor and/or their representatives shall consider the opinions and recommendations of the URB, the record, and such other advice as they may deem necessary and proper. They may remand the matter to the initial adjudicatory authority or to the URB for further proceedings or may enter a final decision, accepting or rejecting the recommendations in part or in their entirety. (A sanction imposed by an initial adjudicatory authority may not be increased.)

The University of Pittsburgh, as an educational institution and as an employer, values equality of opportunity, human dignity, and racial/ethnic and cultural diversity. Accordingly, the University prohibits and will not engage in discrimination or harassment on the basis of race, color, religion, national origin, ancestry, sex, age, marital status, familial status, sexual orientation, gender identity or expression, disability, or status as a disabled veteran or a veteran of the Vietnam era. Further, the

University will continue to take affirmative steps to support and advance these values consistent with the University's mission. This policy applies to admissions, employment, and access to and treatment in University programs and activities. This is a commitment made by the University and is in accordance with federal, state, and/or local laws and regulations.

For information on University equal opportunity and affirmative action programs and complaint/grievance procedures, please contact:

Katie Pope  
Associate Vice Chancellor for Civil Rights and Title IX  
Office of Diversity and Inclusion  
412-648-7860  
diversity.pitt.edu

### **WHAT TO DO IF YOU SUSPECT ACADEMIC INTEGRITY HAS BEEN VIOLATED**

Should you feel that academic integrity in the form of cheating, plagiarism, etc. has occurred, the steps below are provided to guide and assist you through the process. Please note that these are general guidelines and may not be pertinent to every situation. Should you have any questions or concerns, you can contact Pitt Public Health's Office of Student Affairs.

- If you suspect that academic integrity has been violated, document the behavior(s) you observed, those involved, and the date. Do this as soon after the event as possible to ensure that key facts are documented as they occurred. Keep this record in a safe place.
- Meet with the individual(s) involved to discuss the matter and obtain all the facts. You could meet one-on-one with the individual(s) or ask that a colleague who would be neutral to the situation to sit in on the meeting. It would be advised that you do not select the student's academic advisor or the department chair of that particular department as this may pose additional pressure on the student.
- If after the meeting, you believe that academic integrity has been violated, the [Academic Integrity Violation form](#) must be completed.
- The Academic Integrity Violation form documents the violation, sanction, and whether the student agrees on the imposed sanction. The completed form is to be returned to Pitt Public Health's Office of Student Affairs. This form will be placed in a confidential file housed in the Office of Student Affairs. It will not become part of the student(s)' academic file and will be destroyed when the student graduates.
- If the student indicates on the Academic Integrity Violation Form that they do not agree with the imposed sanction, a hearing before the Pitt Public Health Academic Integrity Hearing Board will occur.

## **TA AND GSR POLICY**

### **Pitt Public Health Policy on GSRs, GSAs, TAs, and TFs**

The University policy statements on student assistants are the foundation for the Pitt Public Health policy. In addition, individual departments and programs within the school may have policies of their own, as long as those do not conflict with University or school policy.

#### **Definition of GSA/GSR**

According to University policy, a Graduate Student Researcher (GSR) is a graduate student receiving financial support from research funds in return for duties performed to meet the goals for which the funds were awarded. The research performed is often an integral part of the student's research practicum experience, thesis, or dissertation, but this is not a requirement. A Graduate Student Assistant (GSA) performs duties to assist in the educational or research mission of the University, but does not teach a class, recitation or laboratory.

#### **Pitt Public Health Enrollment**

All students appointed as GSRs/GSAs/TAs/TFs through the school must be enrolled in a degree program at Pitt Public Health. It is permissible for Pitt Public Health faculty to support students in other programs, as long as those students are appointed through their own programs.

#### **Length of Appointment and Funding Eligibility**

The length of any appointment may not exceed one academic year. Funding cannot be guaranteed beyond the term of the appointment.

#### **Weekly Work Requirement and Limitations**

In accordance with University policy, the workweek of a student with a full GSA or GSR appointment shall not exceed 20 hours. When the GSR assignment is an integral part of a student's practicum experience, research project, thesis or dissertation research, more hours may be required, but these should be planned in coordination with the student's other academic obligations so that the student is able to make satisfactory progress toward all aspects of completing the degree.

At any particular time, students may not hold more than one full assistantship or the equivalent of one full appointment in fractional appointments. Students with full appointments or the equivalent of a full appointment may not receive additional hourly employment positions within the University (or UPMC). In all cases, a student

may not hold any combination of assistantship appointments and hourly work appointments amounting to more than 20 hours per week.

### **Registration/Credit Limitations**

Courses taken and covered by the tuition scholarship must be required for the degree or certified by the student's department as relevant to the degree. In no case should a student take fewer than six credits in the fall and spring terms, or fewer than three credits in the summer term (unless restricted by the department to fewer credits in the summer). Please note: foreign students must be registered full time in the fall and spring unless prior to registration, Office of International Services (OIS) has given them permission to register for fewer credits.

### **Evaluation and Reappointment**

Reappointment will be conditional upon satisfactory work performance. Each student will be evaluated at least annually for performance by the project director and academic advisor. While Pitt Public Health encourages ongoing evaluation of the GSR throughout their appointment, a formal written evaluation is required once a year (please see section on evaluation). Progress must be satisfactory in order for the student to be reappointed.

### **Appointment Letter**

Before the beginning of the term of appointment, each student shall be given a letter outlining all duties and terms of appointment. Departments may use the letter format provided by the dean's office.

The letter shall be signed by...

1. the student's major advisor;
2. the faculty member who will oversee the research (if not the major advisor); and
3. the chair of the department offering the appointment.

Copies of the University and Pitt Public Health policy statements shall be attached, and the student shall sign the letter as an indication of acceptance of the terms of the appointment. Signed copies of this letter must be forwarded to the Office of Student Affairs and to the director of personnel.

### **Leave Policies**

It is the faculty member's responsibility to define the terms of the research assignment and to convey them to the graduate student prior to the signing of the

appointment letter. These terms should include an understanding of the extent of between-term and holiday leaves, observance of religious holidays and personal leaves. There is no uniform University policy on holidays. However, Pitt Public Health strongly encourages faculty to consider student needs for appropriate leaves during holidays and between terms.

Students appointed as GSRs, GSAs, TAs or TFs are entitled to parental accommodation and leave as outlined in the [University policy on graduate student parental accommodations](#).

### **University Research Policies**

Both faculty and students must be familiar with and adhere to University policies on conflict of interest and research integrity, and any other policies relevant to the student's work.

### **Other Conditions**

All appointments will be given both a stipend and a tuition scholarship as provided by the University policy. Tuition scholarships may not be given without a stipend. Tuition scholarships will be prorated for appointments whose start or end dates do not coincide with the official dates of the term.

### **Grievances**

Should a student encounter difficulties with their faculty advisor for their GSR, the first recourse is to address those difficulties with that faculty member. Should they be unable to resolve the issues, a student can raise their concerns to the department chair. The school strongly encourages students to work out the issues within the department. If that is not feasible, the student should bring those issues to either the assistant or associate dean responsible for student affairs or the associate dean responsible for academics.

## **UNIVERSITY POLICIES**

[Academic Integrity](#)

[Alcohol](#)

[Anti-Harassment Policy Statement](#)

[Buckley Amendment \(FERPA\)](#)

[Drug-Free Schools](#)

[Graduate Advising](#)

[Graduate Student Parental Accommodations Guidelines and](#)

[Parental Accommodation Request Form](#)

[Graduate Student Researchers](#)

[Nondiscrimination Policy Statement](#)

[Regulations Governing Graduate Study](#)

[Required On-line Training for Student Researchers](#)

[Research Integrity](#)

[Responsible Conduct of Research](#)

[Satisfactory Academic Progress](#)

[Student Code of Conduct](#)

[Students with Disabilities](#)

[Teaching Assistants, Teaching Fellows, and  
Graduate Student Assistants](#)