Part III: Research, practice, and examination, and final paper requirements

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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 department. All departments should have a process for helping students identify appropriate practica, for orienting both students and practicum supervisors to expectations, and for evaluating the practicum and any competencies that are based on it. Model forms for evaluating MPH practica are on the Teaching & Advising Resources page. Some departments use these forms and some use their own.

Programs other than the MPH: Programs other than the MPH and DrPH may also require practica or clinical experiences.

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 with the practicum supervisor well in advance, as some clearance processes are lengthy. Some practicum sites may also require specific site agreements or other legal arrangements. In addition, some practica include a research component, in which case you will need to complete appropriate research modules (see below).

Research requirements

Requirements: All doctoral degrees and most MS degrees in Pitt Public Health include a research component. The process of choosing a research advisor can be critically important. Start on this process early, in consultation with your advisor and other mentors, and be sure that you know what departmental rules and expectations are.

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. See the TA and GSR policy for specific requirements for students with GSR appointments. 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 the 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 each group. View the Research Training Requirements Web page. Students are advised to verify the specific modules required by their department, research mentor, and/or academic advisor.

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. The modules are located on the Pitt CITI Access Portal. More information can be found on the CITI Web site.

Online module on human subjects research in the biomedical sciences: This module is required for all students who are conducting human subjects research within the biological sciences field. 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. The modules are located on the Pitt CITI Access Portal. More information can be found on the CITI Web site.

Online module on human subjects research in the behavioral and social sciences: This module is required for all University of Pittsburgh students who are conducting human subjects research within the social and behavioral sciences field. 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. The modules are located on the Pitt CITI Access Portal. More information can be found on the CITI Web site.

Examination requirements

General: Requirements for exam committee memberships can be found in part IV of this handbook. Policies on exam re-takes and appeals can be found in the Pitt Public Health probation and dismissal guidelines, also in part IV. 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 responsibility of the student to bring this form to the exam; check with your departmental student services coordinator.

MS degrees: Per University of Pittsburgh policy, all MS degrees require a comprehensive examination and a thesis defense. This takes different forms in different Pitt Public Health departments; consult your program handbook.

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 your department and advisor.

Other degrees: Most other degrees do not require comprehensive examinations, but consult your advisor and program handbook.

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

Essay, thesis, and dissertation requirements

General: 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. Detailed format requirements are located in part IV of this handbook, and final submission instructions are located on the graduation web page of the Pitt Public Health web site. Rules for committee composition and the School-Wide MPH Essay/ Thesis Completion Policy are also located in part IV.

MS degrees: All MS degrees at Pitt Public Health require a thesis and a defense of that thesis. In some programs this is 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 if your department and advisor allow. Be sure to discuss this with your advisor, and also be aware of for the two dissertation forms.

MPH degrees: MPH programs may require an essay or a thesis, or may give students a choice of the two formats. Consult with your advisor and your program handbook on differences and expectations. For students who wish to base their essay on practicum/ internship experiences with the Allegheny County Health Department (ACHD), please note that your essay requires approval from your ACHD preceptor/ site supervisor. In addition, a member of the ACHD should serve on your essay committee.

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 they may be so at the discretion of the department. Doctoral defenses are required to be public, and have very specific publicity requirements. See the [graduation page](.).