



## **Department of Epidemiology**

Doctoral Degree Programs

Student Manual

Version 2 - Academic Year 2025-2026

## Preface

Welcome to the Department of Epidemiology's Doctoral Program. This handbook serves as your comprehensive guide to the Ph.D. program, outlining important operational policies, procedures and requirements for the successful completion of the doctoral degree program. Below, you will find essential information, including relevant forms and documentation that you will need throughout your tenure with us. We encourage you to familiarize yourself with this handbook and use it as a primary reference during your academic journey.

## Contact Information

As you read through this document, you will see instructions on who to contact for each action/task. Please use the following contact information for the titles that are referenced:

<b>Title</b>	<b>Name</b>	<b>Email</b>
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MD/PhD Joint Program Director	Iva Miljkovic, MD, PhD, FAHA	<a href="mailto:miljkovici@edc.pitt.edu">miljkovici@edc.pitt.edu</a>
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Pitt Public Health Student Services Director	Mike Dolinger	<a href="mailto:mike.dolinger@pitt.edu">mike.dolinger@pitt.edu</a>
Senior Research Assistant, Education Team	Anne Meals, MaT	<a href="mailto:amm902@pitt.edu">amm902@pitt.edu</a>

**Forms referenced in the document can be found using these links:**

- [School Forms](#)
- [Department of Epidemiology Forms](#)

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## PhD Degree Overview

- Epidemiology doctoral degree programs include:
  - Doctor of Philosophy (PhD) – 72 credits
  - Doctor of Medicine (MD) / Doctor of Philosophy (PhD) Joint Degree – 72 credit PhD program
- Program Directors:
  - Doctoral Program Director – Tina Costacou, PhD
  - MD/PhD Program Director – Iva Miljkovic, MD, PhD, FAHA

**Note:** Milestone exam (Overview, Comprehensive, Dissertation Defense) and PhD faculty committee formation/approval details are accessible in the [PhD Dissertation Guidelines section](#) of this handbook.

### Degree Purposes

#### [PhD in Epidemiology](#)

The 72-credit PhD degree is designed to provide the individual with an advanced level of academic preparation to conduct epidemiological research, and to teach, supervise and mentor students in epidemiology. This includes concentrated training in epidemiological concepts and methodology, completion of a teaching practicum on a core course, competence in scientific and grant writing, passage of the preliminary, overview, and comprehensive exams, and the completion of a research-based dissertation.

#### [MD/PhD in Epidemiology](#)

The [Medical Scientist Training Program \(MSTP\)](#) of the University of Pittsburgh and Carnegie Mellon University was established in 1983 to offer exceptionally talented individuals the opportunity to undertake a physician-scientist training program tailored to their specific research interests.

This program allows students to initially pursue an MD degree at the University of Pittsburgh School of Medicine for two years and apply to the Epidemiology PhD program during the second year of study, with the goal of completing it in approximately three years. After earning the PhD, students return to the School of Medicine to finish the final two years of their medical training.

### Completion Timeframes

- The PhD program in Epidemiology requires a minimum of 3 years of coursework and research. Students who have completed their master's degree in our department may be able to complete both their master's and doctoral degrees within 4 years. In exceptional circumstances, students may request the Department Chair to consider granting an exception to these timeframes. However, all degree program requirements must be completed within eight to ten in accordance to university policy ([Statute of Limitations for Degree Completion/Leaves of Absence](#)).
- MD/PhD joint degree students generally complete the requirements of both programs in 6 – 8 years

## Program of Study

The Ph.D. program of study includes departmental (Epidemiology) core courses, Pitt Public Health courses, and electives. Doctoral students are also required to gain experience in the conduct of research and teaching. Below is the [suggested sequence of required courses](#) for a Ph.D. in Epidemiology depending on year of matriculation.

## Epidemiology PhD Program Sequence Documents - Matriculation as of Fall 2025

<b>Full Sequence</b>		
<b>Doctor of Philosophy (PhD) Program in Epidemiology</b>		
<b>Fall Term, Year 1 (matriculation as of Fall 2025)</b>		
<b>Course #</b>	<b>Course Title</b>	<b>Credits</b>
BIOST 2041*	Introduction to Statistical Methods	3
EPIDEM 2004 (fall/spr/sum) <u>OR</u> EOH 3210 (spring)	Pathophysiology Across the Lifespan <u>OR</u> Pathophysiology of Environmental Disease	4 3
EPIDEM 2110*	Principles of Epidemiology	3
EPIDEM 2185 (fall) <u>OR</u> EPIDEM 2186 (fall)	Introduction to SAS <u>OR</u> Introduction to R for Public Health	2 2
EPIDEM 2250	Seminar in Epidemiology	1
PUBHLT 2022	Dean's Public Health Grand Rounds (must register for 2 terms)	0
Electives	In consultation with advisor	0-3
Internal Review Board (IRB) Training	Internal Review Board (IRB) Online Training – see Student Services staff for details	0
Pitt Public Health Academic Integrity Module Training	Please refer to the Pitt Public Health website for more information about this school-wide graduation requirement.	0
<b>Spring Term, Year 1</b>		
BIOST 2142*	Applied Regression Analysis	3
EPIDEM 2004 (fall/spr/sum) <u>OR</u> EOH 3210 (spring)	Pathophysiology Across the Lifespan <u>OR</u> Pathophysiology of Environmental Disease	4 3
EPIDEM 2160 (spr 1 or spr 2)	Epidemiology of Infectious Diseases	2
EPIDEM 2180*	Fundamentals of Epidemiological Methods	3
EPIDEM 3183**	Reading, Analyzing & Interpreting Public Health Medical Literature	3
EPIDEM 2250	Seminar in Epidemiology	1
EPIDEM 2600 (spr 1 or spr 2)	Introduction to Molecular Epidemiology	3
PUBHLT 2011	Essentials of Public Health (exempted with BSPH or MPH)	3
PUBHLT 2022	Dean's Public Health Grand Rounds (must register for 2 terms)	0
Electives	In consultation with advisor	0-3
<b>Summer Term, Year 1</b>		
EPIDEM 2004 (fall/spr/sum) <u>OR</u> EOH 3210 (spring)	Pathophysiology Across the Lifespan <u>OR</u> Pathophysiology of Environmental Disease	4 3
Electives	In consultation with advisor	0-6
<b>Fall Term, Year 2</b>		
EPIDEM 2181**	Design and Conduct of Clinical Trials	2
EPIDEM 2189	Epidemiological Methods of Longitudinal & Time-To-Event Analyses	3
EPIDEM 3100	Research and Dissertation	Discuss w/ advisor
EPIDEM 2215	Teaching Practicum	2
EPIDEM 2250	Seminar in Epidemiology	1
EPIDEM 2260	Epidemiologic Basis for Disease Control	2
XXXXX-XXXX <sup>1</sup>	Advanced Quantitative Course requirement	1-3
Electives	In consultation with advisor	0-3



Spring Term, Year 2		
EPIDEM 2160 (spr 1 or spr 2)	Epidemiology of Infectious Diseases	2
EPIDEM 2170	Chronic Disease Epidemiology	2
EPIDEM 2192	Causal Inference in Epidemiologic Research	3
EPIDEM 3100	Research and Dissertation	Discuss w/ advisor
EPIDEM 2215 (fall/spr/sum)	Teaching Practicum	2
EPIDEM 2230 (spr 2 or spr 3)	Secondary Data Analysis: A Capstone Course	2
EPIDEM 2250	Seminar in Epidemiology	1
EPIDEM 2600 (spr 1 or spr 2)	Introduction to Molecular Epidemiology	3
XXXXX - XXXX <sup>1</sup>	Advanced Quantitative Course requirement	1-3
Electives	In consultation with advisor	0-4
Summer Term, Year 2		
EPIDEM 3100	Research and Dissertation	Discuss w/ advisor
Electives	In consultation with advisor	0-6
Fall Term, Year 3		
EPIDEM 2193	Machine Learning in Epidemiological Research	3
EPIDEM 3100	Research and Dissertation	Discuss w/ advisor
EPIDEM 2215 (fall/spr/sum)	Teaching Practicum	2
EPIDEM 2250	Seminar in Epidemiology	1
EPIDEM 2921	Grant Writing	3
PUBHLT 2030	Research Ethics and the Responsible Conduct of Research	1
XXXXX-XXXX <sup>1</sup>	Advanced Quantitative Course requirement	1-3
Electives	In consultation with advisor	0-4
Spring Term, Year 3		
EPIDEM 3100 <u>OR</u> FTDR 3999	Research and Dissertation <u>OR</u> Full-Time Dissertation Research (determined by level of academic progress)	Discuss w/ advisor
EPIDEM 2215 (fall/spr/sum)	Teaching Practicum	2
EPIDEM 2230 (spr 2 or spr 3)	Secondary Data Analysis: A Capstone Course	2
EPIDEM 2250	Seminar in Epidemiology	1
Electives	In consultation with advisor	0-10

**<sup>1</sup> One advanced quantitative course is required. Choose from the following:**

BCHS 2991, BCHS 3002, BCHS 3015, BIOST 2016, BIOST 2143 (replaced BIOST 2050), BIOST 2150 (replaced BIOST 2066), EFOP 3408, HPM 3505, and HUGEN 2080.

**NOTE:** HUGEN 2070 also qualifies as an advanced quantitative course. However, this course is no longer being offered.

**REMINDER:** Questions about other courses not on the above list that may qualify to meet this requirement should be discussed with your advisor. If your advisor agrees that the class might qualify, information about it should be forwarded to the Epidemiology Curriculum Committee Chair via the Director of Student Services. Approval from the Curriculum Committee must be obtained prior to enrolling in the class.

**OTHER PhD REQUIREMENTS (no credits involved):** Contact your academic advisor or the Director of Student Services [rhodesa@edc.pitt.edu](mailto:rhodesa@edc.pitt.edu) for more information. They must be completed prior to graduation.

- **Primary Data Collection & Management Requirement**
- **Independent Development Plan (IDP) submission** (Doctoral students must submit IDP's annually. A reminder about this requirement will be emailed to students in spring term).
- **Presentation Training – Competency in Communication** (two presentations must be delivered)

\*Course should be completed before sitting for the preliminary examinations unless exempted

\*\*Students who have completed this course performed better on the preliminary exams than those who did not.

<b>Accelerated Sequence</b> (students with prior MS/MPH in epidemiology and advisor approval) *		
<b>Doctor of Philosophy (PhD) Program in Epidemiology</b>		
<b>Fall Term, Year 1</b> (matriculation as of Fall 2025)		
<b>Course #</b>	<b>Course Title</b>	<b>Credits</b>
EPIDEM 2004 (fall/spr/sum) OR EOH 3210 (spring)	Pathophysiology Across the Lifespan <u>OR</u> Pathophysiology of Environmental Disease	4 3
EPIDEM 2181***	Design and Conduct of Clinical Trials	2
EPIDEM 2185 (fall) <u>OR</u> EPIDEM 2186 (fall)	Introduction to SAS <u>OR</u> Introduction to R for Public Health	2 2
EPIDEM 2189	Epidemiological Methods of Longitudinal & Time-To-Event Analyses	3
EPIDEM 2215 (fall/spr/sum)	Teaching Practicum	2
EPIDEM 2250	Seminar in Epidemiology	1
EPIDEM 2260	Epidemiologic Basis for Disease Control	2
PUBHLT 2022	Dean's Public Health Grand Rounds (must register for 2 terms)	0
Electives	In consultation with advisor	0-3
Internal Review Board (IRB) Training	Internal Review Board (IRB) Online Training - see Student Services staff for details	0
Pitt Public Health Academic Integrity Module Training	Please refer to the Pitt Public Health website for more information about this school-wide graduation requirement.	0
<b>Spring Term, Year 1</b>		
EPIDEM 2004 (fall/spr/sum) OR EOH 3210 (spring)	Pathophysiology Across the Lifespan <u>OR</u> Pathophysiology of Environmental Disease	4 3
EPIDEM 2160 (spr 1 or spr 2)	Epidemiology of Infectious Diseases	2
EPIDEM 2170 (spr 1 or spr 2)	Chronic Disease Epidemiology	2
EPIDEM 3183***	Reading, Analyzing, & Interpreting Public Health Medical Literature	3
EPIDEM 2192	Causal Inference for Epidemiologic Research	3
EPIDEM 2215 (fall/spr/sum)	Teaching Practicum	2
EPIDEM 2250	Seminar in Epidemiology	1
EPIDEM 2600 (spr 1 or spr 2)	Introduction to Molecular Epidemiology	3
PUBHLT 2011	Essentials of Public Health (exempted with BSPH or MPH)	3
PUBHLT 2022	Dean's Public Health Grand Rounds (must register for 2 terms)	0
Electives	In consultation with advisor	0-3
<b>Summer Term, Year 1</b>		
EPIDEM 2004 (fall/spr/sum) OR EOH 3210 (spring)	Pathophysiology Across the Lifespan <u>OR</u> Pathophysiology of Environmental Disease	4 3
Electives	In consultation with advisor	0-6
<b>Fall Term, Year 2</b>		
EPIDEM 2170 (fall 1 or fall 2)	Chronic Disease Epidemiology	2
EPIDEM 2193 (fall 2 or fall 3)	Machine Learning in Epidemiological Research	3
EPIDEM 3100	Research and Dissertation	Discuss w/ advisor
EPIDEM 2215	Teaching Practicum	2
EPIDEM 2250	Seminar in Epidemiology	1
PUBHLT 2030	Research Ethics and Responsible Conduct of Research	1
XXXXX-XXXX <sup>1</sup>	Advanced Quantitative Course requirement	1-3
Electives XXX	In consultation with advisor	0-5

Spring Term, Year 2		
EPIDEM 2160 (spr 1 or spr 2)	Epidemiology of Infectious Diseases	2
EPIDEM 2170 (starting 2025, spring 1 or spring 2)	Chronic Disease Epidemiology	2
EPIDEM 3100	Research and Dissertation	Discuss w/ advisor
EPIDEM 2215 (fall/spr/sum)	Teaching Practicum	2
EPIDEM 2230 (spr 2 or spr 3)	Secondary Data Analysis: A Capstone Course	2
EPIDEM 2250	Seminar in Epidemiology	1
EPIDEM 2600 (spr 1 or spr 2)	Introduction to Molecular Epidemiology	3
Electives	In consultation with advisor	0-5
Fall Term, Year 3		
EPIDEM 2193 (fall 2 or fall 3)	Machine Learning in Epidemiological Research	3
EPIDEM 2215 (fall/spr/sum)	Teaching Practicum	2
EPIDEM 2921	Grant Writing	3
EPIDEM 3100	Research and Dissertation	Discuss w/advisor
XXXXX-XXXX <sup>1</sup>	Advanced Quantitative Course requirement	1-3
Electives	In consultation with advisor	0-8
Spring Term, Year 3		
EPIDEM 3100 <u>OR</u> FTDR 3999	Research and Dissertation <u>OR</u> Full-Time Dissertation Research (determined by level of academic progress)	Discuss w/ advisor
EPIDEM 2215 (fall/spr/sum)	Teaching Practicum	2
EPIDEM 2230 (spr 2 or spr 3)	Secondary Data Analysis: A Capstone Course	2
EPIDEM 2250	Seminar in Epidemiology	1
Electives	In consultation with advisor	0-10

<sup>1</sup> **One advanced quantitative course is required. Choose from the following:**

BCHS 2991, BCHS 3002, BCHS 3015, BOST 2016, BOST 2143 (replaced BOST 2050), BOST 2150 (replaced BOST 2066), EFOP 3408, HPM 3505, and HUGEN 2080.

**NOTE:** HUGEN 2070 also qualifies as an advanced quantitative course. However, this course is no longer being offered.

**REMINDER:** Questions about other courses not on the above list that may qualify to meet this requirement should be discussed with your advisor. If your advisor agrees that the class might qualify, information about it should be forwarded to the Epidemiology Curriculum Committee Chair via the Director of Student Services. Approval from the Curriculum Committee must be obtained prior to enrolling in the class.

**OTHER PhD REQUIREMENTS (no credits involved):** Contact your academic advisor or the Director of Student Services [rhodesa@edc.pitt.edu](mailto:rhodesa@edc.pitt.edu) for more information. They must be completed prior to graduation.

- **Primary Data Collection & Management Requirement**
- **Independent Development Plan (IDP) submission** (Doctoral students must submit IDP's annually. A reminder about this requirement will be emailed to students in spring term).
- **Presentation Training – Competency in Communication** (two presentations must be delivered)

\*Doctoral students interested in following this accelerated sequence will need the approval of their Advisor **AND** the Program Director to exempt from the following prerequisite courses: EPIDEM 2110, BOST 2041, EPIDEM 2180, BOST 2142 (replaced BOST 2049). This exemption will only be granted if they have previously taken these courses or similar courses in another program. To receive the exemption, students should discuss with their academic advisor and submit transcripts and course syllabi to the PhD program

director for approval. Students receiving exemptions are strongly recommended to participate in EPIDEM 2110 or EPIDEM 2180 as a Teaching Assistant given that these courses are required for the preliminary examinations.

\*\*\*Students who have completed this course performed better on the preliminary exams than those who did not.

# Epidemiology PhD Program Sequence Documents - Matriculation as of Fall 2024

<b>Full Sequence</b> <b>Doctor of Philosophy (PhD) Program in Epidemiology</b>		
Fall Term, Year 1 (matriculation as of Fall 2024)		
Course #	Course Title	Credits
BIOST 2041*	Introduction to Statistical Methods	3
EPIDEM 2004 (fall/spr/sum) OR EOH 3210 (spring)	Pathophysiology Across the Lifespan OR Pathophysiology of Environmental Disease	4 3
EPIDEM 2110*	Principles of Epidemiology	3
EPIDEM 2185 (fall) OR EPIDEM 2186 (fall)	Introduction to SAS OR Introduction to R for Public Health	2 2
EPIDEM 2250	Seminar in Epidemiology	1
PUBHLT 2022	Dean's Public Health Grand Rounds (must register for 2 terms)	0
Electives	In consultation with advisor	0-3
Internal Review Board (IRB) Training	Internal Review Board (IRB) Online Training – see Student Services staff for details	0
Pitt Public Health Academic Integrity Module Training	Please refer to the Pitt Public Health website for more information about this school-wide graduation requirement.	0
Spring Term, Year 1		
BIOST 2142 (replaced BIOST 2049)*	Applied Regression Analysis	3
EPIDEM 2004 (fall/spr/sum) OR EOH 3210 (spring)	Pathophysiology Across the Lifespan OR Pathophysiology of Environmental Disease	4 3
EPIDEM 2160 (spr 1 or spr 2)	Epidemiology of Infectious Diseases	2
EPIDEM 2180*	Fundamentals of Epidemiological Methods	3
EPIDEM 3183**	Reading, Analyzing, & Interpreting Public Health Medical Literature	3
EPIDEM 2250	Seminar in Epidemiology	1
EPIDEM 2600 (spr 1 or spr 2)	Introduction to Molecular Epidemiology	3
PUBHLT 2011	Essentials of Public Health (exempted with BSPH or MPH)	3
PUBHLT 2022	Dean's Public Health Grand Rounds (must register for 2 terms)	0
Electives	In consultation with advisor	0-3
Summer Term, Year 1		
EPIDEM 2004 (fall/spr/sum) OR EOH 3210 (spring)	Pathophysiology Across the Lifespan OR Pathophysiology of Environmental Disease	4 3
Electives	In consultation with advisor	0-6
Fall Term, Year 2		
EPIDEM 2170***	Chronic Disease Epidemiology	2
EPIDEM 2181**	Design and Conduct of Clinical Trials	2
EPIDEM 2189	Epidemiological Methods of Longitudinal & Time-To-Event Analyses	3
EPIDEM 3100	Research and Dissertation	Discuss w/ advisor
EPIDEM 2215	Teaching Practicum	2
EPIDEM 2250	Seminar in Epidemiology	1
EPIDEM 2260	Epidemiologic Basis for Disease Control	2
XXXXX - XXXX <sup>1</sup>	Advanced Quantitative Course requirement	1-3
Electives	In consultation with advisor	0-3

Spring Term, Year 2		
EPIDEM 2160 (spr 1 or spr 2)	Epidemiology of Infectious Diseases	2
EPIDEM 2170***	Chronic Disease Epidemiology	2
EPIDEM 2192	Causal Inference in Epidemiologic Research	3
EPIDEM 3100	Research and Dissertation	Discuss w/ advisor
EPIDEM 2215 (fall/spr/sum)	Teaching Practicum	2
EPIDEM 2230 (spr 2 or spr 3)	Secondary Data Analysis: A Capstone Course	2
EPIDEM 2250	Seminar in Epidemiology	1
EPIDEM 2600 (spr 1 or spr 2)	Introduction to Molecular Epidemiology	3
XXXXX - XXXX <sup>1</sup>	Advanced Quantitative Course requirement	1-3
Electives	In consultation with advisor	0-4
Summer Term, Year 2		
EPIDEM 3100	Research and Dissertation	Discuss w/ advisor
Electives	In consultation with advisor	0-6
Fall Term, Year 3		
EPIDEM 2193	Machine Learning in Epidemiological Research	3
EPIDEM 3100	Research and Dissertation	Discuss w/ advisor
EPIDEM 2215 (fall/spr/sum)	Teaching Practicum	2
EPIDEM 2250	Seminar in Epidemiology	1
EPIDEM 2921	Grant Writing	3
PUBHLT 2030	Research Ethics and the Responsible Conduct of Research	1
XXXXX-XXXX <sup>1</sup>	Advanced Quantitative Course requirement	1-3
Electives	In consultation with advisor	0-4
Spring Term, Year 3		
EPIDEM 3100 <u>OR</u> FTDR 3999	Research and Dissertation <u>OR</u> Full-Time Dissertation Research (determined by level of academic progress)	Discuss w/ advisor
EPIDEM 2215 (fall/spr/sum)	Teaching Practicum	2
EPIDEM 2230 (spr 2 or spr 3)	Secondary Data Analysis: A Capstone Course	2
EPIDEM 2250	Seminar in Epidemiology	1
Electives	In consultation with advisor	0-10

**<sup>1</sup> One advanced quantitative course is required. Choose from the following:**

BCHS 2991, BCHS 3002, BCHS 3015, BIOST 2016, BIOST 2143 (replaced BIOST 2050), BIOST 2150 (replaced BIOST 2066), EFOP 3408, HPM 3505, and HUGEN 2080.

**NOTE:** HUGEN 2070 also qualifies as an advanced quantitative course. However, this course is no longer being offered.

**REMINDER:** Questions about other courses not on the above list that may qualify to meet this requirement should be discussed with your advisor. If your advisor agrees that the class might qualify, information about it should be forwarded to the Epidemiology Curriculum Committee Chair via the Director of Student Services. Approval from the Curriculum Committee must be obtained prior to enrolling in the class.

**OTHER PhD REQUIREMENTS (no credits involved):** Contact your academic advisor or the Director of Student Services [rhodesa@edc.pitt.edu](mailto:rhodesa@edc.pitt.edu) for more information. They must be completed prior to graduation.

- **Primary Data Collection & Management Requirement**



- **Independent Development Plan (IDP) submission** (Doctoral students must submit IDP's annually. A reminder about this requirement will be emailed to students in spring term).
- **Presentation Training – Competency in Communication** (two presentations must be delivered)

\*Course should be completed before sitting for the preliminary examinations unless exempted

\*\*Students who have completed this course performed better on the preliminary exams than those who did not.

\*\*\*Starting spring 2025, EPIDEM 2170 will only be offered in the spring.

**Accelerated Sequence** (students with prior MS/MPH in epidemiology and advisor approval) \***Doctor of Philosophy (PhD) Program in Epidemiology****Fall Term, Year 1** (matriculation as of Fall 2024)

<b>Course #</b>	<b>Course Title</b>	<b>Credits</b>
EPIDEM 2004 (fall/spr/sum) <u>OR</u> EOH 3210 (spring)	Pathophysiology Across the Lifespan <u>OR</u> Pathophysiology of Environmental Disease	4 3
EPIDEM 2170 (fall 1 or fall 2)**	Chronic Disease Epidemiology	2
EPIDEM 2181***	Design and Conduct of Clinical Trials	2
EPIDEM 2185 (fall) <u>OR</u> EPIDEM 2186 (fall)	Introduction to SAS <u>OR</u> Introduction to R for Public Health	2 2
EPIDEM 2189	Epidemiological Methods of Longitudinal & Time-To-Event Analyses	3
EPIDEM 2215 (fall/spr/sum)	Teaching Practicum	2
EPIDEM 2250	Seminar in Epidemiology	1
EPIDEM 2260	Epidemiologic Basis for Disease Control	2
PUBHLT 2022	Dean's Public Health Grand Rounds (must register for 2 terms)	0
Electives	In consultation with advisor	0-3
Internal Review Board (IRB) Training	Internal Review Board (IRB) Online Training - see Student Services staff for details	0
Pitt Public Health Academic Integrity Module Training	Please refer to the Pitt Public Health website for more information about this school-wide graduation requirement.	0

**Spring Term, Year 1**

EPIDEM 2004 (fall/spr/sum) <u>OR</u> EOH 3210 (spring)	Pathophysiology Across the Lifespan <u>OR</u> Pathophysiology of Environmental Disease	4 3
EPIDEM 2160 (spr 1 or spr 2)	Epidemiology of Infectious Diseases	2
EPIDEM 2170 (starting 2025, spring 1 or spring 2)	Chronic Disease Epidemiology	2
EPIDEM 3183***	Reading, Analyzing, & Interpreting Public Health Medical Literature	3
EPIDEM 2192	Causal Inference for Epidemiologic Research	3
EPIDEM 2215 (fall/spr/sum)	Teaching Practicum	2
EPIDEM 2250	Seminar in Epidemiology	1
EPIDEM 2600 (spr 1 or spr 2)	Introduction to Molecular Epidemiology	3
PUBHLT 2011	Essentials of Public Health (exempted with BSPH or MPH)	3
PUBHLT 2022	Dean's Public Health Grand Rounds (must register for 2 terms)	0
Electives	In consultation with advisor	0-3

**Summer Term, Year 1**

EPIDEM 2004 (fall/spr/sum) <u>OR</u> EOH 3210 (spring)	Pathophysiology Across the Lifespan <u>OR</u> Pathophysiology of Environmental Disease	4 3
Electives	In consultation with advisor	0-6

**Fall Term, Year 2**

EPIDEM 2170 (fall 1 or fall 2)	Chronic Disease Epidemiology	2
EPIDEM 2193 (fall 2 or fall 3)	Machine Learning in Epidemiological Research	3
EPIDEM 3100	Research and Dissertation	Discuss w/advisor
EPIDEM 2215	Teaching Practicum	2

Fall Term, Year 2 (continued)		
EPIDEM 2250	Seminar in Epidemiology	1
PUBHLT 2030	Research Ethics and Responsible Conduct of Research	1
XXXXX-XXXX <sup>1</sup>	Advanced Quantitative Course requirement	1-3
Electives XXX	In consultation with advisor	0-5
Spring Term, Year 2		
EPIDEM 2160 (spr 1 or spr 2)	Epidemiology of Infectious Diseases	2
EPIDEM 2170 (starting 2025, spring 1 or spring 2)	Chronic Disease Epidemiology	2
EPIDEM 3100	Research and Dissertation	Discuss w/ advisor
EPIDEM 2215 (fall/spr/sum)	Teaching Practicum	2
EPIDEM 2230 (spr 2 or spr 3)	Secondary Data Analysis: A Capstone Course	2
EPIDEM 2250	Seminar in Epidemiology	1
EPIDEM 2600 (spr 1 or 2)	Introduction to Molecular Epidemiology	3
Electives	In consultation with advisor	0-5
Fall Term, Year 3		
EPIDEM 2193 (fall 2 or fall 3)	Machine Learning Analysis in Epidemiological Research	3
EPIDEM 2215 (fall/spr/sum)	Teaching Practicum	2
EPIDEM 2921	Grant Writing	3
EPIDEM 3100	Research and Dissertation	Discuss w/ advisor
XXXXX-XXXX <sup>1</sup>	Advanced Quantitative Course requirement	1-3
Electives	In consultation with advisor	0-8
Spring Term, Year 3		
EPIDEM 3100 <u>OR</u> FTDR 3999	Research and Dissertation <u>OR</u> Full-Time Dissertation Research (determined by level of academic progress)	Discuss w/ advisor
EPIDEM 2215 (fall/spr/sum)	Teaching Practicum	2
EPIDEM 2230 (spr 2 or 3)	Secondary Data Analysis: A Capstone Course	2
EPIDEM 2250	Seminar in Epidemiology	1
Electives	In consultation with advisor	0-10

<sup>1</sup> **One advanced quantitative course is required. Choose from the following:**

BCHS 2991, BCHS 3002, BCHS 3015, BIOST 2016, BIOST 2143 (replaced BIOST 2050), BIOST 2150 (replaced BIOST 2066), EFOP 3408, HPM 3505, and HUGEN 2080.

**NOTE:** HUGEN 2070 also qualifies as an advanced quantitative course. However, this course is no longer being offered.

**REMINDER:** Questions about other courses not on the above list that may qualify to meet this requirement should be discussed with your advisor. If your advisor agrees that the class might qualify, information about it should be forwarded to the Epidemiology Curriculum Committee Chair via the Director of Student Services. Approval from the Curriculum Committee must be obtained prior to enrolling in the class.

**OTHER PhD REQUIREMENTS (no credits involved):** Contact your academic advisor or the Director of Student Services [rhodesa@edc.pitt.edu](mailto:rhodesa@edc.pitt.edu) for more information. They must be completed prior to graduation.

- **Primary Data Collection & Management Requirement**
- **Independent Development Plan (IDP) submission** (Doctoral students must submit IDP's

annually. A reminder about this requirement will be emailed to students in spring term).

- **Presentation Training – Competency in Communication** (two presentations must be delivered)

\*Doctoral students interested in following this accelerated sequence will need the approval of their Advisor **AND** the Program Director to exempt from the following prerequisite courses: EPIDEM 2110, BIOST 2041, EPIDEM 2180, BIOST 2142 (replaced BIOST 2049). This exemption will only be granted if they have previously taken these courses or similar courses in another program. To receive the exemption, students should discuss with their academic advisor and submit transcripts and course syllabi to the PhD program director for approval. Students receiving exemptions are strongly recommended to participate in EPIDEM 2110 or EPIDEM 2180 as a Teaching Assistant given that these courses are required for the preliminary examinations. \*\*Starting spring 2025, EPIDEM 2170 will only be offered in the spring. \*\*\*Students who have completed this course performed better on the preliminary exams than those who did not.

## Epidemiology PhD Program Sequence Documents - Matriculation as of Fall 2023

<b>Full Sequence</b>		
<b>Doctor of Philosophy (PhD) Program in Epidemiology</b>		
<b>Fall Term, Year 1</b> (matriculation as of Fall 2023)		
<b>Course #</b>	<b>Course Title</b>	<b>Credits</b>
BIOST 2041*	Introduction to Statistical Methods	3
EPIDEM 2004 (fall/spr/sum) OR EOH 3210 (spring)	Pathophysiology Across the Lifespan OR Pathophysiology of Environmental Disease	4 3
EPIDEM 2110*	Principles of Epidemiology	3
EPIDEM 2185 (fall) OR EPIDEM 2186 (fall)	Introduction to SAS OR Introduction to R for Public Health	2 2
EPIDEM 2250	Seminar in Epidemiology	1
PUBHLT 2022	Dean's Public Health Grand Rounds (must register for 2 terms)	0
Electives	In consultation with advisor	0-3
Internal Review Board (IRB) Training	Internal Review Board (IRB) Online Training – see Student Services staff for details	0
Pitt Public Health Academic Integrity Module Training	Please refer to the Pitt Public Health website for more information about this school-wide graduation requirement	0
<b>Spring Term, Year 1</b>		
BIOST 2049*	Applied Regression Analysis	3
EPIDEM 2004 (fall/spr/sum) OR EOH 3210 (spring)	Pathophysiology Across the Lifespan OR Pathophysiology of Environmental Disease	4 3
EPIDEM 2160 (spr 1 or spr 2)	Epidemiology of Infectious Diseases	2
EPIDEM 2180*	Fundamentals of Epidemiological Methods	3
EPIDEM 3183**	Reading, Analyzing, & Interpreting Public Health Medical Literature	3
EPIDEM 2250	Seminar in Epidemiology	1
EPIDEM 2600 (spr 1 or spr 2)	Introduction to Molecular Epidemiology	3
PUBHLT 2011	Essentials of Public Health (exempted with BSPH or MPH)	3
PUBHLT 2022	Dean's Public Health Grand Rounds (must register for 2 terms)	0
Electives	In consultation with advisor	0-3
<b>Summer Term, Year 1</b>		
EPIDEM 2004 (fall/spr/sum) OR EOH 3210 (spring)	Pathophysiology Across the Lifespan OR Pathophysiology of Environmental Disease	4 3
Electives	In consultation with advisor	0-6
<b>Fall Term, Year 2</b>		
EPIDEM 2170	Chronic Disease Epidemiology	2
EPIDEM 2181**	Design and Conduct of Clinical Trials	2
EPIDEM 2189	Epidemiological Methods of Longitudinal & Time-To-Event Analyses	3
EPIDEM 2210	Special Studies	Discuss w/ advisor
EPIDEM 2215 (fall/spr/sum)	Teaching Practicum	2
EPIDEM 2250	Seminar in Epidemiology	1
EPIDEM 2260	Epidemiologic Basis for Disease Control	2
XXXXX - XXXX <sup>1</sup>	Advanced Quantitative Course requirement	1
Electives	In consultation with advisor	0-3

Spring Term, Year 2		
EPIDEM 2160 (spr 1 or spr 2)	Epidemiology of Infectious Diseases	2
EPIDEM 2192	Causal Inference in Epidemiologic Research	3
EPIDEM 2210	Special Studies	Discuss w/ advisor
EPIDEM 2215 (fall/spr/sum)	Teaching Practicum	2
EPIDEM 2230 (spr 2 or spr 3)	Secondary Data Analysis: A Capstone Course	2
EPIDEM 2250	Seminar in Epidemiology	1
EPIDEM 2600 (spr 1 or spr 2)	Introduction to Molecular Epidemiology	3
XXXXX - XXXX <sup>1</sup>	Advanced Quantitative Course requirement	1-3
Electives	In consultation with advisor	0-4
Summer Term, Year 2		
EPIDEM 2210	Special Studies	Discuss w/ advisor
Electives	In consultation with advisor	0-6
Fall Term, Year 3		
EPIDEM 2193	Machine Learning in Epidemiological Research	3
EPIDEM 2210 <u>OR</u> EPIDEM 3100	Special Studies <u>OR</u> Research and	Discuss w/ advisor
EPIDEM 2215 (fall/spr/sum)	Teaching Practicum	2
EPIDEM 2250	Seminar in Epidemiology	1
EPIDEM 2921	Grant Writing	3
PUBHLT 2030	Research Ethics and the Responsible Conduct of Research	1
XXXXX-XXXX <sup>1</sup>	Advanced Quantitative Course requirement	1-3
Electives	In consultation with advisor	0-4
Spring Term, Year 3		
EPIDEM 2210 <u>OR</u> EPIDEM 3100 <u>OR</u> FTDR 3999	Special Studies <u>OR</u> Research and Dissertation <u>OR</u> Full-Time Dissertation Research (determined by level of academic progress)	Discuss w/ advisor
EPIDEM 2215 (fall/spr/sum)	Teaching Practicum	2
EPIDEM 2230 (spr 2 or spr 3)	Secondary Data Analysis: A Capstone Course	2
EPIDEM 2250	Seminar in Epidemiology	1
Electives	In consultation with advisor	0-10

**<sup>1</sup> One advanced quantitative course is required. Choose from the following:**

BCHS 2991, BCHS 3002, BCHS 3015, BIOST 2016, BIOST 2050 (to be replaced by BIOST 2143 starting Fall 2024), BIOST

2066 (to be replaced by BIOST 2150 starting Fall 2024), EFOP 3408, HPM 3505, and HUGEN 2080.

**NOTE:** HUGEN 2070 also qualifies as an advanced quantitative course. However, this course is no longer being offered. **REMINDER:** Questions about other courses not on the above list that may qualify to meet this requirement should be discussed with your advisor. If your advisor agrees that the class might qualify, information about it should be forwarded to the Epidemiology Curriculum Committee Chair via the Director of Student Services.

**OTHER PhD REQUIREMENTS (no credits involved):** Contact your academic advisor or the Director of Student Services [rhodesa@edc.pitt.edu](mailto:rhodesa@edc.pitt.edu) for more information. They must be

completed prior to graduation.

- **Primary Data Collection & Management Requirement**
- **Independent Development Plan (IDP) submission** (Doctoral students must submit IDP's annually. A reminder about this requirement will be emailed to students in spring term).
- **Presentation Training – Competency in Communication** (two presentations must be delivered)

\*Course should be completed before sitting for the preliminary examinations unless exempted

\*\*Students who have completed this course performed better on the preliminary exams than those who did not.



<b>Accelerated Sequence (students with prior MS/MPH in epidemiology and advisor approval) *</b>		
<b>Doctor of Philosophy (PhD) Program in Epidemiology</b>		
<b>Fall Term, Year 1 (matriculation as of Fall 2023)</b>		
<b>Course #</b>	<b>Course Title</b>	<b>Credits</b>
EPIDEM 2004 (fall/spr/sum) <u>OR</u> EOH 3210 (spring)	Pathophysiology Across the Lifespan <u>OR</u> Pathophysiology of Environmental Disease	4 3
EPIDEM 2170 (fall 1 or 2)	Chronic Disease Epidemiology	2
EPIDEM 2181**	Design and Conduct of Clinical Trials	2
EPIDEM 2185 (fall) <u>OR</u> EPIDEM 2186 (fall)	Introduction to SAS <u>OR</u> Introduction to R for	2 2
EPIDEM 2189	Epidemiological Methods of Longitudinal & Time-To-Event Analyses	3
EPIDEM 2215 (fall/spr/sum)	Teaching Practicum	2
EPIDEM 2250	Seminar in Epidemiology	1
EPIDEM 2260	Epidemiologic Basis for Disease Control	2
PUBHLT 2022	Dean's Public Health Grand Rounds (must register for 2 terms)	0
Electives	In consultation with advisor	0-3
Internal Review Board (IRB) Training	Internal Review Board (IRB) Online Training - see Student Services staff for details	0
Pitt Public Health Academic Integrity Module Training	Please refer to the Pitt Public Health website for more information about this school-wide graduation requirement.	0
<b>Spring Term, Year 1</b>		
EPIDEM 2004 (fall/spr/sum) <u>OR</u> EOH 3210 (spring)	Pathophysiology Across the Lifespan <u>OR</u> Pathophysiology of Environmental Disease	4 3
EPIDEM 2160 (spr 1 or 2)	Epidemiology of Infectious Diseases	2
EPIDEM 3183**	Reading, Analyzing, & Interpreting Public Health Medical Literature	3
EPIDEM 2192	Causal Inference for Epidemiologic Research	3
EPIDEM 2215 (fall/spr/sum)	Teaching Practicum	2
EPIDEM 2250	Seminar in Epidemiology	1
EPIDEM 2600 (spr 1 or 2)	Introduction to Molecular Epidemiology	3
PUBHLT 2011	Essentials of Public Health (exempted with BSPH or MPH)	3
PUBHLT 2022	Dean's Public Health Grand Rounds (must register for 2 terms)	0
Electives	In consultation with advisor	0-3
<b>Summer Term, Year 1</b>		
EPIDEM 2004 (fall/spr/sum) <u>OR</u> EOH 3210 (spring)	Pathophysiology Across the Lifespan <u>OR</u> Pathophysiology of Environmental Disease	4 3
Electives	In consultation with advisor	0-6
<b>Fall Term, Year 2</b>		
EPIDEM 2170 (fall 1 or fall 2)	Chronic Disease Epidemiology	2
EPIDEM 2193 (fall 2 or fall 3)	Machine Learning in Epidemiological Research	3
EPIDEM 2210	Special Studies	Discuss w/ advisor
EPIDEM 2215	Teaching Practicum	2
EPIDEM 2250	Seminar in Epidemiology	1
PUBHLT 2030	Research Ethics and Responsible Conduct of Research	1
XXXXX-XXXX <sup>1</sup>	Advanced Quantitative Course requirement	1-3
Electives XXX	In consultation with advisor	0-5

Spring Term, Year 2		
EPIDEM 2160 (spr 1 or 2)	Epidemiology of Infectious Diseases	2
EPIDEM 2210	Special Studies	Discuss w/ advisor
EPIDEM 2215 (fall/spr/sum)	Teaching Practicum	2
EPIDEM 2230 (spr 2 or 3)	Secondary Data Analysis: A Capstone Course	2
EPIDEM 2250	Seminar in Epidemiology	1
EPIDEM 2600 (spr 1 or 2)	Introduction to Molecular Epidemiology	3
Electives	In consultation with advisor	0-5
Fall Term, Year 3		
EPIDEM 2193 (fall 2 or fall 3)	Machine Learning in Epidemiological Research	3
EPIDEM 2215 (fall/spr/sum)	Teaching Practicum	2
EPIDEM 2921	Grant Writing	3
EPIDEM 2210 <u>OR</u> EPIDEM 3100	Special Studies <u>OR</u> Research and Dissertation	Discuss w/advisor
XXXXX-XXXX <sup>1</sup>	Advanced Quantitative Course requirement	1-3
Electives	In consultation with advisor	0-8
Spring Term, Year 3		
EPIDEM 2210 <u>OR</u> EPIDEM 3100 <u>OR</u> FTDR 3999	Special Studies <u>OR</u> Research and Dissertation <u>OR</u> Full-Time Dissertation Research (determined by level of academic progress)	Discuss w/ advisor
EPIDEM 2215 (fall/spr/sum)	Teaching Practicum	2
EPIDEM 2230 (spr 2 or spr 3)	Secondary Data Analysis: A Capstone Course	2
EPIDEM 2250	Seminar in Epidemiology	1
Electives	In consultation with advisor	0-10

<sup>1</sup> **One advanced quantitative course is required. Choose from the following:**

BCHS 2991, BCHS 3002, BCHS 3015, BIOST 2016, BIOST 2050 (to be replaced by BIOST 2143 starting Fall 2024), BIOST

2066 (to be replaced by BIOST 2150 starting Fall 2024), EFOP 3408, HPM 3505, and HUGEN 2080.

**NOTE:** HUGEN 2070 also qualifies as an advanced quantitative course. However, this course is no longer being offered. **REMINDER:** Questions about other courses not on the above list that may qualify to meet this requirement should be discussed with your advisor. If your advisor agrees that the class might qualify, information about it should be forwarded to the Epidemiology Curriculum Committee Chair via the Director of Student Services.

**OTHER PhD REQUIREMENTS (no credits involved):** Contact your academic advisor or the Director of Student Services [rhodesa@edc.pitt.edu](mailto:rhodesa@edc.pitt.edu) for more information. They must be completed prior to graduation.

- **Primary Data Collection & Management Requirement**
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- **Presentation Training – Competency in Communication** (two presentations must be delivered)

\*Doctoral students interested in following this accelerated sequence will need the approval of their Advisor **AND** the Program Director to exempt from the following prerequisite courses: EPIDEM 2110, BIOST 2041, EPIDEM 2180, BIOST 2049 (to be replaced by BIOST 2142 Fall 2024). This exemption will only be granted if they have previously taken these courses or similar courses in another program. To receive the

exemption, students should discuss with their academic advisor and submit transcripts and course syllabi to the PhD program director for approval. Students receiving exemptions are strongly recommended to participate in EPIDEM 2110 or EPIDEM 2180 as a Teaching Assistant given that these courses are required for the preliminary examinations.

\*\*Students who have completed this course performed better on the preliminary exams than those who did not

## Other Doctoral Program Requirements and Experiences

- Department of Epidemiology Required Internal Review Board (IRB) Module Completion
  - o This online training must be completed during the first term of study.
  - o Completion certificates and reports generated by the IRB system must be submitted to the Epidemiology Student Services Offices by students to meet doctoral program graduation requirements.
  - o Student Services will forward information to new students concerning this requirement, and explain how to access the modules.
  - o Contact the director of student services with IRB questions.

## Teaching Practicum

- Doctoral students are expected to fulfill a teaching experience requirement by enrolling in the Teaching Practicum course (EPIDEM 2215). Students must act as a Teaching Assistant (TA) in one of the designated Department of Epidemiology **required core** courses, as listed in the table below. These are not compensated opportunities, but were instead created to develop and expand valuable teaching-related foundational skills.
- **NOTE:** Although students may choose to serve as a TA in an elective Epidemiology course to obtain additional teaching experience, **they may not serve as a TA in an elective class to fulfill their Teaching Practicum requirement.**

## Epidemiology Required Core Courses

Table 1. Required Epidemiology Core Courses

Course Catalog	Course Title	Term Offered
2110	Principles of Epidemiology	Fall & Summer
2160	Epidemiology of Infectious Diseases	Spring (first 6 weeks)
2170	Chronic Disease Epidemiology	Spring
2180	Fundamentals of Epidemiological Methods	Spring
2181	Design and Conduct of Clinical Trials	Fall
2185	Introduction to SAS	Fall
2186	Introduction to R for Public Health	Fall
2189	Epidemiological Methods of Longitudinal and Time-to-Event Analyses	Fall
2192	Causal Inference in Epidemiological Methods	Spring
2193	Machine Learning in Epidemiological Research	Fall
2230	Secondary Analysis: A Capstone Course	Spring
2260	Epidemiological Basis for Disease Control	Fall
2600	Introduction to Molecular Epidemiology	Spring
2921	Grant Writing	Fall
3183	Reading, Analyzing, and Interpreting Public Health Medical Literature	Spring

In rare circumstances (e.g., when a student has had prior teaching experience), a Teaching Practicum requirement waiver is granted. Students should discuss this with their advisors and be able to provide detailed justification for their request. If the teaching practicum exemption is approved by an advisor, the student should ask the Epidemiology Director of Student Services for assistance with processing an official waiver request.

- Eligibility/course assignments
  - o Students must have completed the course for which they will be a TA, or an equivalent course with permission of the instructor.
  - o Doctoral students who are non-native speakers of English and whose undergraduate degree programs were not taught in English as the official language of instruction must take and pass the University's [English Comprehensibility Exam](#) prior to registering for EPIDEM 2215.
- Student responsibility
  - o Contact faculty of selected course to determine if teaching assistance is needed. At times, the Doctoral Program Director or course instructors may also contact students regarding some Teaching Practicum opportunities.
  - o If course instructor approves teaching practicum experience request, student will participate in University seminars/workshops providing teaching assistance training. [New TA Orientation programming can be found here.](#)
  - o Register for 2 credits of EPIDEM 2215 in the Student Services office for the term in which the Teaching Practicum will be done.
  - o Download a [Teaching Practicum Agreement form](#) from the Department of Epidemiology Web site. This form identifies parameters of the experience and must be completed by the course instructor and signed by both students and instructors.
  - o Discuss the experience with the instructor upon completion, and complete and sign a [Teaching Practicum Student Evaluation form](#). This form allows students to document their assessment of their Teaching Practicum experiences.
  - o Obtain instructor's signature on the Teaching Practicum Student Evaluation form.
  - o Remind instructor to complete and sign the [Teaching Practicum Instructor Evaluation form](#). Sign this form after discussing it with the course instructor.
  - o Email completed forms to the Student Services Offices ([epistudentservices@edc.pitt.edu](mailto:epistudentservices@edc.pitt.edu)) for retention by the department.
- Instructor responsibility
  - o Meet with students interested in fulfilling their Teaching Practicum experiences in their course.
  - o Complete a [Teaching Practicum Agreement form](#) while meeting with the student, specifying the parameters of the experience.
  - o Ensure the TA experience includes at least 30 minutes of lecturing or leading review sessions in front of the class. The amount of work for the TA should be equivalent to work in other 2-credit courses.
  - o TA responsibilities should not include setting up A/V equipment, photocopying, or other clerical tasks. The teaching practicum is designed to provide students with exposure to basic teaching skills, such as preparing lectures, leading discussions, and grading.

- o Discuss experiences with students at the end of the course.
- o Complete a [Teaching Practicum Instructor Evaluation form](#) at the end of the course to document student performance and any suggestions for improvement.
- o Obtain student signature on the Instructor Evaluation form.
- o Enter grade (H [Honors], S [Satisfactory] or U [Unsatisfactory]) into the PeopleSoft grade roster for EPIDEM 2215 during appropriate grading period for current term.
- o Note: Entering grades on the Instructor Evaluation form without also entering them electronically or via a Grade Change Request form will not post them to student records). The Director of Student Services will notify faculty when electronic grade rosters are open each term.
- o Remind students to email completed Teaching Practicum Agreement and both Instructor and Student Evaluation forms to the Student Services office ([epistudentservices@edc.pitt.edu](mailto:epistudentservices@edc.pitt.edu)) for departmental retention.

## English Comprehensibility Test

**Table 2. English comprehensibility test for non-native English speakers**

RESPONSIBILITY	ACTION / POLICY
Doctoral Students	<p>PhD students who are non-native speakers of English and whose undergraduate programs were not taught in English as the official language of instruction must take and pass this test prior to registering for EPIDEM 2215 (Teaching Practicum) and before beginning any potential departmentally funded Teaching Assistant (TA) and faculty supported Graduate Student Researcher (GSR) appointments.</p> <p>Eligible students should follow instructions forwarded by the Student Services staff concerning the test, once scheduled by the University. Students will receive copies of their test score reports.</p>
Student Services Staff	Receives and retains a copy of the test score report from the University's English Language Institute (ELI).
Student	<p>Those with passing scores may register for EPIDEM 2215 in any future term or proceed in their roles as GSRs or TAs, if applicable.</p> <p>Those who do not receive sufficient test scores receive recommendations for registration in specific English language courses, and should plan to take the test again. Dates will be communicated by the Student Services Staff. Students cannot register for EPIDEM 2215 or act as GSRs or TAs until they receive sufficient test scores.</p>

## Epidemiology Seminar (EPIDEM 2250)

- All Epidemiology students must register for the Epidemiology Seminar course at least once prior to completing their degree programs, although all students and faculty are strongly encouraged by the Department of Epidemiology Chair to attend seminar each fall and spring term it is offered.
- Epidemiology Seminars are a traditional gathering place and informal networking opportunity for students, faculty, and staff, where cutting-edge developments related to public health and epidemiology are presented, and research achievements are shared.
- Grading for the course is based upon attendance. Registered students **should attend at least 75% of seminar presentations in person to receive a satisfactory grade.** Students with questions about attendance should contact the faculty seminar course director or the course teaching assistants.
- Students with a GSR appointment **must attend** seminar presentations in any fall or spring term in which they hold the appointment, and must attend **in person** at least 75% of the presentations per term to remain compliant with Epidemiology GSR policy. Those not attending this minimum number of lectures are in policy violation and may lose funding.
- Students are reminded to be sure to swipe their Pitt ID cards upon entering the Seminar to record their attendance.

## Policy update regarding dissertation research enrollment

- All doctoral students who have passed the preliminary examinations but have not yet completed the comprehensive examinations must register for EPIDEM 3100 for dissertation research. EPIDEM 2210 is no longer authorized for dissertation work by doctoral students. This change applies to all current and incoming doctoral students.

## Epidemiology Journal Clubs

- [Departmental journal clubs](#) provide another opportunity for networking with colleagues and faculty, and for delving more deeply into areas of specific research interest.
- Students or faculty members who are interested in organizing and promoting a new journal club should contact the Research Assistant for the Education Team.

## Competency in Communications Requirement

Department of Epidemiology policy specifies that prior to graduation, all degree-seeking students must demonstrate competency in oral communication through research presentation experiences as described below:

- PhD students are required to complete at least two oral or poster presentations during their tenure at Pitt Public Health.
- **Qualifying venues and presentations**
  - Local, regional, national, or international professional or scientific conferences qualify as venues where the Competency in Communication requirement may be fulfilled. Presentations delivered at Department of Epidemiology or Pitt Public Health special events featuring student research, including at Dean's Day or the Epidemiology Department annual poster session, will also count towards this requirement.
- **Submission of competency records**
  - A [Communications Competency Requirement Record form](#) must be completed and submitted to the Student Services Offices ([epistudentservices@edc.pitt.edu](mailto:epistudentservices@edc.pitt.edu)) to document fulfillment of this requirement.
  - It is recommended that students submit their forms immediately following their presentations, instead of waiting until their graduation terms are approaching.

## Data Collection, Measurement, and Management Requirement Record

- Epidemiology PhD students must develop proficiencies in data collection, measurement, and management as part of their dissertation work or other graduate-level experiences outside of the classroom. Academic advisors should meet with their advisees to discuss options and develop or demonstrate this proficiency. This requirement must be fulfilled prior to student graduation.
- **Experience Options**  
Two or more of the following are required:
  - Surveillance (i.e., systematic collection/recording of disease data for the purpose of monitoring over time)
  - Primary collection of new data to define an exposure or outcome
  - Obtaining and generating new data from existing specimens, tests, or large datasets
  - Chart or electronic record abstraction
  - Questionnaire or survey design and validation
  - Data management (i.e., monitor progress of data collection, examine data for errors and apply correction, merge and maintain large datasets, design and assess quality control measures, etc.)
- **Requirement form completion and submission**
  - Advisors should complete a [Primary Data Collection, Measurement, and Management Requirement Record form](#) to document student experience or training plans, and both advisors and students should sign as indicated.
  - Forms should be emailed to the Epidemiology Student Services Offices ([epistudentservices@edc.pitt.edu](mailto:epistudentservices@edc.pitt.edu)).

## Independent Development Plan (IDP) annual submission (Table 3)

- The School of Public Health requires that all doctoral students in the school receive guidance on their progress and development on an annual basis. Each department must document that this activity has taken place by completing an Independent Development Plan.
- In the Dept. of Epidemiology, faculty advisors must work with their doctoral mentees to complete an IDP form **at the end of each spring semester**. Students should prepare a draft IDP (self-evaluation) and schedule a meeting with their advisor to discuss and refine the form with their advisor's input. Topics to be covered should include the student's progress over the past year, any concerns about current progress and a plan to address them, plans for the coming year, progress toward their dissertation research, as well as professional development and career plans.
- The Epidemiology [IDP form can be found here](#). The Director of Student Services will send a reminder to complete an annual IDP form and instructions on how to submit it.



**Table 3. Independent Development Plan**

RESPONSIBILITY	ACTION / POLICY
Students	Schedule meetings with their academic advisors in spring term.  Complete the <a href="#">Epidemiology Individual Development Plan form</a> together with their advisors. The form will be forwarded to students by the Director of Student Services in a reminder e-mail, or students will be directed to download it from the Department of Epidemiology Web site.  Forward form copies to advisors before meetings.
Students and Advisors	Discuss current skill levels and develop goals and/or a plan to address these skills in the coming year.  Outline the agreed-upon goals on the Individual Development Plan form. Sign and date the form.
Student Services	The Student Services Office will inform students on when to submit their completed forms to a One Drive folder.
Students	Be prepared to discuss completion of prior year goals and new goals for the coming academic year when meeting with advisors in the following spring term.

## Epidemiology Doctoral Program Policies & Procedures

### Course Enrollment

Epidemiology Doctoral Program students may self-register for courses that are approved by their academic advisors.

#### General Course Enrollment Information

- **Assistance with the course enrollment process**
  - o Students should contact the Doctoral Program Epidemiology Student Services Specialist with operational enrollment questions.
- **Student enrollment appointments**
  - o In fall and spring terms, students receive University designated enrollment appointments.
  - o Students may self- register on or after their enrollment appointment dates, through the end of the registration period for the term.
  - o Enrollment appointment dates can be found in the [Student Center](#). There are no enrollment appointments assigned to students in summer term.
- **Student enrollment process (Table 4)**
  - o Doctoral students should communicate with their assigned academic advisors on selecting courses for an upcoming term.
  - o Doctoral student [Enrollment Form](#) should be emailed to the Doctoral Program Epidemiology Student Services Specialist.
  - o Receipt of these signed Forms by the Student Services staff represents advisor approval of the courses selected.
  - o This authorizes Student Services to remove each student's University assigned Advisement Services Indicator hold and enables students to

proceed with the self- enrollment process.

**Table 4. Steps to course enrollment**

<b>RESPONSIBILITY</b>	<b>ACTION / POLICY</b>
Student	Discusses course selection with academic advisor and completes <a href="#">Enrollment Form</a> . This form is then forwarded to their advisor via DocuSign for approval.
Academic advisor	Reviews the submitted Enrollment Form. If they approve of the course selection, the form will be signed and returned to the student.
Student	E-mails the approved Enrollment Form to the Doctoral Program Epidemiology Student Services Specialist. The Enrollment Form must be signed by both the student and their academic advisor in order for the University assigned Advisement Services Indicator hold to be lifted.
Student Services Staff	Receives form from student. Receipt of signed forms is indication to the department that student has received appropriate registration advisement from their academic advisor. Lifts PeopleSoft Advisement Services indicator following receipt of signed Enrollment Form.
Student	Registers for courses using the University student self-enrollment system.

## Registration for more than 15 credits

- The maximum full-time course credit load for graduate students is 9 – 15 credits. Students who register for more than 15 credits will be billed for each additional credit that exceeds their full-time tuition rate.
- Graduate students requesting to register for more than 15 credits must first receive approval from their advisor.
- After receiving approval, students should contact the Doctoral Program Epidemiology Student Services Specialist to facilitate the registration process.

## Graduate Student Researcher (GSR) and Teaching Assistant (TA) course enrollment

- **Fall and Spring Terms**  
Doctoral students with funded GSR and TA appointments must be registered as full-time in any fall and spring term in which they hold their appointments. Full time means students are registered for 9-15 credits or Full-Time Dissertation Research (FTDR 3999).
- **Summer Term**  
Per University policy, students with GSR appointments are not required to be enrolled in the summer. However, students who are not registered full time (i.e., for 3 credits) during the summer terms, will be subject to 7.5% FICA tax on their stipends. To avoid paying FICA tax, students could consider:
  - o Registering for Full-Time Dissertation Research (FTDR). FTDR eligibility criteria comprise:
    - Completion of all coursework required for the degree
    - At least 72 completed credits completed
    - Successful completion of all sections of the Preliminary Exams
  - o Registering for SMSR 3666. This course will allow doctoral students with GSR appointments who are not yet at FTDR status, to enroll as full-time students in the summer for a reduced cost and avoid paying the FICA tax.

Based on the description provided above, to avoid paying the FICA tax, GSRs have the following options for summer enrollment.

### 1. **FTDR Eligible (per above description)**

- Enroll in FTDR.

### 2. **Ineligible for FTDR**

- Enroll in SMSR 3666 at a reduced cost—this option is available if a student is not interested in taking any summer course(s) but wants to avoid paying the FICA tax.
- Enroll in at least 3.0 credits of regular courses to be considered as a full-time student and avoid paying the FICA tax.
- Enroll in a combination of regular credits (1.0 - 2.0) and SMSR 3666—to reach the full-time status of 3.0 credits

### 3. **Enroll in 0.0 credits—students will be required to pay the FICA tax.**

### When permission is required prior to enrollment (Table 5)

- Enrollment in some courses is accepted only by special permission of the instructor(s). Courses requiring permission for enrollment are indicated in the online [Pitt Public Health course schedule](#) by term.
- If instructor permission is needed, students should contact the Doctoral Program Epidemiology Student Services Specialist for specific instructions.

**Table 5. Obtaining permission for course enrollment**

RESPONSIBILITY	ACTION / POLICY
Student	Contacts course instructor to request permission to enter course.
	If the instructor approves the student's enrollment into the closed or restricted course, the email is to be forwarded to the Doctoral Program Epidemiology Student Services Specialist.
Student Services staff	Upon receipt of instructor's approval, the Student Services Staff Specialist will do one of the following: <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• If an EPIDEM class, a permission number will be forwarded to the student.</li><li>• If a non-EPIDEM class, the student will be advised by their Student Services Staff Specialist on how to obtain a permission number from the respective department.</li></ul>
Student	Enters permission number while completing <a href="#">student self-enrollment process</a> .

### Obtaining enrollment verification

- Proof of enrollment may be obtained from the [University Registrar's Office](#). Verification may be obtained by visiting the office in person, or requested electronically.

### Enrollment in independent study course (**EPIDEM 2213**)

- To enroll in an independent study course, students should first discuss with their advisor.
- Students must complete an [Independent Study Form](#), in addition to an [Enrollment Form](#), to enroll in an independent study course, after conferring with their advisor.

### Undergraduate course enrollment

- Pitt Public Health students may register for undergraduate courses with the permission of their academic advisor.
- Advisors will indicate permission with signatures on the student's [Enrollment Forms](#). However, students may also need to obtain permission from the instructor of the course.
- Students should contact the Doctoral Program Epidemiology Student Services Specialist for specific instructions.
- Students should be aware that credits obtained from undergraduate courses do not count towards earning a master's or doctoral degree.

## Enrollment in the term of graduation

- The current School of Public Health policy is that degree-seeking graduate students must be registered for at least one credit, or for FTDR 3999 (for doctoral students completing full-time dissertation research), in the term of graduation.
- Under extenuating circumstances, exceptions to this rule can be granted, provided the student was registered for credit in the term prior to the term in which they are graduating. These circumstances may include illness, a death in the family, or other situations beyond the student's control, which delay completion of their essay, thesis, or dissertation in time of graduation.
- Epidemiology students **will not be eligible** for an exception if they have attended a Pitt Public Health Epidemiology doctoral program for **less than four terms**. If they have been enrolled four or more terms, they may be granted a 1-credit waiver in extenuating circumstances, such as the ones described above.
- This waiver will apply for one term only. If the student is unable to finish in that term, they will be required to pay for any subsequent terms.
- This exception is made at the discretion of and with the approval of: 1) the student's primary reader/advisor and 2) the relevant program director. **Two** faculty members must sign off on the request.

Additional information concerning student self-enrollment procedures can be found on the [University Registrar's website](#).

## Enrollment in Courses Outside the University of Pittsburgh at Specific Regional Academic Institutions (Cross Registration)

- The University of Pittsburgh has cross-registration agreements with several regional academic institutions regarding enrollment of Pitt students in their courses. More information about these types of registrations is available on the [University Registrar's Office Web site](#).
- Students must be registered as full time (enrolled in 9 – 15 credits) in fall and spring terms at the University before cross-registration can be approved. Cross registration is not available in summer terms. Please contact the Director of Epidemiology Student Services if interested.

## Good Academic Standing Policy

To maintain good academic standing, a student must:

- Maintain active student status by registering for at least one credit in each 12-month period. Students who do not register for three consecutive terms are considered inactive if not registered by the add-drop deadline of the third term. As an example, if a student does not register for fall and spring, the student is considered inactive if not registered by the add-drop period for the subsequent summer term. Inactive students must [re-apply via SOPHAS](#) if they wish to re-register. Readmission to the program is contingent upon meeting all current program requirements and is not guaranteed. Contact the Director of the Epidemiology Student Services for more information on how to reobtain active student status.
- Maintain a 3.0 grade point average on the 4.0 scale with no grades lower than a B in required courses.

## Course Add/Drop (Table 6)

- The [Enrollment Form](#) used to register for courses is also utilized to add or drop courses. The add/drop deadline each term can be found on the [School of Public Health Academic Calendar](#).
- Students interested in adding or dropping a course must first get permission from their academic advisor.
- All students requesting late transactions (after add/drop deadlines) must also have the approval of the Pitt Public Health Student Services Director, in addition to that of their academic advisor.
- Students **resign** when they request withdrawal from all enrolled courses for the term. Resignation does not automatically result in a refund of all charges, and may only result in a partial refund depending upon the date in the term the resignation was processed.

**Table 6. Course add / drop policies**

RESPONSIBILITY	ACTION / POLICY
Student	<p><b>Before Add/Drop Deadline:</b>            If it is before the deadline and the student is already registered for one or more courses, they should complete the <a href="#">Enrollment Form</a> to indicate the courses they want added or dropped. The student and their academic advisor must sign the form. The student should e-mail the Enrollment Form to the Doctoral Program Epidemiology Student Services Specialist, then complete the self-enrollment process.</p> <p><b><u>Adding a Course After Add/Drop Deadline:</u></b>            Only in extenuating circumstances may students attempt to add a class after a term's add/drop deadline with permission from their advisor and the course instructor.</p> <p>Students requesting course adds after the deadline must obtain written permission to enroll from the course instructor. Once they have permission, they should complete the <a href="#">Enrollment Form</a> and have it signed by their advisor. The Enrollment Form and the written authorization from the course instructor should then be sent to the Director of Epidemiology Student Services, who will then send to the Pitt Public Health Student Services Director.</p> <p>If the add request is approved by the Pitt Public Health Student Services Director, the University Registrar's Office will consider and either approve/disapprove it.</p> <p>Permission numbers are not needed for approved enrollments beyond the add/drop deadline unless special permission is required to enter the course in question.</p>

	<p><b><u>Dropping a Course After Add/Drop Deadline</u></b></p> <p>Students requesting a course drop after the deadline must first talk with their academic advisor and obtain written permission to drop the course in the form of a signature on the <a href="#">Enrollment Form</a>.</p> <p>The Enrollment Form and the written authorization should then be sent to the Director of Epidemiology Student Services, who will then send to the Pitt Public Health Student Services Director.</p> <p>If the drop request is approved by the Pitt Public Health Student Services Director, the University Registrar's Office will consider and either approve/disapprove it.</p> <p>If the drop request is not approved, students may consider processing a <a href="#">Monitored Withdrawal Request form</a> to withdrawal from the course if the term deadline for this process has not passed. In cases where a course must be dropped, a Monitored Withdrawal Form must be completed.</p> <p>Refer to the <i>Monitored Withdrawal</i> section below.</p>
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### Monitored Withdrawals (Table 7)

- If a student wishes to withdrawal from a course after the term's add/drop deadline, a Monitored Withdrawal Request form should be processed. Information about Monitored Withdrawals is posted on the [University Registrar's Office Web site](#).
- Students withdrawing from a course in this manner receive a "W" for the course on their transcripts and receive no tuition reimbursement. This "W" grade has no impact on the Grade Point Average (GPA) earned, requirements toward student degree completion, or academic progress for purposes of financial aid eligibility.

**Table 7. Monitored withdrawal policies**

RESPONSIBILITY	ACTION / POLICY
Student	Confers with their academic advisor regarding the course drop. Informs the Director of Epidemiology Student Services that they wish to complete <a href="#">Monitored Withdrawal Request Form</a> .
Director of Epidemiology Student Services	Completes the Monitored Withdrawal Request Form. It is then forwarded to the student and the Pitt Public Health Student Services Director for signature using DocuSign.
Student	Upon receipt of form via DocuSign, the student will sign and date confirming request to withdrawal from course.
Pitt Public Health Student Services Director	Signs form to authorize withdrawal and forwards it to the University Registrar's Office for further processing.

## Repeating Courses (Table 8)

- If authorized by the student's advisor, a student may repeat a course in which a grade of B- or lower is received.
- Students may not repeat a school-wide core course or required departmental course more than once (i.e., course may only be taken twice).
- Students who fail a school-wide core course or required departmental course twice are subject to dismissal.
- See Pitt Public Health [academic dismissal and probation guidelines](#).

**Table 8. Policies for repeating courses**

RESPONSIBILITY	ACTION / POLICY
Student	Discusses desire to repeat course with advisor, obtains appropriate approvals, completes <a href="#">Enrollment Form</a> and requests advisor signature.
Advisor	Signs Enrollment Form to indicate course repeat approval.
Student	E-mails Enrollment Form to Student Services Offices.
Student	Informs the Director of Epidemiology Student Services that they are repeating a course.
Director of Epidemiology Student Services	Completes <a href="#">Course Repeat Form</a> . Forwards form to Academic Advisor and Pitt Public Health Student Services Director to request inclusion of only last course grade for GPA computational purposes.

## Course Exemptions

### Pitt Public Health and Departmental Core Course

**Exemptions Table 9. Course exemption policies**

RESPONSIBILITY	ACTION / POLICY
Student	<p>Discuss previously taken course justifying exemption with academic advisor. Of note, required core courses cannot be substituted with an independent study, unless approved by the Department due to extreme hardship.</p> <p>If advisor supports the exemption, identify the appropriate exemption request form on the <a href="#">Pitt Public Health Website</a>.</p> <p>If advisor approves request, complete student section of form, explaining exemption basis, and forward to advisor and course instructor for signatures.</p>
Academic Advisor, Course Instructor, Department Chair	Sign form and return form to student if exemption request is approved.
Student	Deliver or e-mail form to Doctoral Program Epidemiology Student Services
Epidemiology Student Services Staff	Ensure Pitt Public Health Student Affairs staff receives form copies.



## Advanced Quantitative Course Exemptions for Doctoral Students

- On the [doctoral program course sequence documents](#), doctoral students can find a list of courses they must choose from to meet their advanced quantitative course requirement. Coursework taken outside the doctoral degree (e.g., as part of a Master's degree) cannot be used to satisfy the Advanced Quantitative Course requirement.
- If a doctoral student believes another course may meet the advanced quantitative requirement, they may submit a course exemption request to the Epidemiology Curriculum Committee.
  - To submit a request, the student must get written approval from their advisor, stating that the advisor approves the course to meet the advanced quantitative requirement.
  - The student should also obtain a copy of the course syllabus from the instructor.
  - The student will then email the written approval and the course syllabus to the Director of Student Services, who will then submit the request to the Curriculum Committee.
- The committee will review the request and determine whether or not it should be approved.
- If the exemption is approved, the student will receive confirmation through email from the Director of Student Services and documentation of the approval will be placed on file with Epidemiology Student Services and Pitt Public Health Student Services.
- If the request is not approved, the student will need to select a course from the approved list or submit another exemption request to the committee for a new course.

## Credit Transfers

### General Credit Transfer Information (Table 10)

- In any course credit transfers, associated grades must be a "B" or higher. Grades (and quality points) are not recorded for credits accepted by transfer.
- Credits may be transferred from another academic institution, a University of Pittsburgh school, or another department in Pitt Public Health.
- Credit transfers must be discussed with and approved by each student's advisor.
- [A Course Credits Accepted form](#) should be completed and submitted to the Doctoral Program Epidemiology Student Services Specialist. Generally speaking, courses taken at previously attended institutions must be matched on the form with Pitt Public Health courses that are comparable in content.

**Table 10. Credit transfer policy**

RESPONSIBILITY	ACTION / POLICY
Epidemiology Student Services Staff	Prepares letter or memo on behalf of an Epidemiology advisor, indicating approval of credits being transferred from a University of Pittsburgh school (outside of Pitt Public Health). A copy will be forwarded to Pitt Public Health Student Affairs for the student's school-level file.
Student transferring credits from another university	Obtains and completes <a href="#">Course Credits Accepted Form</a> and requests advisor approval and signature. Individual course credits previously earned should be linked to Pitt Public Health course credits on the form. It should be delivered or e-mailed to the Doctoral Program Epidemiology

	Student Services Specialist, who will retain a copy. The original form should be forwarded to Pitt Public Health Student Affairs.
Student transferring credits from master's degree within Epidemiology Department to doctoral program within Epidemiology Dept.	No credit transfer request documentation is required, provided the student's Epidemiology MPH/MS graduation date and the PhD matriculation date are within 5 years. If more than 5 years have passed, students should communicate their transfer request to the Epidemiology Student Services staff member for their academic program and further instructions will be provided.
Pitt Public Health Student Affairs	Reviews/approves Course Credits Accepted Forms and any supporting memo or letters. Individual course credits accepted are subsequently entered into PeopleSoft.

### **Continuing Students - Completing Another Degree During or After Their Course of Study**

- Students already enrolled in the Epidemiology MPH/MS program at the University of Pittsburgh who are accepted into the Epidemiology PhD program may transfer all of their credits, with a grade of B or higher, toward their doctoral degree. Students who have already graduated with an MPH/MS in Epidemiology and are then accepted into the Epidemiology PhD program may transfer all of their master's degree credits toward their doctoral degree if the date of graduation was within 5 years of matriculation into the doctoral program. If the MPH/MS graduation date was greater than 5 years before matriculation into the doctoral program, a maximum of 24 credits may be transferred.
- Students enrolled in the Epidemiology PhD program who would like to earn an MS or MPH Degree in Epidemiology during their course of study may apply credits already earned to their prior master's degree. However, students must ensure that they fulfill all MS or MPH program requirements in this process, and first apply to be officially admitted to their program of choice.

### **Other Credit Transfer Policies**

- At the discretion of students' academic advisors, up to 24 course credits may be transferred from a previously earned graduate degree or from graduate credits taken where no degree was earned towards a doctoral (PhD) degree.
- Twenty-four credits may be transferred, with advisor approval, from a prior master's degree, with a possibility of 12 more for post-master's coursework.
- A doctoral student who was enrolled elsewhere in a doctoral program but didn't earn the degree can transfer as many as 36 credits, with advisor authorization. MD/PhD joint program students should discuss credit transfers with the MD/PhD Program Director.
- Course credit transfer acceptance does not automatically imply course exemption from Pitt Public Health or Departmental core requirements. All course exemptions must be discussed with and approved by the student's academic advisor.

## Changing To/Adding Another Degree Program

### Current Epidemiology Department or Pitt Public Health Students

- Students desiring enrollment in two independent degree programs must be admitted to both programs, and must satisfy degree requirements of both.
- The [Pitt Public Health Website](#) provides more information concerning the processes involved.
- Students should contact [phadmissions@pitt.edu](mailto:phadmissions@pitt.edu) with questions.

## Grading

Students may view their grades through their PeopleSoft Student Centers via the [University Web portal](#)

### Changing Pitt Public Health Grade Option – Audit Requests (Table 11)

- Any Pitt Public Health graduate course may be audited on a space available basis.
- Students auditing a course will still be assessed tuition, but will not receive a traditional letter grade or credits for the course (an “N” grade will be received).
- Interested students should discuss this grade option with their advisors and course instructors, and must obtain their permission.

**Table 11. Requesting a change in grade option**

RESPONSIBILITY	ACTION / POLICY
Student	Verify with instructor that grade option selected is available for course.  Complete middle portion of <a href="#">Grade Option/Audit Request form</a> to request a grade option/basis change.  Complete form to request course auditing (no grade/no credit – “N” appears on transcript) or the middle section to request a different grade option.
Advisor & Instructor	Sign and date form to indicate approval. Instructor must remember to enter an “N” grade (representing an audit) when electronic grade rosters open for the term in question.
Student	Delivers or e-mails form to the Epidemiology Student Services staff member for their academic program.
Epidemiology Student Services Staff	Forwards form copy to Pitt Public Health Student Affairs.

### Grade Change Requests

- An instructor may assign an “I” grade when a student has not completed all required coursework. To qualify for an “I” grade, a student must meet all of the following conditions:
  - o The student has been active in the course;
  - o The student has maintained satisfactory progress in the course; and
  - o The student can complete the remaining work independently, without needing additional classes or instructor guidance.

- When assigning an “I” grade, the instructor will:
  - o Submit the student’s current grade based on completed work up to that point;
  - o Provide a written contract detailing:
    - Outstanding work to be completed
    - Due dates for work to be completed
    - Final deadline for all work.
- The completion deadline must be no longer than one year beyond the end of the term in which the class was taken.
- Once all requirements are met, the instructor will communicate with the Director of Epidemiology Student Services to replace the “I” grade with the student’s final earned grade.
- Instructors and students should communicate with the Director of Epidemiology Student Services for more information.
- The Director of Epidemiology Student Services can also change grades on behalf of instructors when grading errors must be corrected or when other circumstances warranting grade changes occur.

## Statute of Limitations for Degree Completion/Leaves of Absence

### Statute of Limitations Policy (Table 12)

All doctoral degree program requirements must be completed within ten years, or eight years if student has received credit for a master's degree.

**Table 12. Process to request an extension to the statute of limitations**

RESPONSIBILITY	ACTION / POLICY
Student	<p>Requests for extensions of statute of limitations must be made in writing by students and their academic advisors, and submitted to Pitt Public Health student services director for final approval. There is no guarantee that extension requests will be approved.</p> <p>Extension requests must include documented evidence of specific circumstances leading to current situation, and students must describe ongoing plans to complete all degree requirements and identify a completion timeline</p> <p>Contact the Director of Epidemiology Student Services to obtain instructions for proceeding with extension requests.</p>
Pitt Public Health Student Services Director	<p>Forwards student letter indicating final approval or disapproval of statute of limitations extension requests and sends letter copies to Epidemiology Student Services staff.</p>

### Leave of Absence Policy (Table 13)

- A two-year leave of absence may be granted for doctoral degree students.

**Table 13. Process to request a leave of absence**

RESPONSIBILITY	ACTION / POLICY
Student	Leaves requests must specify the basis for the leave, and must first be approved by the academic advisor.  Contact the Director of Epidemiology Student Services to obtain instructions for proceeding with leave of absence requests.
Pitt Public Health Student Services Director	Forwards student letter indicating final approval or disapproval of leave of absence requests, and sends letter copies to Doctoral Program Student Services Specialist.

### Changing Advisors

#### Changing a Doctoral Degree Advisor (Table 14)

- It is possible for students to change advisors, provided that both the current and new advisor agree that this would support the student's ability to successfully complete their program of study.

**Table 14. Process to request a change in advisors**

RESPONSIBILITY	ACTION / POLICY
Student	Discusses advisor change request with both current and new advisor.  Completes, signs and dates student section of <a href="#">Request to Change Academic Advisor</a> form.
Current Advisor	Signs and dates form.
New Advisor	Signs and dates form.
Student	Returns form to Student Services staff.
Student Services Staff	Retains form for student files and enters advisor change in PeopleSoft.

# PhD Dissertation Guidelines

This section includes information regarding doctoral program milestone requirements, formation of doctoral committees, and dissertation proposal and development.

## Introduction

Study towards completion of a doctoral dissertation in the Epidemiology Department is accomplished through the completion of didactic coursework, guided independent study, and completion of a dissertation. Despite required coursework, the focus of doctoral training places a heavier emphasis on the dissertation and the development of independent skills in research and/or practice.

Students typically begin study in the doctoral program with 1.5-2.5 years of focus on the completion of major elements of coursework. At this time, students, in consultation with their primary advisor, can also begin discussions on research/practice interests and goals that may be pursued in a dissertation proposal. Students also may become engaged in faculty research projects.

Upon completion of the primary coursework requirements, students (in consultation with their primary advisor) should register for and complete the Preliminary Exams as the first of 4 total milestone exams including the Overview, Comprehensive, and Dissertation Defense.

## Registration policy by exam term:

- Students taking these milestone exams during the fall or spring term should be enrolled for that term. If they are eligible for FTDR status, they should enroll in FTDR.
- Students (with or without GSR/TA appointments) taking these milestone exams during the summer terms can take the exam without registering for the summer.

## Preliminary Examinations

The Preliminary Exams, typically taken at the end of the second year of coursework by those pursuing the Full PhD Sequence, and after the first two terms of coursework by students pursuing the Accelerated PhD Sequence, consists of three written exams:

- General Epidemiology: a 3-hour in-class, closed-book exam.
- Biostatistics: a 4-hour open-book and open-note exam that is typically administered and proctored in a computer laboratory.
- Applied Epidemiology: a 4-hour closed-book exam that is also typically administered and proctored in a computer laboratory.

Collectively, the exams are designed to assess a student's ability to demonstrate and apply fundamental principles of epidemiology and biostatistics, to think critically about epidemiologic methods and reasoning and to synthesize epidemiology and biostatistics concepts as applied in a research proposal. This evaluation is used to identify students with the potential to complete doctoral research successfully, and to also reveal areas of weakness in the student's preparation.

PhD students are required to **pass all three parts of the exam within two attempts** before the student can form a doctoral dissertation committee.

**If a student fails an exam a second time, a third attempt will be considered only in exceptional circumstances and with the approval of the Epidemiology Department chair. Students should meet with their academic advisors to discuss if, and how, they should request this final re-take.** Students who do not pass all sections this final time will be discontinued from the PhD program. It may be suggested by a student's advisor that the student applies for and completes an MPH or MS program depending upon the individual's academic background and career goals. Students may also want to discuss this decision with the doctoral program director.

The Preliminary Exams are offered in June every year. To register for the exam, students must request permission from their advisor, who is then asked to email the Preliminary Exam committee chair for approval and confirmation.

Students should have completed the following courses before sitting for the preliminary examinations:

- EPIDEM 2110: Principles of Epidemiology
- EPIDEM 2180: Fundamentals of Epidemiological Methods
- BIOST 2041: Introduction to Statistical Methods
- BIOST 2142 (former BIOST 2049): Applied Regression Analysis

Although additional courses are not required, students who have completed the following have performed better on the exams than those who did not:

- EPIDEM 3183: Reading, Analyzing and Interpreting Public Health Medical Literature
- EPIDEM 2181: Design and Conduct of Clinical Trials
- Any course that involves critiquing epidemiologic literature

Epidemiology Student Services Specialist completes a **Report on Requirements (R on R)** for Doctoral Degree form after exam administration. A form indicating each student's exam results is prepared and circulated electronically by the Epidemiology Student Services Specialist for doctoral degree programs for departmental retention, and shared with the school-wide Student Affairs Office.

### **Conceptualizing a Dissertation Proposal**

Upon successful completion of the Preliminary Exams, students may formally begin to work on a dissertation proposal. This work will begin in consultation with the primary faculty advisor and the identification of an appropriate dissertation topic.

The dissertation is a written document that presents the results of a research project carried out by the student. An appropriate research project involves a substantive piece of original and independent research grounded in an appropriate body of literature. All dissertation projects should present a hypothesis tested by data and analysis and provide a significant contribution or advancement in the chosen area of study.



A good dissertation provides the student with an area of concentration that is the “spring board” for their career. The dissertation should advance knowledge and answer one or more important questions, but it should also raise more questions, thus providing the impetus for further research. A good dissertation ties together didactic coursework and allows the student to see how research is accomplished. The dissertation is an important step in training the student to ask good questions as well as learning how to go about answering them. If the process works, as it should, the committee learns from the experience as well as the trainee.

## Dissertation Formats

Students may identify and prepare a dissertation proposal following one of two formats:

- **Traditional format:** In the traditional format, students prepare a dissertation proposal to describe the background, methods, results, and interpretation of one research project. The written dissertation document should include an introduction, a meaningful literature review, a clear presentation of the methods and results of the project, and an appropriate discussion of the meaning of the results.

The introduction of the dissertation should outline the public health significance of the topic area under investigation in the dissertation, and identify the key research objectives. A meaningful literature review should identify the historical context for the dissertation research project, an analysis and synthesis of a broad literature base, and the summation of existing knowledge and areas of research opportunity in the chosen field of study. A clear presentation of the methods should identify the chosen study design, study population, methods for key research variables, and proposed methods of analysis. The results should outline key research findings, and the discussion should interpret the meaning of these results to the field of study, discuss the public health significance of the results, and identify areas for future study.

- **Three Paper format:** In the three-paper format, students prepare a dissertation proposal focused on the development of three research papers addressing original research in a chosen topic area. The papers should be of publishable quality in appropriate journals in the field of study. This format of the dissertation proposal has the advantage of ensuring that the substantial work done by both the trainee and the dissertation committee can become part of the published literature.

In the three-paper option, the written dissertation proposal should have a theme to which all three papers contribute. The written document should also include the relevant background to the dissertation work in a format which demonstrates the student’s knowledge of the topic area, the results of the work accomplished by the student (presented in the document as the three individual research papers), and a general discussion of the meaning of the work.

- **Written dissertations in the Three Paper format may consider the outline recommended below.** However, it should be noted that this is at the discretion of the dissertation chair and committee.
  - ***Introduction and Background:*** The introduction of the written dissertation should outline the theme of the dissertation, and identify the key research objectives. The background should identify the historical context for the dissertation research, and provide a succinct analysis and synthesis of the literature base in the topic area. The background should also address the manner in which the dissertation represents original research. Consider that the written background is often an abridged version of the literature and is not a complete review as exemplified in a traditional dissertation. Bear in mind, however, that the student will need to do a substantial literature review in order to understand the research in the topic area and argue for how the proposed dissertation project attends to a “hole” in the literature, and why the proposed research objectives are relevant. The student must be able to distill a large body of literature into a concise rationale for the proposed research.
  - ***Three Projects:*** Each project should be presented as a manuscript with a short paragraph introducing how the project relates to the dissertation.
  - ***General Discussion:*** A concluding discussion section should be presented to summarize and discuss the results of the three projects and their place in the literature. Because the three projects each contain a discussion section, the purpose of this summary is to synthesize the results of the three papers as a whole (rather than individually) and to articulate the contribution of the dissertation research in this field.
  - ***Summary:*** The summary should also discuss how the work completed is important in the context of public health (i.e., the public health significance of the research findings), and discuss the overall strengths and weaknesses of the dissertation research. Most presentations also identify the logical ‘next research questions’ raised by the research, provide a final conclusion derived from the completed dissertation work.

### Criteria for an Acceptable Dissertation (any format)

In a successful dissertation project, the trainee should demonstrate mastery of a chosen research topic area, including application of that knowledge in conducting original research on the topic. This requires that the trainee takes “ownership” of the dissertation work, demonstrated through initiation of the project, oversight of data collection and/or data management, data analysis, and research result interpretation. This work is largely completed by the trainee, but involves active guidance from the dissertation committee.

- Examples of original research include, but are not limited to:
  - Primary data collection – the student collects new data to address a research question in a sole dissertation project, or identifies data (with appropriate methods) that should be added to the methods of an existing research study.

- Novel approaches to secondary data – the student applies a new analytic technique or makes novel use of an existing technique.
- Development of a new research protocol or way of collecting data.
- Execution of additional laboratory assays or genetic evaluation of existing samples.

## Creation/Approval of Doctoral Committees

In the dissertation process, after all three sections of the Preliminary Exam are passed, students should confer with their advisors to form a faculty committee to review and oversee the work necessary for completion of each required milestone exam to follow, i.e., the **Overview**, the **Comprehensive**, and the **Dissertation Defense**. The Overview, Comprehensive, and Dissertation Defense Committee should be approved to ensure it complies with University and Department composition policy.

Typically, the student's advisor also assumes the role of the faculty committee chair, although this is not required (e.g., when the student will be conducting dissertation research with another faculty, who is an expert in that field of research). Exceptions to this protocol should be discussed by the advisor and the student. If the research advisor and the academic advisor are not the same person, the research advisor should become the dissertation committee chair, provided they meet the qualifications identified in University, school, and departmental policy for this role.

This committee is typically composed of the same faculty members for all three exams. Committee members are identified based upon the expertise and consultation that they can bring to an individual dissertation proposal. Advisors should review the school committee guidelines when considering membership of the committee for these exams, as outlined below. If the student's work involves data, policies, or experiences from an outside agency, organization, or practicum site, they should ensure that they follow the guidelines that may include a requirement to have a member of the agency, organization, or site on their committee.

- **Any student who plans to use data or experiences gained from the Allegheny County Health Department (ACHD) must include their ACHD preceptor as a member of their committee. If the preceptor holds an adjunct faculty position, they will be considered a faculty member. If they do not hold an adjunct appointment, they must be included in the committee in addition to all faculty. The proposed committee chair must draft an e-mail (please refer to the next section) requesting committee approval and identify the agencies with which preceptors are associated.**

Initiating the committee approval process:

- In formally designating a committee, the student's academic advisor (typically the dissertation committee chair) should discuss membership selection with the student, and then forward an e-mail to the Director of Epidemiology Student Services. The e-mail message with the subject line "*PhD Committee approval request*" should identify:
  - The proposed committee members (their titles, department, primary or secondary appointments and affiliations, references to having University Graduate Faculty Status and/or Epidemiology Core Faculty Status affiliations), and the committee chair), and

- The type of committee being proposed (e.g., Overview, Comprehensive and Dissertation Defense).
- The Director of Student Services and the Doctoral Program Director on behalf of the Department Chair must approve members. The proposed committee list is next forwarded to a designated Pitt Public Health Student Affairs staff member for additional approval.
- When final approval for the committee is obtained, the Director of Student Services will e-mail committee chairs and their students to notify them that the committee has been approved at all required levels.

### **Rules for Doctoral Committee Composition**

The following Overview, Comprehensive, and Dissertation Defense Committee composition criteria must be met:

- The committee must consist of at least four University of Pittsburgh faculty members.
- At least two members must be on the [core faculty 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.
- More committee details can be found on the [Milestone Committee Composition Rules](#) page of the School of Public Health website.

### **Proceeding after committee approval:**

- After the committee is formed, it is recommended that the student and committee members meet on an ongoing basis to discuss the next milestone exam to be taken.
- Exams are administered in-person, unless there is a critical need to administer remotely. Administering the exam remotely requires the approval of the committee chair.
- Additional working meetings of the committee should be considered throughout the dissertation process, particularly between the Comprehensive exam and Final Defense to ensure that the Final Defense goes smoothly. If the trainee is working closely with all committee members throughout the process, then additional, in-person, committee meetings may not be necessary.

### **Overview Exam**

All Doctoral candidates must have their dissertation topic and outline of proposed research approved by their doctoral committee. The Overview Meeting is the first official meeting of students with their doctoral committees. The Overview Exam may or may not be combined with the Comprehensive Exam. Combining the two exams is advised only when:

- The student has worked closely with all doctoral committee members, and
- All committee members are familiar with and have approved the dissertation aims.

The student should present the dissertation topic and research plan. The meeting should allow for the committee members to provide guidance in the conceptualization and methodology of the plan.

### Eligibility

- Preliminary Exam must have been passed.
- The doctoral committee for the Overview must be formed and approved.
- A general research area for the dissertation must have been chosen.
- A basic literature review for the chosen research area should be completed.
- Academic advisor must agree that the student is ready for this exam.

Minimum required written material submitted to the approved Dissertation Committee two weeks before the Overview include:

- A basic literature review to demonstrate how the proposed research fills a void in the existing literature in the topic area. The length and format are at the discretion of the dissertation chair; however, it is expected that it should be at least 10 pages.
- Suggested dissertation aims, hypothesis, and methods to be discussed and finalized with the dissertation committee.

### Exam parameters:

- Oral format
- A basic literature review should be submitted to the committee at least two weeks prior to the exam to demonstrate how the proposed research fills a void in the existing literature in the topic area.
- Relationship of student project to ongoing departmental projects (if any) must be explained.
- Data may be included in this exam, but is not required. Where applicable, the use of data to demonstrate feasibility or support for proposed evaluations is encouraged.
- Proposal may be to carry out research elsewhere under direct supervision of person selected by dissertation committee, under special circumstances. This alternative should be discussed with committee chairperson prior to proposal presentation.

### The committee should assess:

- If the student has the skills necessary to move forward with the proposed work.
- If the dissertation topic is feasible and is relevant to the topic area.
- If the proposed research plan is appropriate to address the specific aims.

The committee must provide feedback to the student within two weeks following the Overview exam.

### Overview proposal approval & reporting

- Students obtaining Overview approval are not yet admitted to candidacy for the doctoral degree, but have made progress towards that goal.
- Students not obtaining Overview approval will receive written comments regarding this assessment from their dissertation committee, including suggestions and/or recommendations for action(s) prior to scheduling a second Overview Exam.
- A Report on Requirements (R on R) for Doctoral Degree form must be completed and submitted to the Student Services Office when the overview proposal is approved. The form, which may be downloaded from the [Pitt Public Health Web Site](#), should be completed by the committee chair and either brought to the Overview Exam or distribute via DocuSign for committee signatures.
  - If the second attempt to pass the Overview Exam is not successful, students will be unable to continue their current pursuit of a doctoral degree within the department.

## Comprehensive Exam

During the Comprehensive exams, students must present material to demonstrate mastery of the general topic of study and depth and breadth of knowledge in the area of specialization in that topic area. They must also show the ability to use the research methods of epidemiology appropriately for the dissertation plan.

### Eligibility

- Preliminary Exam must have been passed.
- Students must have obtained Dissertation Overview approval.
  - Comprehensive Exams may be combined with Dissertation Overview or Prospectus Meetings at committee chair discretion (please see Overview Exam above).
- Exam cannot be taken in the same term in which graduation will occur.

Minimum required written material submitted to the Dissertation Committee at least two weeks before the Comprehensive Exams include:

- A completed literature review addressing strengths and weaknesses of the topic area and identifying gaps in knowledge (in 2024, the average length of the literature review of dissertations submitted was 62 pages, with a median length of 59 pages).
- Dissertation aims, hypothesis, and how they address gaps in knowledge in the topic area.

### Exam parameters:

Exam is oral.

- Focus is primarily on student knowledge in the area of the dissertation topic.
- The literature review in the Comprehensive Exam should address strengths and weaknesses of the topic area and identify gaps in knowledge in this topic area.
- If a systematic review is performed, it may count as one of the three papers in the 3-paper dissertation format, provided that it is of publishable quality.

The committee should assess:

- If the student has shown a mastery of knowledge of the important concepts in the general topic area and the area of specialization of the research plan, including knowledge and understanding of recent advances in the field, a clear comprehension of disease biology and pathophysiology (if applicable), competency in relevant interdisciplinary areas (e.g., biostatistics, genetics, etc.).
- If the student has a fundamental understanding of the strengths and weaknesses of the methods in the research plan.

Committee members are encouraged to raise any concerns regarding the student's preparedness. Should any concerns arise, the chair and committee members are responsible for developing a plan, clearly outlining specific areas for improvement and establishing concrete deadlines for addressing identified weaknesses.

Regardless of outcome of the exam (pass / fail), the committee is required to provide written feedback to the student within two weeks following the Comprehensive examination.

### Exams Results and Reporting

- Results must be reported to the Pitt Public Health Assistant Dean for Student Affairs' office no later than the last day of the term in which the exam is administered.

**Research credit registration before and after completing the Preliminary, Overview, Comprehensive Milestone Exams:**

- With their academic advisors' approval, students may register for one of the following three courses listed in the chart below, depending upon their academic progress, to proceed with dissertation research.

**Research Credit Registration Guidelines**

**Table 15**

<b>COURSE</b>	<b>TITLE</b>	<b>CREDITS</b>	<b>STUDENT STATUS</b>	<b>PREREQUISITES</b>	<b>OTHER INFORMATION</b>
EPIDEM 3100	Research & Dissertation for the Doctoral Degree	01.0 – 15.0	Full or part time. Minimum of 3 credits are required (or FTDR 3999 registration) prior to graduation. Discuss credits taken with advisor.	Passing of the Preliminary Exams.	Students may register for EPIDEM 3100 to begin work on their dissertations (with advisor authorization) if they have passed the Preliminary Exams.
FTDR 3999	Full-Time Dissertation Research	No credits (0)	Candidates are considered full- time	Completion of all coursework required for the degree, at least 72 credits earned, and all three sections of the Preliminary Exam passed	Substitutes for EPIDEM 3100 in meeting graduation requirements  Special (lower) reduced tuition rate is assessed.

## Admission to Candidacy

Admission to candidacy for the doctoral degree represents student promotion to the most advanced level of graduate study, and provides formal approval to devote exclusive attention to dissertation research and writing.

### Candidacy prerequisites

- Full (not provisional) graduate status
- Preliminary Exam passage
- Successful dissertation Overview meeting
- Approval of dissertation proposal
- Comprehensive Exam passage
- Formal course work completion with minimum 3.0 grade point average

### Candidacy approval and reporting

- A [Report on Requirements \(R on R\) for Doctoral Degree form](#) must be completed and submitted as a record indicating that candidacy status has been attained.
- **NOTE:** Candidacy status may also be indicated on the Report on Requirements for Doctoral Degree form completed to record passing of the Comprehensive Exam, if the student has qualified for this status at that time.
- Contact the Director of Student Services concerning processing and submission of the form, which may be downloaded from the [Pitt Public Health Web Site](#).

## Dissertation Defense

Students should confirm readiness to defend their dissertations by conferring with their advisors and committees. If approval is obtained, they should schedule a meeting with the Director of Epidemiology Student Services to discuss defense and graduation preparations and requirements.

Doctoral candidates will present the completed dissertation project and defend the validity of the work under examination from the committee members. They should present results of the dissertation and a discussion of the meaning of these results in the topic area of study.

Defenses should be scheduled on-site at Pitt Public Health, or at another University space acceptable to the student and the student's committee. The Student Services staff can help with space reservations in the school building.

If circumstances occur that make on-site participation by the committee and the student difficult or impossible, this should be discussed by the student, their advisor/committee chair, the research mentor (if a different person than the advisor) and the other committee members. It may be decided that a virtual defense is acceptable. In that case, the Director of Student Services, Amy Rhodes, will share information with the student concerning virtual defense operational protocols.



### Eligibility

- Preliminary Exam passed
- Dissertation Overview approved
- Comprehensive Exam passed
- Admission to candidacy attained

### Defense timeframe

- Defense may be scheduled no earlier than two weeks following submission of the dissertation.
- Defense must be held at least two weeks before:
  - End of the term of graduation
  - Degrees are awarded

### Students should:

- Select a time and place for the defense, and notify the Director of Epidemiology Student Services, as well as [stuaff@pitt.edu](mailto:stuaff@pitt.edu) and [phcomm@pitt.edu](mailto:phcomm@pitt.edu).
- Announce their dissertation defenses at least 3 weeks prior to defending, or as soon as they have all information related to the defense (location, date, time, committee chair name and participating committee members).
- Submit final dissertation drafts to their committee at least two weeks prior to the defense date.
- Bring Electronic Theses and Dissertation (ETD) Approval Form to the defense for committee signatures, provided the committee is prepared to approve the dissertation in its current state for final uploading to the University library system.
- Refer to the [Pitt Public Health Graduation Webpage](#) for additional details concerning forms to be submitted, deadlines, etc.

Students should take note of all defense and graduation information provided, and formulate a plan for addressing all requirements within the stated timeframes. Failure to do so may result in inability to graduate in the desired academic term.

### Defense / Exam Results and Reporting

- The Dissertation Chair should bring a [Report on Requirements \(R on R\) for Doctoral Degree form](#) to the defense in preparation for committee signatures. Alternatively, electronic signatures (e.g., via DocuSign) are also acceptable.
- Contact the Director of Student Services concerning processing and submission of the form, which may be downloaded from the [Pitt Public Health Web Site](#).

## Timing of Overview, Comprehensive, and Dissertation Defense exams

The timing of these exams is at the discretion of the dissertation committee chair in consultation with the committee members.

The Overview and Comprehensive milestones may be held at separate dates, or may be held on the same date. However, if these exams are administered on the same date at the same sitting, each must be considered and rated distinctly and individually as part of the committee review of the student's progress.

The Comprehensive and Final Defense cannot occur in the same term.

It is important to realize that dissertation work does not always fit a set schedule. The successful doctoral candidate is one who realizes that research does not always go according to plan and deadlines are secondary to accomplishing what is required of a dissertation.

## Conduct of Overview, Comprehensive, and Dissertation Defense Exams

Milestone exams should be scheduled on-site or virtually, with consensus of the committee members. The [Pitt Public Health Graduation Website](#) includes information and tips students and committee members may find helpful in creating and navigating virtual meetings. Questions about defending virtually should be discussed with the advisor and committee chair (if these are two different individuals).

- **Overview and Comprehensive Exams:** At the beginning of the exam, when all committee members have convened, the chair asks the student to leave the room for a few minutes. At this time, the chair provides a brief description of the student's strengths and weaknesses. It is important for the chair to be honest with any concerns that he or she has. This is the chance for the chair to get opinions and suggestions from other committee members. The chair may wish to bring along the student's school record which can be signed out from the Student Services office. Permission for this is granted only to the chair of the committee. When this review is completed, the student is invited back into the room and the exam begins.

In the exam, the student delivers a presentation that has been prepared in consultation with their dissertation committee chair. While the length of the presentation will vary, most presentations involve 30-45 slides, followed by a discussion. It is important to realize that sufficient time must be left for discussion. After all questions and discussion have taken place, the chair will again ask the student to leave the room. The committee will discuss the performance of the student during the exam and settle on a decision regarding the pass or fail status of the individual. The student is then invited back to the room and informed of the outcome of the exam.

The committee chair should inform the Director of Student Services if the Overview or Comprehensive Exam was passed or failed, so appropriate follow up with the student and the committee can be initiated, and additional advisement concerning administrative next steps can be provided.

- **Final Defense:** As the Final Defense is advertised and open to the public, it is recommended that the meeting begin with an open session. Members of the public and University community are invited, as well as committee members. Questions may be given to the doctoral candidate from committee members during the presentation. However, it is recommended that committee members should consider only questions required for clarification at this point. After the presentation, the chair should invite questions from the public.

When the public question and answer period is finished, the chair should declare that the public session is complete, and begin the closed session of the final defense meeting. **The closed session should include only committee members and the candidate.** It is conducted to allow sufficient time for the evaluation of the parameters of the final defense. Committee members may ask additional questions at this time. When discussion is complete, the chair asks the candidate to leave again, and the committee privately discusses their decision.

Recommendations on how to address weaknesses are provided to the chair who relays the comments to the candidate. Committee members are encouraged to provide input directly to the candidate as well.

**A closed session** of the doctoral committee (without the candidate) should then be conducted. The committee should arrive at a decision on the results of the exam based upon material and discussion provided in both the open and closed sessions. The candidate is eventually invited back to the room and informed of the outcome of the exam.

**Dissertation edit requests:** Often, even with the best planning, there is work that must still be done after the Final Defense. If committee members indicate that final changes to the dissertation should be made, they do not sign required exam documentation until they have seen and approved those changes. It is not uncommon for committee members to defer the decision about whether minor issues have been adequately addressed to the dissertation committee chair and they may sign the form conditional on the chair's future approval. However, any committee member has the right to see all changes and agree to them before signing off.

The committee chair should inform the Director of Student Services if the Dissertation Defense was passed or failed, so appropriate follow up with the student and the committee can be initiated, and additional advisement concerning administrative next steps can be provided.

## **Failing an Exam**

If the committee indicates that the student/candidate was not successful for a given exam, then the committee must identify areas of deficiency and outline criteria necessary for successful completion of the milestone. Both issues must be explained to the student. Failure of a milestone exam is often an infrequent occurrence, because the dissertation chair should have a reasonable sense of where the student/candidate is and should make sure that the student/candidate is adequately prepared for a given exam before it is scheduled. However, there may be times when an important gap is

discovered during the exam and the committee members are not comfortable passing a student/candidate, until the identified issues are addressed.

### **Authorship of Research Papers from the Dissertation**

Committee members are often included as authors on the papers produced from the dissertation work, but this is not a requirement. The primary dissertation advisor and trainee should make this decision and it should be based on the degree to which a given committee member influenced or contributed to each paper. In deciding authorship, the primary dissertation advisor and trainee may consult the authorship guidelines published by the [International Committee of Medical Journal Editors](#).

It is recommended that the primary advisor and trainee decide on an action plan for papers that are unpublished at the time of graduation. Time limits should be considered so that papers are not held up if the graduate does not submit papers following graduation. For example, the advisor and trainee may decide that if the work is not submitted for publication within 6 months of graduation, the materials will be turned over to the advisor so that the advisor can move forward with the publication.

### **Copyright**

Copyright notice and registration are optional for all dissertations. Information on the format and guidelines for electronic dissertation preparation can be found at: [ETDformat.pdf \(pitt.edu\)](#).

### **Options when the doctoral student is not performing at a sufficient level**

There are several critical points at which the primary advisor needs to be confident that the trainee is capable before allowing them to move forward. An astute advisor will follow the progress of the trainee at several points, including the four milestone exams, as well as performance in coursework, and research progress. If a student is not making sufficient progress in these areas, the advisor should consult with the doctoral program director and the vice-chair for education. Additionally, the advisor should review the Pitt Public Health Probation and Dismissal Guidelines (on the [Pitt Public Health website](#)) for further guidance.

In some circumstances, insufficient progress in research may lie in scenarios where the interests of the trainee and the interests of the primary advisor are not well matched. The option of switching advisors can be raised at this time. In this situation, the student is given the responsibility of identifying an alternate advisor. If the faculty member accepts, then an advisor change form is completed. In other circumstances, students may fail milestone exams due to clear and unamenable deficiencies. In these situations, the option of completing a master's thesis can be discussed with the student.

A failing score on the final defense milestone exam is a serious concern. Thus, all committee members should be reasonably comfortable with the candidate's progress before allowing the defense to be scheduled. Candidates must realize that their dissertation work represents a substantial investment of time on the part of the committee chair and other committee members. Thus, the scheduling of the Final Defense is a commitment that should not be taken lightly. If the candidate insists on going forward without the recommendation of their dissertation advisor, the likelihood of failure is a real possibility.

## **ZOOM Guidelines for PhD Milestone Exams**

- As ZOOM continues to be utilized for conducting milestone exams (i.e., Overview and Comprehensive Exams, and Dissertation Defense), please be advised that, effective this summer, Student Services will no longer be responsible for managing passcodes for these exams. Instead, students will need to set up and manage passcodes themselves.
- To ensure students/advisors have full control over these exams, including who attends, they should consider one of the following options:
  - If using a passcode, it will be the student's responsibility to either distribute the passcode themselves or designate a point person of contact. This cannot be a member of the Epidemiology Student Services Staff. It is strongly recommended that the passcode is not included on the dissertation announcement to maintain privacy and control over attendees.
  - If electing not to use a passcode, it is suggested that the waiting room feature on Zoom be utilized. However, it is important to assign someone to monitor the waiting room throughout the duration of the defense. This individual will be responsible for admitting attendees at the beginning of the defense as well as ensuring anyone joining late can enter the meeting.
- Please direct any questions to the Director of Epidemiology Student Services.

## **Graduation Certification**

- Students should meet with their advisors and contact the Director of Epidemiology Student Services to learn about the process for ensuring they have met all departmental graduation requirements and verifying that all supporting documentation has been submitted.
- Students may e-mail Student Affairs staff [stuaff@pitt.edu](mailto:stuaff@pitt.edu) with questions about school-level graduation requirements and forms, and to submit inquiries about their dissertation's compliance with University formatting standards.
- Detailed school graduation policies and procedures are included on the [Pitt Public Health Web site](#).
- The Director of Epidemiology certifies all master's and doctoral program students for graduation on behalf of the Department of Epidemiology.

## Doctoral Student Funding Options

- **Graduate Student Researcher (GSR) / Teaching Assistant (TA) Appointments**
- The primary goal of a GSR or TA appointment is to provide financial support to the graduate student. Students also benefit from valuable exposure to research and class management environments, and networking opportunities.

### Funding option descriptions GSR

- GSRs in the Epidemiology Department provide doctoral degree students with paid training opportunities. These opportunities typically arise from financial support from research grants secured by faculty affiliated with the department.
- In a GSR appointment, students complete research-related activities to meet the project goals of the specific research project. Under guidance from a faculty mentor, students receive training on the research activities required.
- Financial support is provided to students with GSR appointments to assist with costs related to the training activities for which the funds were awarded.
- **Due to funding limitations, GSR appointments are not guaranteed to all accepted doctoral applicants or continuing PhD students. Prospective and continuing students should be prepared to rely upon their own sources of financial support if appointments are not available.**
- For questions regarding GSR appointments and funding, contact Dr. Tina Costacou ([costacout@edc.pitt.edu](mailto:costacout@edc.pitt.edu))

### Teaching Assistant (TA) Appointments

- TA appointments in the Epidemiology Department provide a selected number of doctoral students with training opportunities in course development, implementation, and assessment. These appointments arise from educational funds to support departmental courses.
- In a TA appointment, students work with faculty, providing assistance to a specific course(s). See Table 13 below for a list of courses with current TA appointments.
- Financial support is provided to students with these appointments to assist with the costs related to this educational training.
- TA appointments are subject to term limits. See the [TA Term Limit Policy](#) section of this document for more information.
- Eligibility
  - All Epidemiology doctoral students and newly accepted doctoral applicants are eligible for TA appointments. Selection for an appointment is commensurate with experience and availability of appointments.
- How to request appointment consideration
  - PhD accepted applicants and continuing unfunded doctoral students can be considered for TA appointments. Contact Dr. Tina Costacou ([costacout@edc.pitt.edu](mailto:costacout@edc.pitt.edu)) and Dr. Tom Songer ([tjs@pitt.edu](mailto:tjs@pitt.edu)) for details.

# **Courses that Currently Have TA Appointments**

**Table 16. Courses with TA appointments**

<b>Graduate Courses</b>		
Course	Title	Term
EPIDEM 2110	Principles of Epidemiology	Fall
EPIDEM 2170	Chronic Disease Epidemiology	Spring
EPIDEM 2181	Design and Conduct of Clinical Trials	Fall
EPIDEM 2185	Intro to SAS	Fall
EPIDEM 2186	Intro to R for Public Health	Fall
EPIDEM 2189	Epidemiological Methods of Longitudinal & Time to Event Analyses	Fall
EPIDEM 2193	Machine Learning in Epidemiological Research	Fall
EPIDEM 2250	Seminar in Epidemiology	Fall, Spring
EPIDEM 2921	Grant Writing	Fall
EPIDEM 2210	Special Studies - Masters Essay	Fall
EPIDEM 2709	Epidemiology of Women's Health	Fall
EPIDEM 2261	Applied Epidemiology Field Investigation Methods	Fall
EPIDEM 2180	Fundamental Epidemiological Methods	Spring
EPIDEM 2160	Epidemiology of Infectious Diseases	Spring
EPIDEM 2192	Causal Inference in Epidemiologic Research	Spring
EPIDEM 2230	Secondary Data Analysis: A Capstone Course	Spring
EPIDEM 2600	Introduction to Molecular Epidemiology	Spring
EPIDEM 3183	Reading, Analyzing, and Interpreting Public Health Medical Literature	Spring
<b>Undergraduate</b>		
PUBHLT 0330	Introduction to Epidemiology	Fall, Spring
PUBHLT 0431	Understanding and Interpreting Health Research	Fall
PUBHLT 0430	Get SASsy: Data Management & Analysis with SAS	Spring
PUBHLT 0432	Epidemiology in Public Health Practice	Spring
PUBHLT 0433	Epidemiology of Firearm Injuries and Death	Spring

**\*Note:** These courses are subject to change based on enrollment numbers.

## TA Term Limit Policy

- The Epidemiology TA position will be subject to evaluation for renewal on a yearly basis. Evaluation will be based on quality of TA work and availability of department funds.
- Epidemiology TAs are limited to a maximum number of four academic years served as a TA. An opportunity to serve as a TA for a fifth year may be offered, contingent on all renewal qualifications being met and evidence from the student's advisor and committee showing the student will be able to finish the degree program in that academic year.

## Supervision & Evaluation of GSR/TA

- GSR and TA supervisors are the student's GSR advisor, the Epidemiology doctoral program director, or another qualifying member of the Epidemiology faculty.
- Students and faculty are required to meet within the first month of the first GSR or TA appointment term to discuss, complete and sign a [GSR / TA Objectives Form](#) so that a clear understanding of responsibilities and goals is set forth.
- This form must be completed and submitted to the Student Services Office, and should be submitted thereafter at the beginning of each academic year if the GSR or TA appointment is continued.
- Students and faculty must meet to discuss progress in meeting objectives and goals annually, and must submit a GSR/TA Evaluation Form to the Student Services Offices ([epistudentservices@edc.pitt.edu](mailto:epistudentservices@edc.pitt.edu)). The Student Services staff will remind faculty to submit this form at the appropriate time during the term.
- GSR Students must attend seminar presentations in person in any fall or spring term in which they hold a GSR appointment, and must attend at least 75% of the presentations per term to remain compliant with Epidemiology GSR policy. Those not attending this minimum number of lectures are in policy violation. Students are reminded to be sure to swipe their Pitt ID cards upon entering the designated seminar courses space to record their EPIDEM 2250 participation.

## Appointment Timeframe & Renewal of GSR/TA

- GSR/TA appointments are typically for two terms (fall and spring), subject to performance consideration and funding availability. Additionally, TAs appointments are subject to term limits. See the [TA Term Limit Policy](#) section of this document for more information.
- Twenty hours per week must be devoted to GSR and TA responsibilities as identified by GSR and TA supervisors.

## Coursework/enrollment requirement

- Epidemiology Department GSR's and TAs must maintain full time student status by enrolling in  
9  
– 15 credits or FTDR 3999 (full-time dissertation research in fall and spring terms if they qualify and wish to focus only on dissertation research).
- Per University policy, students with summer term GSR appointments are not required to be enrolled in the summer if they also have an appointment in the preceding spring or following fall term. For more information on how this may affect FICA tax payment, please read the section on [Graduate Student Researcher \(GSR\) and Teaching Assistant \(TA\) course enrollment](#).



## Compensation and Benefits

- Stipend
  - Set by Department within range established by University policy
  - Current stipend rates are posted [here](#).
- GSR and TA full tuition scholarships for up to 15 credits or FTDR 3999
  - Student Activity Fees identified on e-bills must be paid by students, and payment receipts must be forwarded to the Student Services Office ([epistudentservices@edc.pitt.edu](mailto:epistudentservices@edc.pitt.edu)).
  - Once receipts are received, tuition coverage will be applied.
- Health insurance
  - Free individual coverage to students with appointments
  - Insurance applications must be submitted annually.
  - Family coverage available at student cost.
  - Vision and dental policies are available at student cost.
  - Contact the Student Services Offices ([epistudentservices@edc.pitt.edu](mailto:epistudentservices@edc.pitt.edu)) with questions.

## Training Grant (Trainee) Appointments

- Students or accepted applicants who are US citizens or permanent residents may contact designated representatives of training grants associated with the Department of Epidemiology to determine if any funded appointments are available.

## University student employment opportunities

- Available employment positions may be reviewed at the University of [Pittsburgh Human Resources Website](#).
- Students should communicate with their academic advisors and instructors to inquire about hourly-paid student employment positions.
- Local/regional employers may have available positions, including the University of Pittsburgh Medical Center.
- International Students must discuss any off-campus activities with their immigration specialist at the Office of International Services (<https://www.ois.pitt.edu/>).

## Doctoral Student Profiles – Epidemiology Website

- A section on the Epidemiology Website was created to showcase the academic and research accomplishments of our continuing doctoral students, inspire new PhD students, and invite communication and collaboration among Epidemiology students, faculty, postdocs, and alumni, as well as epidemiologists and public health professionals, prospective employers, and friends of the department globally.
- New PhD students will be contacted by the Director of Epidemiology Student Services about submitting profile information.
- Continuing PhD students should update their profile details at least annually by e-mailing updates to the Student Services Office ([epistudentservices@edc.pitt.edu](mailto:epistudentservices@edc.pitt.edu)). Update reminders will be forwarded by the Director of Epidemiology Student Services in the spring term.
- Graduating PhD student profiles will be removed from the site by Student Services staff.