

Student Research Guide

For DrPH Students

PHD 9999 Dissertation Research

This guide provides an overview of the steps required to complete a doctoral-level dissertation and helpful resources to ensure your success. Throughout the research process students can reach out for assistance from their committee members or The Office of Academic Affairs and Student Services. For questions regarding the research process, please email SPHStudentResearch@uth.tmc.edu.

Students in the Doctor of Public Health (DrPH) that matriculated fall 2018 or later must follow these requirements. Students in the DrPH program fulfill their [Integrative Learning Experience \(ILE\)](#) through their academic research dissertation and must generate high-quality field-based products consistent with advanced practice designed to influence programs, policies, or systems addressing public health. DrPH students who matriculated prior to fall 2018 are encouraged to follow this guide or may opt to follow the [Dissertation Guide for PhD Students](#). Students are required to complete an oral defense of the proposal and an oral defense of the final dissertation.

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Research timeline and checklist

The amount of time required to complete the dissertation is determined by the specific project and the time the student devotes to the project. Students should work with their committee to create a tailored timeline appropriate to their research and plans. Students should utilize this worksheet to plan an appropriate timeline and to verify all necessary forms and documentation is complete and submitted.

Activity	Timeline
Stage 1: Planning and Committee Formation	
1. Plan and discuss topics with your faculty advisor	
2. Enrollment in research credits (see Policy 401)	
3. Form a committee (see Policy 102) <input type="checkbox"/> Doctoral Committee Appointment Form	
Stage 2: Pre-proposal	
4. Identify advanced field-based project and products based on your research	
5. Identify competencies and write a synthesis statement (see CEPH Competencies) <input type="checkbox"/> DrPH Independent ILE Approval Form	
Stage 3: Proposal	
6. Preparing your proposal	
7. Review of proposal by your committee	
8. Proposal defense	
9. Proposal approvals (see Policy 106) <input type="checkbox"/> Final proposal document <input type="checkbox"/> Doctoral Dissertation Proposal Defense Form <input type="checkbox"/> Student Research Approvals Form <input type="checkbox"/> Additional documentation as mentioned in the CPHS Guide and Instructions	
Stage 4: Dissertation	
10. Complete proposed dissertation work	
11. Prepare final dissertation document	
12. Prepare for graduation	
13. Dissertation defense and committee approval <input type="checkbox"/> Copy of the student's dissertation defense newsletter announcement <input type="checkbox"/> DrPH ILE Statement of Completion Form	
14. Submit final dissertation to The Office of Academic Affairs and Student Services <input type="checkbox"/> Final dissertation document, including completed signature page	
15. Work with the SPH Library to publish final dissertation to ProQuest	

Student Resources

The research preparation process begins with many steps as outlined below. It is important to begin talking to your advisor early in your graduate program to ensure you are completing the appropriate steps to be successful in completing your thesis or dissertation.

The school provides several resources to students. More information about each of the following resources can be found in the '[Student Resources](#)' section at the end of this guide.

- UTHealth SPH Library & Graduate Communication Center
- Library Services
- Writing Support Services
- The Texas Medical Center (TMC) Library
- RefWorks
- LibGuides
- CEPH Competency Inventory

Stage 1: Planning and Committee Formation

At the end of each stage of the research process, students will be required to submit documents or forms to document their progress. By the end of *Stage 1: Planning and Committee Formation*, students should complete and submit the following forms:

- Step 1: *no forms associated with step 1.*
- Step 2: *no forms associated with step 2.*
- Step 3: [Dissertation Committee Appointment Form](#)

Before proceeding, students should review [Stage 1: Summary and Required Documentation](#). This section summarizes required documentation, when to submit documentation and where to submit documentation. It is important for students to keep this information in mind as they progress through the steps in Stage 1.

1. Plan and discuss topics with your faculty advisor

You should begin to discuss potential research topics and research goals early in your program with your faculty advisor. Based on your research interests, your faculty advisor may suggest taking additional coursework that would provide the skills necessary to be successful in your research. Your faculty advisor may be able to help identify other faculty to serve on your research committee. Students should begin discussing their research with potential committee members.

2. Enrollment in research credits

Students should first enroll in dissertation credit hours the semester they begin working on their research. DrPH students completing a dissertation should enroll in **PHD 9999 Dissertation Research**.

Policy: Students should review [Policy 401: Continuous Enrollment for Students Enrolled in Thesis and Dissertation Research](#), which describes the school's enrollment requirements for thesis and dissertation.

Section of enrollment: Students should enroll in the appropriate course mentioned above with the appropriate faculty member based on the following scenarios:

- If the student's dissertation supervisor is a current School of Public Health faculty member, the student should enroll with their dissertation supervisor.
- If the student's dissertation supervisor is not a current School of Public Health faculty member, the student should enroll with their faculty advisor.
- If a student has not finalized a research committee, the student should enroll with their faculty advisor.

International students: Students should review the information provided in the [Curricular Practical](#)

[Training \(CPT\) Information Statement for F-1 Students](#) if they wish to request CPT.

3. Form a committee

A student's committee serves to assist and guide students throughout their research process.

Policy: [Policy 102, Doctoral Committee Structure](#) outlines the required membership of a DrPH dissertation committee. Students should review this policy before establishing their committee.

Roles of committee members: The committee members serve many different roles including scientific advisor, editor, mentor and advocate. The committee or individual members of the committee work with the student to develop the proposal, help obtain necessary institutional approvals (e.g. IRB, animal welfare), assist with the execution of the proposed project and completion of the final document.

Student expectations: Students are important members on their research committee. They are expected to:

- Coordinate meetings with committee members as frequently as necessary to ensure progress through their research process
- Obtain expert advice and assistance
- Obtain feedback on their proposal and final research document
- Establish with their committee members how they will review drafts of the proposal and final research document.

Related Documentation: Students should complete and submit the [Dissertation Committee Appointment Form](#) to document the membership of their research committee.

**Note:* Occasionally, there are changes in committee membership. These changes include the removal or addition of a committee member and can occur at any time. Whenever a change occurs, students should submit an updated [Dissertation Committee Appointment Form](#) to document the change and keep the student's records up to date.

Stage 1: Summary and Required Documentation

The table below summarizes the required documentation associated with Stage 1. Students should have this documentation submitted before progressing to [Stage 2: Pre-Proposal](#).

Required Documentation	Where to Submit	When to Submit
Dissertation Committee Appointment Form	SPHStudentResearch@uth.tmc.edu	Students should complete and submit this form once they have established their research committee.

Stage 2: Pre-proposal

At the end of each stage of the research process, students will be required to submit documents or forms to document their progress. By the end of *Stage 2: Pre-proposal*, students should complete and submit the following forms:

- Step 4: *no forms associated with step 4.*

- Step 5: [DrPH Independent ILE Approval Form](#)

Before proceeding, students should review [Stage 2: Summary and Required Documentation](#). This section summarizes required documentation, when to submit documentation and where to submit documentation. It is important for students to keep this information in mind as they progress through the steps in Stage 2.

4. **Identify advanced field-based project and products based on your research**

After discussing research topics and gaining knowledge in the research area, students should begin fine-tuning their goals and final product for their research. Identifying the research area and research goals will help students complete the next step, [Step 5. Identifying competencies and writing a synthesis statement](#).

DrPH students must complete a rigorous field-based independent research project and dissertation that impacts, influences or informs public health practice, programs, policies, or systems. Products and findings that result from the dissertation must be useful to organizations or systems (e.g., health departments, non-profit organizations, healthcare systems, clinics, schools, community health).

Selecting a field-based project: The field-based project that you select should fit or build upon your skills (e.g. statistical, qualitative and analytic) and be relevant to your future career goals. However, it should also be feasible to carryout given available resources and within a reasonable time period. Once you have identified a potential project, it is essential that you discuss both the scientific and practical aspects of the project with your committee members and any others who would play a significant role in the project. The School's [online faculty directory](#), which includes descriptions of faculty research interests, can serve as a source of ideas for the project. In addition, the [Office of Research](#) webpage includes lists of recent publications by the faculty as well as recently funded grants.

Field-based research generally refers to conducting research outside of a laboratory or library setting. Examples of field-based research are:

- primary data collection using qualitative, quantitative, or mixed-methods methodologies
 - secondary analysis of data collected to address a public health topic in collaboration with an organization or agency
- *Note: Students may conduct secondary data analysis using data collected by academic researchers if the student is producing the analysis to inform public health practice in collaboration with public health practitioners or if the student produces additional products that translate research into public health practice, such as a training manual, white paper, improved processes, intervention, or policy paper (see below).*
- development of a product or policy in collaboration with stakeholders outside of the academic setting

Note: Projects that are largely complete or that have been completed prior to writing your proposal, including work that has been submitted for publication or previously published, may **not be used for your dissertation.*

Selecting products: The student must produce a minimum of **three** high-quality, evidence-based, written deliverables. **Two** of the three scholarly products must be in the form of a manuscript. The third product can be a manuscript or a deliverable that is useful to the public health agency or a community organization the student is working with. Examples of types of deliverables include the following:

- Evaluation plan and instrument development
- Grant proposal
- Intervention plan
- Needs assessment

- Policy document
- Program manual
- Strategic plan
- Technological innovation with supporting documentation
- Training program
- White paper

5. **Identify competencies and write a synthesis statement**

DrPH students are required to select four competencies that will be attained through their written dissertation and compose a synthesis statement that details how these competencies will be utilized to create something new and impactful. The following two sections describe these requirements in more detail.

a. **Identifying competencies**

DrPH students are required to select competencies related to their dissertation. DrPH students fulfill the required Integrative Learning Experience (ILE) through the completion of their dissertation. The ILE demonstrates synthesis of a student's foundational and major-specific competencies. While students are brainstorming project ideas with their faculty advisor, they should also discuss which competencies will be synthesized in their final dissertation.

Competency requirements: Students will select their foundational and major-specific competencies by completing and submitting the [DrPH Independent ILE Approval Form](#). DrPH students must integrate a minimum of two (2) [DrPH Foundational Competencies](#) and two (2) [DrPH major-specific competencies](#) into their dissertation.

A complete list of competencies for all majors and degree programs can be found on the [CEPH Competencies](#) webpage.

b. **Write a synthesis statement**

Students must submit a synthesis statement as part of their [DrPH Independent ILE Approval Form](#). Synthesis strategically fuses multiple competencies into something new and impactful. Synthesis is not a summary. It takes A + B + C, and then derives D, where D encompasses the essence of A, B, and C but also adds something new that produces an impact. An example of a competency synthesis statement is:

DrPH Example: "Designing a mixed methods study (DrPH-1, DrPH-2) on adolescent bullying. The student might use secondary data to examine determinants of bullying, conduct a qualitative study to help better understand how a school implements bullying policies (DrPH-1, DrPH-2, DrPH-H4), and select and apply theoretical change methods and community health practice-based processes to recommend environmental-level for schools (DrPH-H2; DrPH-14)."

Related documentation: Students must complete and submit the [DrPH Independent ILE Approval Form](#) to document the intended research project and selected competencies. This form includes:

- the student's selected foundational and major-specific competencies (discussed in [Step 5a](#))
- the student's synthesis statement (discussed in [Step 5b](#))

**Note:* This form is intended to document the student's plan. Occasionally, a final product or competency may change due to research restrictions or limitations. Students will have the opportunity to elect their formal final product/s and competencies in the [DrPH ILE Statement of Completion Form](#), discussed in [step 13, Dissertation defense and committee approval](#).

Stage 2: Summary and Required Documentation

The table below summarizes the required documentation, where to submit each document and when to submit required documents. Students should have this documentation submitted before progressing to [Stage 3: Proposal](#).

Required Documentation	Where to Submit	When to Submit
DrPH Independent ILE Approval Form	SPHAcademicAdvising@uth.tmc.edu	Students should complete and submit this document prior to or with your research proposal, in step 9, Proposal approvals .

Stage 3: Proposal

At the end of each stage of the research process, students will be required to submit documents or forms to document their progress. By the end of *Stage 3: Proposal*, students should complete and submit the following forms:

- Step 6: *no forms associated with step 6*
- Step 7: *no forms associated with step 7*
- Step 8: [Doctoral Dissertation Proposal Defense Form](#)
[Student Research Approvals Form](#)

Additional documentation as mentioned in the [CPHS Guide and Instructions](#)

Before proceeding, students should review [Stage 3: Summary and Required Documentation](#). This section summarizes required documentation, when to submit documentation and where to submit documentation related to this stage. It is important for students to keep this information in mind as they progress through the steps in Stage 3.

6. Preparing your proposal

The proposal serves as an explanation of a student's thesis or dissertation expectations. It outlines the goals that you and your committee have agreed to meet as well as prepares you for the work that will be required to meet those goals.

Institutional Review Board (IRB): Depending on your research, you may be required to obtain approvals from other offices, such as IRB, before you can begin your project. Your proposal serves as the explanation of your research for these approvals. More information on the IRB process can be found in [Step 8. Proposal approvals](#). It is important for students to review this information and begin preparing the required documentation early to reduce possible delays in the research process.

Content of a proposal: The content of your proposal may vary depending on the needs of your research, although, the following sections should be included.

- **Background/Introduction and Public Health Influence and Significance**
This section should provide a review of the relevant literature. The level of detail that you provide in this section will be determined by you and your committee members. You should provide the background information that a general reader would require to understand the topic of your project and the rationale for the proposed work. This section should also include a discussion of the public health significance as well as how the dissertation will influence programs, policies, or systems addressing public health.
- **Specific Aims/Hypotheses/Objectives**
This section should include a statement of the research question, hypothesis, specific aims or objectives of your project. The best approach for setting up this section will depend on your specific project and should be discussed with your committee. This section may also include a brief discussion of the rationale for the proposed project

and/or a brief description of the approach that will be used to meet the stated goals.

○ Methods

The content of this section will vary depending on your specific project. However, all proposals must include details of the methods that will be used to address the study aims/hypotheses or objectives. The methods section tells the reader exactly “how” you are going to achieve your aims and/or answer your research questions. It is extremely important to clearly delineate the work that you will do from the work that has already been done by using past and present tense appropriately. The methods section should include the following considerations, as appropriate to your proposed work:

- Study population: Inclusion and exclusion criteria; recruitment strategy; consent process (who, what, when, where, how?); sample size calculations and/or study power
- Study setting, including locations and dates
- Data collection procedures: Specify the type and how data that will be collected. For research involving interaction with human participants, include a full protocol/description of the study procedures such as the number of study visits, what procedures will occur at each visit, how long the visits will take, and total amount of time required for each visit.
- Data handling procedures: How you will access data/source documents (e.g. electronic medical record, chart review), whether human subjects will be identifiable either directly (e.g. name) or through identifying variables (e.g. medical record number), and how and where the data will be stored, and how it will be protected to maintain confidentiality.
- Data analysis: Include statistical, laboratory and/or other methods that you will use to address each study aim, hypothesis or objective.
- Ethical considerations: Include human subjects, animal subjects, and or/other safety considerations.
- References/Bibliography: This section should include complete references for all literature, websites, books, and other materials referenced in your proposal. There is no required format for the references in your proposal. Many students find that using a reference management software such as [RefWorks](#), helpful.
- Appendices: Your proposal may include other sections as appropriate to your project or as required by your committee. Examples of other sections that you might include are:
 - Preliminary Data: Projects that are largely complete or that have been completed prior to writing your proposal, may not be used for your dissertation. However, if you have done work in preparation for writing your proposal, for example as part of your practicum or as a graduate research assistant, you should include a summary of the work that has already been done.
 - Results: If you include this section, it should provide an outline of how your results will be presented and mock-ups of the tables and/or figures that will be used to present your data.

Format of the proposal: UTHealth SPH does not require a minimum length for the proposal but does have required formatting parameters for a student’s proposal. Final formatting will be determined by the student’s committee. Both the proposal and final research document must include the

following:

- Double-spaced text
- 12-point font
- 1-inch margins
- Pagination included.

Students should reference the available formatting templates ([with journal articles](#) and [without journal articles](#)) for specific requirements.

The SPH Graduate Communication Center is a resource for students that can provide assistance in reviewing, formatting, and editing proposal and final research documents. More information about the SPH Library and Graduate Communication Center can be found [online](#).

7. Review of proposal by your committee

Preparation of your proposal is an interactive process that involves your committee members. As you begin your proposal, you should work with your committee members to establish how they will review drafts of your proposal. Often, your dissertation Supervisor will serve as a primary reviewer for your initial draft(s), while the other members will review only later drafts or specific sections of the proposal. You are required to work with your committee to update your proposal based on their suggestions and comments.

8. Proposal defense

When the student's research committee is ready to formally approve the completed proposal, students will make an open oral defense of their research proposal.

External reviewer: Students are not required to obtain an external reviewer for their dissertation defense. However, the student's committee may choose to have one. External reviewers may be faculty members from within or outside of UTHealth SPH and serve to provide an unbiased assessment of the proposal and should not be formal members of a student's committee. More information about an additional review can be found in [Policy 102, Doctoral Committee Structure](#).

**Note: External reviewers are not members of a student's dissertation committee.*

Announcing your defense: The student's committee determines the time and venue for the proposal defense. All committee members must attend as well as the external reviewer. The final deadline for completion of the proposal defense is no later than the last class day of the semester. The [announcing your presentation](#) guide provides step-by-step instructions to students as well as newsletter publication deadlines. Students are required to submit a copy of their newsletter announcement as documentation for this requirement.

- **Newsletter announcements:** Presentations must be announced through the SPH student and faculty weekly newsletters. Students should review the [announcement instructions](#) for steps to submit their dissertation announcement for publication in the newsletters.
- **Reserving a room:** Houston campus students can schedule a room for the presentation by completing and submitting a room reservation request through the [Astra](#) online reservation system. Austin, Brownsville, Dallas, El Paso, and San Antonio campus students should contact their campus staff advisor to schedule a room. Students may also conduct their presentation through WebEx.

Format of the defense: Although there are no specific format requirements for the proposal

defense, using standard software package (e.g. PowerPoint) is recommended. Students should provide drafts of the presentation to their committee. Many students find it helpful to practice their talk at least once with your committee members. You should be able to present your work without, or with minimal reference, to written notes. It is also important that you are able to go through your entire presentation in the allotted time.

**Note: Proposal defenses must be announced in the SPH newsletters for at least two week prior to the defense date. Dissertation proposal defenses must be completed before the last class day of the semester, as noted on the [Graduation and Commencement](#) website.*

Assessment of the defense: During the DrPH proposal defense, questions may be directed at the research as well as contextual questions relating to the field of public health. The defense will be assessed with the evaluation rubric that is included on the [Doctoral Dissertation Proposal Defense Form](#) and students will have two opportunities to pass. Passing will be by consensus and if consensus is not reached, passing may be by majority if all non-committee members approve passing.

9. Proposal approvals

Students must receive approval for their final proposal from their committee first as referenced in the previous step. Depending on the nature of the project, the student may also be required to receive additional approvals before it is submitted to the Office of Academic Affairs and Student Services for approval. It is the responsibility of the student and his/her research committee to determine which approvals are required, and to apply for, obtain and maintain all such approvals.

Committee approval: All committee members must approve the proposal. Approval of a student's proposal is documented by completing the [Doctoral Dissertation Proposal Defense Form](#). Once your proposal has received approval by the committee, it may need to be submitted for additional approvals.

Institutional Review Board (IRB): Depending on your research topic, you may be required to obtain approvals from other offices, such as IRB, before you can begin your project. Your proposal serves as the explanation of your thesis or dissertation for these approvals. Based on the type of research and type of data being used for your research will determine the approval process that a student will follow. Students should review the [CPHS Guide and Instructions](#) for navigating this approval process. All students will need to complete the [Student Research Approvals Form](#) as part of this approval process. Depending on the type of research plan and type of data to be used during the student's research, additional documentation may be required, as mentioned in the [CPHS Guide and Instructions](#).

Policy: [Policy 106: Thesis/Dissertation Data & Publication Authorship](#) outlines the necessary topics that students should discuss with their dissertation committee about the publication and planned authorship of data utilized in their research.

Related documentation:

- Students must complete and submit the [Doctoral Dissertation Proposal Defense Form](#) to document the committee's approval of the student's completed proposal.
- Students will need to complete the [Student Research Approvals Form](#) to document their request for approval for using data and to document how the data will be utilized in the student's research.
- Depending on the type of research plan and type of data to be used during the student's research, additional documentation may be required, as mentioned in the [CPHS Guide and Instructions](#).

**Note: If students require review and approval by CPHS, students must first submit the [Student Research](#)*

[Approvals Form](#) and any other required documentation as mentioned in the [CPHS Guide and Instructions](#) through the iRIS platform. Once students receive approval from CPHS, students will submit these documents and their approval letter to SPHStudentResearch@uth.tmc.edu for approval. Students cannot progress with their intended research until they receive approval from SPH Office of Research.

Stage 3: Summary and Required Documentation

The table below summarizes the required documentation associated with Stage 3. Students should have this documentation submitted before progressing to [Stage 4. Dissertation Stage](#).

Required Documentation	Where to Submit	When to Submit
Completed proposal document	SPHStudentResearch@uth.tmc.edu	Students should compile these documents and submit them at once time after the committee has approved the proposal and the student has received approval from CPHS, if required. The CPHS Guide and Instructions will guide students through the approval or exception process to receive this approval.
Doctoral Dissertation Proposal Defense Form		
Student Research Approvals Form	Depending on the type of research, students may need to submit this form for CPHS review and approval through the iRIS platform. Once the student has received approval from CPHS, students should submit this form to	
Additional related documents as mentioned in the CPHS Guide and Instructions .	SPHStudentResearch@uth.tmc.edu as mentioned in the CPHS Guide and Instructions .	

Documentation Checkpoint

Students who have completed their dissertation proposal should have submitted the following forms and documentation to record their current status and progression through the DrPH dissertation research process. Any of the following forms or documentation must be submitted before moving forward.

Required Documentation	Where to Submit
<input type="checkbox"/> Doctoral Committee Appointment Form	SPHStudentResearch@uth.tmc.edu
<input type="checkbox"/> DrPH Independent ILE Approval Form	SPHAcademicAdvising@uth.tmc.edu
<input type="checkbox"/> Completed dissertation proposal document	SPHStudentResearch@uth.tmc.edu
<input type="checkbox"/> Doctoral Dissertation Proposal Defense Form	SPHStudentResearch@uth.tmc.edu
<input type="checkbox"/> Copy of the student's proposal defense newsletter announcement	SPHStudentResearch@uth.tmc.edu

☐ [Student Research Approvals Form](#)

☐ Additional related documents as mentioned in the [CPHS Guide and Instructions](#)

Depending on the type of research, students may need to submit these documents for CPHS review and approval through the iRIS platform. Once the student has received approval from CPHS, students should submit all documentation, including the [Student Research Approvals Form](#) to SPHStudentResearch@uth.tmc.edu as mentioned in the [CPHS Guide and Instructions](#) for final approval by SPH Office of Research.

*Students cannot progress with their intended research until they receive approval from SPH Office of Research.

Stage 4: Dissertation

At the end of each stage of the research process, students will be required to submit documents or forms to document their progress. By the end of *Stage 4: Dissertation*, students should complete and submit the following forms:

- Step 10: *no forms associated with step 10.*
- Step 11: final dissertation document
- Step 12: *no forms associated with step 12.*
- Step 13: Copy of the dissertation defense announcement in the student and faculty newsletters
[DrPH ILE Statement of Completion Form](#)

Before proceeding, students should review [Stage 4: Summary and Required Documentation](#). This section summarizes required documentation, when to submit documentation and where to submit documentation related to this stage. It is important for students to keep this information in mind as they move towards graduation.

10. Complete proposed dissertation work

The requirements for this step vary considerably from project to project. The successful and timely completion of any project requires communication, organization and time management. It is essential that you meet with your committee members to develop a work plan and timeline. Issues that should be addressed during this meeting include: the role of each committee member, how often you will meet with committee members, mechanism(s) for providing updates between meetings e.g. emails, summary reports, etc.

As you are working on your project, it is important to adjust your work plan and timeline so that they remain realistic. If your work plan changes substantially, relative to what was included in your approved proposal, it may be necessary to submit a proposal amendment memo as well as protocol amendments to your committee as well as other relevant committees (e.g. CPHS).

11. Prepare final dissertation document

The dissertation proposal will provide the starting point for your final dissertation. However, you may need to update the 'Background' section to reflect any new developments in the field. In addition, you may need to expand and/or revise the 'Methods' section to accurately reflect the procedures that were used. You will also need to write the sections that were not included in your proposal (e.g. Results and Discussion) and update your references. The final dissertation document can have one of two general formats: [without journal articles](#) or [with journal articles](#). Choosing the 'with journal articles' option does not imply that the journal articles need to be submitted prior to the final dissertation defense. The final dissertation must be approved

and signed by all Dissertation Committee members on the required [signature page](#).

Templates: Templates and a [Template Checklist](#) are available. The templates are designed to assure that standards of style and document formatting (margins, pagination, style, etc.) are followed. Use of the templates is required. Your final dissertation should include the following:

- Signature page should be the first page
- Copyright page
- Dedication
- Title page
- Preface
- Acknowledgements
- Results
- Discussion and conclusion sections

You should review your dissertation for spelling and grammatical errors very carefully.

Final dissertation content: There is considerable flexibility in the manner in which you present your dissertation. In general, the final document will include the following sections:

- Abstract: a concise summary (~ 350 words) of the background, methods, primary results and conclusions
- Background/Introduction and Public Health Significance
- Specific Aims/Hypotheses/Objectives
- Methods
- Results: description of your findings or accomplishments, without comment or discussion. Findings may be presented in tables and figures as well as text. If the project has been, or will be submitted for publication, the journal article (conforming to the style of the journal to which it has been/will be submitted) may be included as a chapter within the results section. Any additional findings, not included in the article, should be included as a separate chapter in the results section.
- Discussion/Conclusions/Recommendations: discussion of results relative to what is already known about the topic, conclusions and/or recommendations that can be made based on the results of the project, and the strengths and limitations of the project
- References/Bibliography

More detailed information about each of these sections can be found in [step 6. Preparing your proposal](#).

12. Prepare for graduation

As students prepare their final thesis or dissertation, they should begin preparing for graduation. Students should review the information available on the [Graduation and Commencement](#) website for important information, such as:

- Graduation guides
- Graduation forms
- Delta Omega Honorary Society in Public Health
- Commencement information

13. Dissertation defense and committee approval

Students will make a formal public defense of their completed research.

External reviewer: Students are not required to obtain an external reviewer for their dissertation defense. However, the student's committee may choose to have one. External reviewers may be

faculty members from within or outside of UTHealth SPH and serve to provide an unbiased assessment of the proposal and should not be formal members of a student's committee. More information about an additional review can be found in [Policy 102, Doctoral Committee Structure](#).

**Note: External reviewers are not members of a student's dissertation committee.*

Announcing the dissertation defense: Students are required announce their dissertation defense by publishing it in the SPH student and faculty newsletters. The student's committee determines the time and venue for the presentation and all committee members must attend. The [announcing your presentation](#) guide provides step-by-step instructions to students as well newsletter publication deadlines. Students are required to submit a copy of their newsletter announcement as documentation for this requirement.

- **Newsletter announcements:** Presentations must be announced through the SPH student and faculty weekly newsletters. Students should review the [announcement instructions](#) for steps to submit their dissertation announcement for publication in the newsletters.
- **Reserving a room:** Houston campus students can schedule a room for the presentation by completing and submitting a room reservation request through the [Astra](#) online reservation system. Austin, Brownsville, Dallas, El Paso, and San Antonio campus students should contact their campus staff advisor to schedule a room. Students may also conduct their presentation through WebEx.

Defense assessment: During the DrPH dissertation defense, questions may be directed at the research as well as contextual questions relating to the field of public health. The presentation will be assessed with the evaluation rubric that is included on the [DrPH ILE Statement of Completion Form](#) and students will have two opportunities to pass. Passing will be by consensus and if consensus is not reached, passing may be by majority if all non-committee members approve passing.

Format of the presentation: Although there are no specific format requirements for the presentation, using standard software package (e.g. PowerPoint) is recommended. Students should provide drafts of the presentation to their committee. Many students find it helpful to practice their talk at least once with your committee members. You should be able to present your work without, or with minimal reference, to written notes. It is also important that you are able to go through your entire presentation in the allotted time.

**Note: Presentations must be announced in the SPH newsletters for at least two week prior to the presentation date. Dissertation defenses must be completed before the last class day of the semester, as noted on the [Graduation and Commencement](#) website.*

Required documentation:

- **DrPH ILE Statement of Completion Form:** All committee members must approve the final dissertation and presentation. Approval of a student's dissertation is documented by completing the [DrPH ILE Statement of Completion Form](#). The entire committee should work together to complete this form and rubric.
- Copy of the student's dissertation defense newsletter announcement

14. Submit final dissertation to the Office of Academic Affairs and Student Services

Once the dissertation is final and has received approval from all committee members, it should be submitted to the Office of Academic Affairs and Student Services for final approval. It is recommended to close your IRB Study by submitting a Study Closure Report in iRIS, if you do not close your study, it will automatically be closed in one year.

15. Work with the SPH Library to publish final dissertation to ProQuest

Graduating students who have received final approval from the Office of Academic Affairs and Student Services, have the option to publish their thesis or dissertation in ProQuest Dissertations & Theses Database (PQDT), the world's most comprehensive curated collection of multidisciplinary dissertations and theses from around the globe.

PQDT has over 5 million citations and 2.7 million full-text works from more than 4,200 graduate schools and universities in more than 100 countries, with 200,000 works added each year. By publishing in PQDT, students make their scholarly work discoverable to researchers using the standard research tools for their fields, such as research databases and Internet search engines, maximizing its reach and impact.

Note that if you choose to publish your dissertation in PQDT, you may not be able to use the same words and format when publishing in a journal. Thus, consider delaying publishing your dissertation in PQDT until after you publish in a journal. During your submission to PQDT, you can place an embargo of up to 12 months in which only the title and abstract will be available online for viewing.

To submit your thesis or dissertation for publication in PQDT, visit the [Library Services LibGuide](#) or contact the SPH Library at SPHLibrary@uth.tmc.edu.

Stage 4: Summary and Required Documentation

The table below summarizes the required documentation associated with Stage 4. Students should have this documentation submitted in order to be eligible for graduation.

Required Documentation	Where to Submit	When to Submit
Completed dissertation document, including completed signature page	SPHStudentResearch@uth.tmc.edu	Students should compile these documents and submit them at one time after the committee has approved the final dissertation document and the student has completed their dissertation defense.
Copy of the student's dissertation defense newsletter announcement		
DrPH ILE Statement of Completion Form		

Student Resources

There are resources available to students throughout their academic career as a School of Public Health student. These resources are particularly valuable to students working towards their thesis or dissertation research. Students are encouraged to utilize the following resources throughout their research process to ensure the best possible final product.

- UTHealth SPH Library & Graduate Communication Center
- Library Services
- Writing Support Services
- The Texas Medical Center (TMC) Library
- RefWorks
- LibGuides
- ProQuest
- CEPH Competency Inventory
- Funding Your Dissertation Research

UTHealth SPH Library & Graduate Communication Center

The [UTHealth SPH Library & Graduate Communication Center](#) integrates Library Services and Writing Support Services in a full-service learning, research, and project space. This physical space combines a library, a writing center, and a student lounge to empower students to direct their own learning by offering them a place where they can meet, study, and use shared equipment and resources. Students, faculty, and staff thus have access to a thriving academic health environment replete with library information and writing-instruction resources and services to help them meet their learning, teaching, and research goals.

The SPH Library & Graduate Communication Center is located on the first floor of the Reuel A. Stallones Building in the Houston campus of UTHealth School of Public Health. Although located physically in the Houston campus, most resources and services are available virtually to students, faculty, and staff at all School of Public Health campuses across Texas.

Library Services

[Library Services](#) provides library and information resources and services to students, faculty, and staff at all campuses of UTHealth School of Public Health. Library Services offers traditional services including circulation services, course reserves, and interlibrary loan, as well as information services including reference assistance, database searching, and citation management. The SPH Library's extensive print and electronic collections cover a broad range of public health subjects.

Contact information for Library Services:

Email address: SPHLibrary@uth.tmc.edu

Physical address: 1200 Pressler Street, RAS E109, Houston, TX 77030

Telephone: 713-500-9121 (main), 713-965-6968 (text)

Writing Support Services

[Writing Support Services](#) provides public health communication skills training, with a focus on writing, to students at all campuses of UTHealth School of Public Health. Training in the areas of academic writing, ESL, and scientific writing is delivered primarily by working one-on-one with students on their coursework, thesis, or dissertation. In addition to writing consultations, Writing Support Services offers mini-courses and writing groups designed to refine students' writing skills as well as to increase their competence and confidence as independent thinkers and writers. With collaboration and cooperation from faculty, students thus receive high-quality writing education (advice, instruction,

and support) tailored to meet their academic needs, faculty expectations, and public health workforce demands.

NOTE: Writing Support Services does not provide editing and proofreading services such as manuscript preparation, grant proposal review, etc. Students, faculty, and staff seeking editorial assistance for manuscript submissions, journal articles, and grant proposals will be referred to freelance editors/writers who are not affiliated with UTHealth School of Public Health and who establish their own protocols and pay rates.

Contact information for Writing Support Services:

Email address: SPHWritingHub@uth.tmc.edu

Physical address: 1200 Pressler Street, RAS E109, Houston, TX 77030

Telephone: 713-500-9121

The Texas Medical Center (TMC) Library

The [Texas Medical Center Library](#) (TMC Library) is one of the most inclusive and collaborative spaces in the Texas Medical Center campus, located between Baylor College of Medicine and McGovern Medical School at The University of Texas Health Science Center at Houston. The TMC Library provides an impressive depth and breadth of library and information resources, as well as a modernized space for study and for meeting at a central Texas Medical Center location. Students, faculty, and staff have access to the extensive collections of the TMC Library, and can participate in classes and workshops on various topics related to library and information services provided by the TMC Library.

Contact information for The TMC Library:

Email address: <https://askus.library.tmc.edu/ask>

Physical address: 1133 John Freeman Blvd., Houston, TX 77030

Telephone: 713-795-4200 (main), 713-636-5295 (text)

RefWorks

UTHealth School of Public Health maintains a site license to [RefWorks](#), a powerful online citation management, research, writing, and collaboration tool. RefWorks is designed to help researchers easily gather, organize, store and share all types of information, as well as to instantly generate citations and bibliographies for use in writing projects. Students, faculty, and staff can use their uth.tmc.edu email to sign up for a RefWorks account. For more information, see the SPH Library's [RefWorks LibGuide](#).

LibGuides

The SPH Library & Graduate Communication Center has created various [LibGuides](#) (online research guides) to ensure resource and service equity for students, faculty, and staff at all campuses of UTHealth School of Public Health. These LibGuides focus on various public health subjects and topics, and facilitate the resources and services available for research and writing projects. The following LibGuides are especially helpful when starting a new project: [Ask Us](#), [Databases](#), [Library Services](#), [RefWorks](#), [Systematic Reviews](#), and [Writing Support Services](#).

ProQuest

Graduating students who have received final approval from the Office of Academic Affairs and Student Services, have the option to publish their thesis or dissertation in ProQuest Dissertations & Theses Database (PQDT), the world's most comprehensive curated collection of multidisciplinary dissertations and theses from around the globe.

PQDT has over 5 million citations and 2.7 million full-text works from more than 4,200 graduate schools and universities in more than 100 countries, with 200,000 works added each year. By publishing in PQDT, students make their scholarly work discoverable to researchers using the standard research tools for their fields, such as research databases and Internet search engines, maximizing its reach and impact.

Note that if you choose to publish your dissertation in PQDT, you may not be able to use the same words and format when publishing in a journal. Thus, consider delaying publishing your dissertation in PQDT until after you publish in a

journal. During your submission to PQDT, you can place an embargo of up to 12 months in which only the title and abstract will be available online for viewing.

For more information or to submit your thesis or dissertation for publication in PQDT, visit the [Library Services LibGuide](#) or contact the SPH Library at SPHLibrary@uth.tmc.edu.

CEPH Competency Inventory

The University of Texas Health Science Center at Houston (UTHealth) School of Public Health is accredited by the Council of Education for Public Health (CEPH) for its master's and doctoral programs. Accreditation was last awarded in March 2020 for a seven-year term.

A complete inventory of CEPH competencies by degree program and major can be found on the [CEPH Competencies website](#). Additional information about our CEPH Accreditation, including a copy of the final self-study document, can be found on the [School of Public Health website](#).

CEPH Competency Inventory: <https://uth.tmc.sharepoint.com/sites/SPH-mySPH/SitePages/CEPH-Competencies.aspx>

SPH Accreditation website: <https://sph.uth.edu/about/accreditation>

Funding for Your Dissertation Research

Doctoral Dissertation Research Awards are intended to provide students with funding for research-related expenditures that are essential to the conduct and successful completion of their doctoral dissertations and that fall outside of the scope of typical graduate school expenses. Applications are solicited in the Fall and Spring semesters. Up to two awards are made per semester. Students should reference the [Doctoral Dissertation Award Guidelines](#) for more information.

Center for Clinical and Translational Sciences - TL1 Program: Training Grants for PhD Students – The CCTS TL1 program provides stipends for PhD students whose dissertation research is clearly translational or addresses a problem that has direct clinical implications. The program also offers didactic courses, seminars, and other training activities. The goal of the program is to train truly interdisciplinary researchers by a meaningful blending of programs and disciplines that have been traditionally operated as stand-alone entities within UTHealth schools and M. D. Anderson Cancer Center. More information about the CCTS TL1 may be found [here](#).