

**Policy Number:** 302

**Subject/Title:** Direct Admission from a Bachelor's Degree to the PhD Program

**Effective Date:** January 25, 2007

**Policy Statement:** UTHealth of Public Health admits applicants with a prior bachelor's degree (BS or BA) directly into its Doctor of Philosophy (PhD) degree program in Biostatistics and Epidemiology.

**Reason for Policy:** UTHealth School of Public Health offers the option of direct admission from a bachelor's degree to the PhD Program to ensure that the school stays competitive with other top schools of public health in the nation in attracting outstanding Bachelor of Science (BS) or Bachelor of Arts (BA) graduates and those with advanced degrees, such as a Doctor of Medicine (MD) or a Master of Science (MS) in an unrelated field.

**Definitions:** N/A

**Scope and Audience:** Applicants to the PhD program in Biostatistics and Epidemiology

**Responsibilities and Procedures:**

**Related Policies, Forms and Information:**

#### Admission Requirements

"Direct admission" applicants should hold a BS or BA degree in a public health or related discipline from an accredited university. The admission criteria for these students are the same as the criteria for applicants who hold a master's degree. All applicants are judged on a number of factors, including but not limited to, the undergraduate Grade Point Average (GPA) and academic record, especially in science and mathematics courses, the Test of English as a Foreign Language (TOEFL) score (for international students), academic letters of reference, the student's goal statement, and the work experience of the applicant, especially in public health organizations.

#### Curriculum

"Direct admission" students to the PhD program are expected to acquire the same breadth and depth of knowledge and skills as the student entering the program with a master's degree. The courses for the "direct admission" PhD student include all recommended courses for the MS program plus the recommended courses for the PhD program. Direct admit students should follow their degree requirements as specified on their [degree planner](#).

#### Duration of the Program

UTHealth School of Public Health has a limit of seven (7) years for completing a PhD degree. The "direct admission" PhD student is expected to complete the degree program within this time period.

## PhD Competencies

“Direct admission” students are held to the same high standard as the master’s-prepared students. Graduates of the PhD program in Public Health are expected to be independent investigators in both the development and application of the major and minor areas of study to problems of human health and disease. Specific competencies have been developed for each major area of study. Major areas of study at UTHealth School of Public Health reflect the multidisciplinary nature of Public Health.

## Graduation Requirements

“Direct admission” students are required to complete a minimum of 72 semester credit hours of coursework, which is equivalent to 24 semester credit hours for a master’s degree plus 48 semester credit hours for the PhD degree.

Graduation requirements for the PhD program are:

- Satisfactory completion of a prescribed course of study. For “direct admission” students, satisfactory completion of a minimum of 72 semester credit hours of which no more than nine (9) credit hours may be earned in dissertation research.
- Satisfactory performance on a preliminary examination deemed by the faculty of the Advisory Committee to test depth of knowledge in the major and two minor fields of concentration in the public health sciences, and a capacity to conceive and conduct independent research in the chosen field. Students will have completed at least 60 semester credit hours in preparation for the preliminary examination.
- Satisfactory completion of an original research dissertation, written in English, that makes a substantial contribution to knowledge in the public health sciences. All doctoral students must present their dissertation research in a public forum at the school prior to graduation. All completed dissertations will be made available to the public.

## Failure to Successfully Complete the Preliminary Examination

In the event that the “direct admission” student does not successfully complete the preliminary examination, the student’s advisory committee makes a recommendation to the members of the major area of study regarding the option of completing a thesis and receiving an MS degree. The final decision regarding the recommended course of action is arrived at by the Department Chair and the department faculty. Thus, the ability to complete an MS degree program in lieu of the PhD degree is not automatic.

**History:** Approved by Academic Council: January 8, 2007  
Endorsed by UTHealth SPH Executive Council: January 25, 2007  
Approved by Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board: March 8, 2007

**Responsible Office/Contact Information:** Office of Academic Affairs and Student Services  
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