

**Policy Number:** 401

**Subject/Title:** Continuous Enrollment for Students Enrolled in Thesis and Dissertation Research

**Effective Date:** Spring 2010

**Policy Statement:** Ideally, students at UTHealth School of Public Health enroll continuously during their entire degree program. Students, however, are required to enroll during their culminating experience and dissertation research. Specific semesters during which a student must be enrolled are:

- the semester in which the proposal is submitted
- all semesters (including the summer) after the proposal is approved
- the semester in which the qualifying or preliminary examination is taken (for doctoral students only)
- any semester in which the student is involved in a practicum/internship
- the semester in which the student completes the degree requirements

Students with approved protocols are expected to enroll in PH 9998 (Culminating Experience/Thesis) or PH 9999 (Dissertation) each semester until graduation. The number of credit hours enrolled in PH 9998 or PH 9999 should reflect the time and effort needed for faculty oversight and guidance of the project. Note that all students enrolled at any point in the degree program are subject to a three (3) semester credit hours per semester minimum although dual degree students may be granted an exception to the minimum semester credit hour load requirement based on the needs of their programs.

#### Consequences of Failing to Enroll During Required Semesters

##### ***Inactivation of Student Research Protocol***

If a student is not enrolled after his/her protocol has been approved, the protocol will be automatically inactivated and the work suspended. The student and the advisory committee will be notified by the Office of Academic Affairs and Student Services via an email that states: 1) the proposal will be marked inactive in the Student Research Services Student Proposal database; and 2) Student Research Services will notify the Committee for Protection of Human Subjects (CPHS) to deactivate the proposal if the student proposal includes a CPHS approval letter.

##### ***Reactivation of Student Research Protocol***

The student must be enrolled in PH 9998 (Culminating Experience/Thesis) or PH 9999 (Dissertation) to reflect the time spent with the committee to reactivate the proposal and oversee the research.

The student must revise the inactivated protocol as needed and resubmit the thesis or dissertation proposal along with a newly prepared and signed cover sheet to UTHealth SPH Student Research Services. This will verify the research plan and assure the direction of the research after the gap in enrollment.

A second CPHS review via will be necessary if: 1) the proposal was previously approved by an UTHealth compliance committee or 2) the resubmitted proposal has been substantively changed

to include human or animal subjects. Human subjects approval will be obtained through iRIS.

Notification will be sent to the student and his/her advisory committee once all Student Research Services and UTHealth approvals have been obtained. Only then can the research begin.

#### Leave of Absence During the Culminating Experience or Dissertation Research

If a student is unable to enroll for one or more semesters, he/she should request a leave of absence, which includes a justification for being away from the degree program. A leave of absence results in inactivation of the research protocol, and no student research can be conducted during this period.

**Reason for Policy:** To ensure continuous enrollment of students.

**Definitions:** N/A

**Scope and Audience:** All UTHealth SPH students.

#### **Responsibilities and Procedures:**

At the beginning of each semester's early registration period, an email goes out to all currently registered students, and those registered in the immediate prior semester, to encourage early registration for the coming term. A specific notation is included in bold type to remind students with approved proposals that they are required to register.

On the 21<sup>st</sup> day of the semester (the day following the final enrollment deadline), the Office of Academic Affairs and Student Services generates a report matching all students with an approved proposal to their current enrollment status. All students with an approved proposal who are not currently enrolled in PH 9998 or PH 9999 will be identified and notified regarding inactivation of their protocol and suspension of the research as well as the process for protocol reactivation. Student Research Services inactivates the proposals of non-enrolled students and contacts CPHS as needed.

#### **Related Policies, Forms and Information:**

[UTHealth SPH Policy 402. Enrollment Requirements, Degree Time Limits and Leaves of Absence](#) (click Policies tab)

**History:** Approved by Executive Council: November 19, 2009

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