

PhD/DrPH PRELIMINARY EXAMINATION GUIDELINES FOR DOCTORAL STUDENTS IN HEALTH PROMOTION AND BEHAVIORAL SCIENCES

The PhD/DrPH preliminary examination in Health Promotion and Behavioral Sciences (HP/BS) has been designed to meet the standards and needs of faculty and students of the Department of Health Promotion and Behavioral Sciences and to be in accordance with The University of Texas Health Science Center (UTHealth) School of Public Health (SPH) requirements for doctoral-level examinations. In addition, they must have completed key courses in behavioral sciences theory, research design and data analysis (See Eligibility). Doctoral students must successfully pass the preliminary exam to proceed in the doctoral program. It is the charge of the HP/BS Curriculum Committee to develop, administer and oversee the evaluation of this exam.

Purpose

This preliminary examination is a written take-home exam for students pursuing their PhD in Behavioral Sciences & Health Promotion or DrPH in Health Promotion & Health Education. It is an evaluation tool designed to indicate to the Department whether the student can understand, synthesize, and apply the fundamental concepts and skills that are required to proceed in the doctoral program. The purpose of the exam, therefore, is to evaluate the student's command of key doctoral-level competencies specific to the design, conduct and analysis of health promotion and behavioral science studies relevant to public health. According to UTHealth-SPH policy, students who do not successfully pass this exam after two attempts will not be eligible to continue in their doctoral studies in HP/BS at UTSPH.

Eligibility

Students must be registered for at least 3 credit hours at the time the preliminary examination is taken unless the exam is taken during the summer. In that case, the student must be registered in the term before/after the exam is offered.

To be eligible to take the preliminary exam, doctoral students must have completed and passed the following six to seven courses (approximately 19-22 hours) with a B or above. These courses are designed to be completed in one year of full-time study which includes fall, spring, and summer semesters. This may be longer for part-time students or for students who need to complete prerequisite courses before taking required courses. **Below are the required courses for students who entered the program in fall 2018 or later. For students who entered the program during a prior semester, please see the list of required courses at the end of this document.**

Required for all PhD students (entered fall 2018 or later):

- ✓ PHD 1420: Research Design for Behavioral Sciences
- ✓ PHD 1421: Quantitative Analysis for Behavioral Sciences
- ✓ PHD 1122: Health Promotion Theories for Individuals and Groups: Part I
- ✓ PHD 1227: Health Promotion Theories for Individuals and Groups: Part II
- ✓ PHD 1113: Advanced Methods for Planning and Implementing Health Promotion Programs (Intervention Mapping)
- ✓ PH 1433- Research Seminar in Health Promotion and Behavioral Sciences
- ✓ **PHM 2612: Epidemiology I

Required for all DrPH students (entered fall 2018 or later):

- ✓ PHD 1113: Advanced Methods for Planning and Implementing Health Promotion Programs (Intervention Mapping)
- ✓ PHD 1120: Program Evaluation
- ✓ PHD 1420: Research Design for Behavioral Sciences
- ✓ PHD 1421: Quantitative Analysis for Behavioral Sciences
- ✓ PHD 1122: Health Promotion Theories for Individuals and Groups: Part I
- ✓ PHD 1123: Community Health Promotion Theory and Practice
- ✓ PH 1433: Research Seminar in Health Promotion and Behavioral Sciences
- ✓ **PHM 2612: Epidemiology I

****A masters-level epidemiology course equivalent will meet this requirement.**

***Example Course Plan for Year 1**

Semester	Required
Fall semester	PHD 1122 – 3 credits PHD 1420 – 3 credits PH 1433 – 1 credit PhD ONLY- PHM 2612- 3 credits DrPH-ONLY PHD 1120 – 3 credits
Spring semester	PHD 1421 – 3 credits PHD 1113- 3 credits PhD ONLY- PHD 1227 - 3 credits
Summer	DrPH ONLY- PHD 1123- 3 credits PHM 2612 (if needed) – 3 credits

***If you are part-time or have additional courses you need to take as part of your acceptance letter, please consult with the curriculum coordinator or your advisor.**

Content and Format

The preliminary examination will test the proficiencies obtained in the required courses specified in “Eligibility”. In general terms, the exam questions are meant to test the ability to apply fundamental concepts and methods in behavioral sciences theory, research design and data analysis.

The preliminary examination will consist of three sections on the following topics: behavioral science theory, research design, and data analysis. Each question will contain multiple parts which require narrative responses. Students will be asked to write the exam in reference to one of four possible health topics. Three weeks prior to the exam, the exam coordinator will email students who are intending to take the exam to request a list of four possible health topics. The health topic can be health behavior or health outcome and should be supported by theoretical and empirical literature. Students can choose health topics that are similar to one another (e.g., healthy eating, physical activity) or the same health topic for different target/priority populations (e.g., condom use in adolescents, condom use in African-American women). The exam coordinator will randomly choose one of the four health topics for the students to complete the exam; the student will be notified of the chosen health topic on the day of the exam.

Guidance will be provided regarding the expected length of response for the entire exam. A total of seven days will be given to complete the exam. The exam is open-book and open-note. Students must adhere to the UTHealth-SPH Honor Code (see page 5). Soliciting help from or providing help to other students during the preliminary exam is not allowed.

Administration

The preliminary exam will be offered during **the 1st week in January and 3rd week in July every year**. In January, the exam will begin the first working day after January 1. In July, the exam will begin on Monday.

In preparation for the preliminary exam, doctoral students must submit the **preliminary exam-intent form signed by their academic advisor** to the HP/BS Curriculum Committee Coordinator at least one month prior to the exam dates as well as a list of their grades (can be obtained from myUTH) and courses taken. If grades are not available for the courses (i.e., if the student is currently taking the course), the student should provide a signed written statement or email from the instructor indicating that the student is expected to obtain a B or higher in the course and then should submit those grades to the curriculum coordinator as soon as they are available.

Students are encouraged to meet with their academic advisor to discuss eligibility. The **preliminary exam-intent form** is available from the curriculum coordinator. It will also be emailed to the HP/BS doctoral students. The doctoral student will be notified by the HP/BS Curriculum Coordinator that the preliminary exam-intent form has been received and approved. It is the responsibility of the HP/BS Curriculum Coordinator to approve the preliminary exam intent form for the student. After the HP/BS Curriculum Coordinator approves the form, they will submit it to the Assistant Dean of Academic Affairs and Student Services. The Assistant Dean will provide the final approval via email notification in a signed letter to the student. If a student is currently enrolled in a designated pre-requisite course and grades are not yet available, conditional approval to take the preliminary exam will be given.

The exam questions will be developed by the HP/BS Curriculum Committee with input from the entire HP/BS faculty. The exam will be made available on a UTSPH Canvas site. Students will submit their completed exam on Canvas through Turnitin. Students should review their exams carefully prior to submission. Students must submit the exam at or prior to the end of the exam period at 11:59 pm Central Time. Late submissions will not be considered. Submission of the exam is final.

Evaluation

The exam will be graded double-blinded to both students and faculty to ensure objectivity in grading. The evaluation of the preliminary examination will be conducted by a rotating committee comprised of HP/BS Faculty. The number of faculty who serve on the committee will be dependent on how many students are taking the exam.

Each of the three sections of the exam (behavioral sciences theory, research design, and data analysis) are worth 100 points, and will be graded **independently** by two faculty members. Different pairs of graders grade each section (though they receive the entire exam). Scores from both graders will be compared for consistency before finalizing into a single score for that section.

Three exam outcomes are possible: Pass, Conditional Pass and Fail. These are described below.

Pass: Student receives a score of 80% or greater on each section.

Conditional Pass: Student receives a score of 80% or greater on two sections of the exam but receives a score below 80% on one section of the exam. The student will need to re-take the exam section that was not passed during the semester immediately following having taken the exam, provided there is sufficient remediation time (i.e., they have one full semester in which to take classes). If the student does not pass the section that is retaken, the student will receive a score of Fail and will need to retake the entire exam within one year.

Students cannot receive more than one Conditional Pass. **Note:** The exam coordinator will randomly choose the student's health topic from the three remaining health topics when the student retakes one section.

Fail: A student receives a score below 80% on two or more sections of the exam. The student should work with the academic advisor to complete a remediation plan. The student will need to re-take the entire exam within one calendar year. Any student who fails the preliminary examination twice will not be allowed to continue in the doctoral program. **Note:** The student will need to submit four health topics when retaking the **entire** exam. Students are allowed to submit previously submitted health topics that were not chosen by the exam coordinator from previous exam attempts.

For a conditional pass or fail, the student will be expected to complete a remediation plan, signed by the advisor, which will outline steps (e.g., independent study, course enrollment) that will be taken prior to retaking the preliminary exam. The student should work with their advisor and other pertinent faculty to ensure that they student has completed their remediation plan and are ready to retake the exam.

Within four weeks of the examination, the student will be notified by email of the outcome of the examination by the HP/BS Curriculum Coordinator. The email will also be sent to the student's Academic Advisor, Department Chair, and Regional Dean (if located at Regional Campus). The email will include the grading sheets and comments provided by the graders. The Assistant Dean for Academic Affairs and Student Affairs will also be notified of the student's outcome.

Course requirements for students who entered fall 2012-2015:

PHD 1113 – Advanced Methods for Planning and Implementing Health Promotion Programs (Intervention Mapping)

PHD 1122 – Health Promotion Theory and Methods: A Teaching and Learning Experience for Doctoral Students

PHD 1420 – Research Design and Analysis in Behavioral Sciences I

PHD 1421 – Research Design and Analysis in Behavioral Sciences II

PHD 1434 – Research Seminar in Health Promotion and Behavioral Sciences for Doctoral Students

Required (PhD only):

PHD 1227 – Advanced and Emerging Theories for Health Promotion

Required (DrPH only):

PHD 1123 - Health Promotion Theory and Methods II Doctoral Level

***Choose 1 of:**

PH 2610 – Fundamentals of Epidemiology

PH 2612 – Epidemiology I

*An epidemiology course taken during a master's program will meet the eligibility requirements.

Course requirements for students who entered fall 2016-2017:

PHD 1122 – Health Promotion Theory and Methods: A Teaching and Learning Experience for Doctoral Students
 PHD 1420 – Research Design and Analysis in Behavioral Sciences I
 PHD 1421 – Research Design and Analysis in Behavioral Sciences II
 PHD 1434 – Research Seminar in Health Promotion and Behavioral Sciences for Doctoral Students
 PHM 2610 – Fundamentals of Epidemiology OR PH 2612 – Epidemiology I (Note: An epidemiology course taken during a master’s program will meet the eligibility requirements.)

Additional Requirements for PhD Students: PHD 1227 – Advanced and Emerging Theories for Health Promotion (Also, recommended for DrPH students)

Additional Requirements for DrPH Students: PHD 1123 - Health Promotion Theory and Methods II Doctoral Level

NOTE: It is highly recommended that all students take PH 1120 (Introduction to Program Evaluation) and/or PH 1113 (Advanced Methods for Planning and Implementing Health Promotion Programs-Intervention Mapping) or equivalent courses (could be from a master’s program) prior to taking the preliminary exam if they have not previously had these courses.

UTSPH Honor Code

Objective: To cultivate a culture of honesty, integrity and respect among and between students & faculty within the UTSPH.

The values for the UTSPH are based upon honesty, integrity, and mutual respect between all students, faculty, and staff. These values are applied to all endeavors that are related to activities that are carried out as members & representatives of the UTSPH. This paper, project, or exam is a reflection of my individual work, and to this end, I affirm that on my honor, I have not received nor given any aid on this submitted work. If you are unsure/unclear of how this pertains to your current assignment, please consult your professor regarding the situation-specific information before signing

Guidance regarding academic misconduct within the Unacceptable Conduct section of the Handbook of Operating Procedures (HOOP):

HOOP Policy 186 - Appendix A - Unacceptable Conduct

“Unacceptable conduct that would subject a student to disciplinary action includes, but is not limited to the following: engaging in scholastic dishonesty such as cheating, plagiarism, collusion, submitting another person’s work or materials for credit, taking an exam for another person, acting in a manner that would give unfair advantage to him or herself or another student, or attempting to commit such acts;”