

**Policy Number:** 109

**Subject/Title:** Student Research Thesis/Dissertation Proposal Approval

**Effective Date:** Fall 2016

**Policy Statement:** Ideally, students at UTHealth School of Public Health will submit their thesis/dissertation proposal for review and approval to the Office of Academic Affairs and Student Services early in their academic program, and after they have met related degree program requirements.

For **master's** students, this includes relevant coursework approved by the student's committee.

For **doctoral** students, this includes required coursework, passing the preliminary exam and passing the oral defense of the proposal. Doctoral students can begin their research while working under a faculty member, but the proposal approval process should come after the preliminary exam has been passed.

Students are encouraged to be involved in research as long as the appropriate IRB approvals have been obtained, and the student works under the supervision of a faculty member. It is school policy that all UTHealth SPH students completing a thesis or dissertation, must submit a *PROPOSAL* for review and approval no later than the last day of class of the term prior to which they expect to graduate.

Students must also adhere to University IRB and Research policies and guidelines, as well as POLICY 401 CONTINUOUS ENROLLMENT once their thesis/dissertation proposal is approved. Dual degree students may be enrolled in either program to work on their research.

**Reason for Policy:** Students should not submit proposals in the term in which they expect to graduate to allow time for administrative and faculty review. Students must allow time for edits and changes, as well as presentation and defense to be completed in order to meet all graduation and registrar deadlines, without the need for extensions which may have a broader impact on university and school-wide activity and procedures.

**Definitions:** N/A

**Scope and Audience:** All UTHealth SPH students completing a thesis and/or dissertation.

**Responsibilities and Procedures:**

It is the responsibility of the faculty and staff advisors in the departments, and student thesis/dissertation committee faculty members to inform students of their responsibility to obtain appropriate and timely approvals for thesis and dissertation work.

It is also the responsibility of the Office of Academic Affairs and Student Services staff (student research and graduation staff) to inform students of the deadlines and procedures for thesis/dissertation proposals and finished products via website updates and links, thesis and research guides; and all individual correspondence related to the thesis and dissertation.

**Related Policies, Forms and Information:**

[UTHealth SPH Policy 401, Continuous Enrollment](#) (under the “Policies” tab)

[MPH Culminating Experience Guide](#)

[MS Thesis Guide](#)

[PhD/DrPH Dissertation Guide](#)

**History:** Approved by Academic Council, May 16, 2016  
Approved by Executive Council: May 26, 2016; Revisions approved September 22, 2016

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