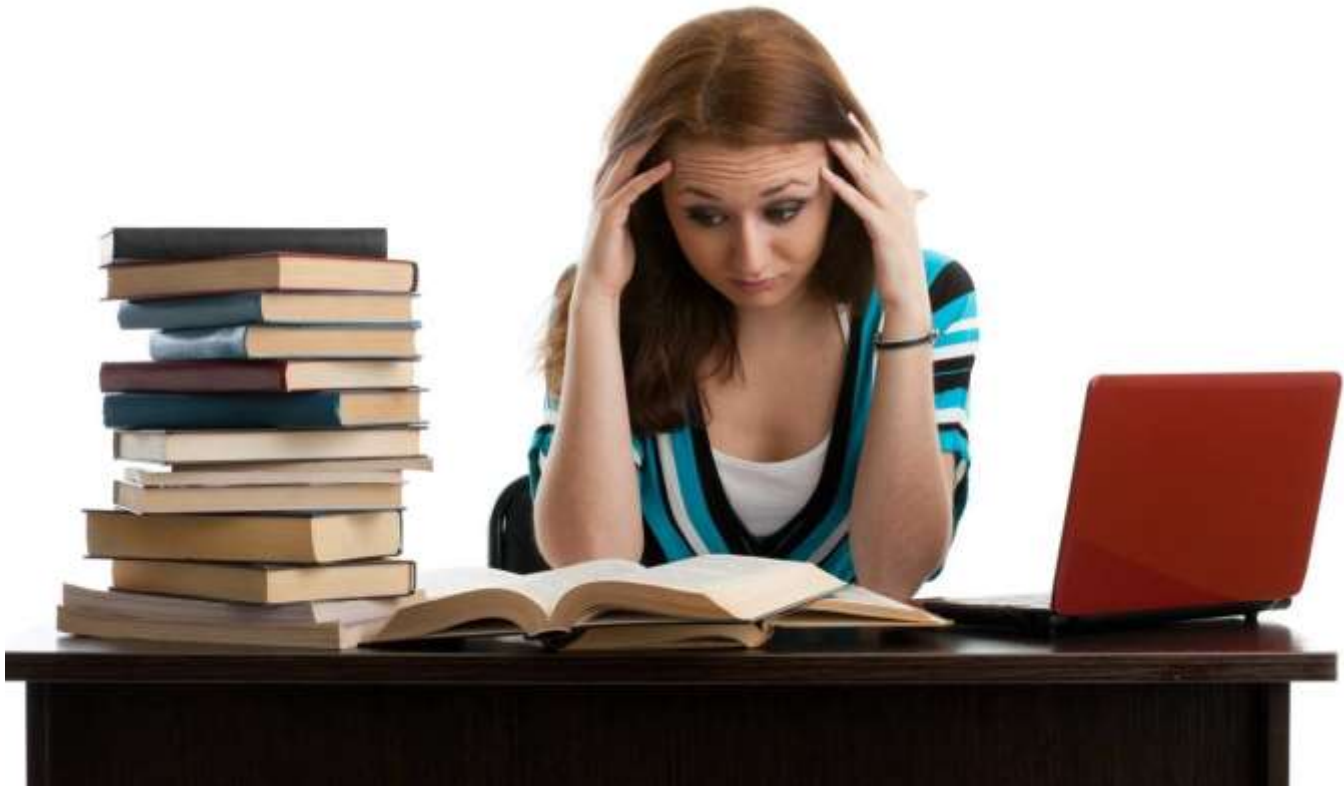


# **Student Guide to the DrPH/PhD Dissertation**

University of Texas School of Public Health

2013-2014



This guide is intended for doctoral students entering in Fall 2013. Although much of the content is also applicable to students who entered prior to this time, doctoral students who entered prior to Fall 2013 should cross reference the information in this guide with the requirements specified for their degree at the time they entered the program.

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## I. WHAT ARE THE DISSERTATION REQUIREMENTS?

Students in the Doctor of Philosophy and the Doctor of Public Health programs are required to complete a written research dissertation that makes a substantial contribution to knowledge in the public health sciences. This guide provides an overview of the steps required to complete the dissertation.

## II. WHAT IS THE ROLE OF THE DISSERTATION COMMITTEE?

The dissertation committee includes the student and his/her advisors.

Upon successful completion of the preliminary exam, doctoral students form a dissertation committee composed of a dissertation advisor (who may or may not be the academic advisor) and two other members representing the student's breadth and minor areas of interest. Students who have elected to pursue a concentration must also include a representative from that concentration on their committee. The members representing the breadth and minor areas must be from different divisions. Additional committee members, who bring specific expertise to the committee, are optional.

Additional details about the dissertation committee composition can be found at:

<https://sph.uth.tmc.edu/academics/degree-programs/>.

Students should also check their Divisional website for information specific to their degree program.

Forms for adding or changing committee membership can be found at:

<https://sph.uth.tmc.edu/current-students/student-forms/>

### ***What is the student's role on the committee?***

As a member of the committee, the student should coordinate committee meetings. Although students are required to meet with their committees at the end of the Fall and Spring semesters, these meetings are generally insufficient for discussing the details of the dissertation. Consequently, additional meetings, specifically for review and discussion of the dissertation, are generally required. Such meetings can save the student and other committee members time, and minimize the potential for confusion that can occur when the student must try to integrate multiple (and sometimes conflicting) opinions without the benefit of everyone talking together. The number and duration of such meetings will depend on the specific project and committee. In general, it may be helpful to have meetings:

- Prior to writing the proposal
- After all committee members have read a final, or near-final, version of the proposal
- After all committee members have read a final, or near-final, version of the dissertation

Committee meetings are typically scheduled several weeks in advance to accommodate the committee members other professional obligations.

The student should also coordinate meetings with individual committee members as needed. In general, the student should meet with a key committee member (e.g. dissertation supervisor) as often as every week. The frequency of meetings with other committee members will depend on their roles on the project.

***What are the roles of the other committee members?***

The committee members serve many different roles including: scientific advisor, editor, mentor and advocate. Individual members may serve in one or more of these roles. The committee or individual members of the committee work with the student to develop the proposal, obtain necessary institutional approvals (e.g. IRB, animal welfare), and assist with the execution of the proposed project and completion of the final dissertation document. In general, committee members should provide feedback on all written documents and requests within two weeks of submission by the student.

The faculty and other professional members of the committee are responsible for the approval of the scientific integrity of both the dissertation proposal and the final dissertation.

### **III. WHAT STEPS ARE INVOLVED?**

The dissertation requires several steps:

- Identification of a project
- Preparation of a proposal
- Review of proposal by the Dissertation Committee
- Oral defense of dissertation research proposal\*
- Revise proposal if necessary and obtain Dissertation Committee approval on proposal
- Review and approval of proposal by IRB(s), etc. as needed; review and approval of proposal by Associated Dean for Research (ADR)
- Completion of the proposed work
- Preparation of the final dissertation document
- Public defense of dissertation

\*An oral defense of the proposal is required for students entering in Fall 2011 or after AND for students entering before Fall 2011 who elect to take the Division preliminary examination rather than the individual qualifying exam.

Each of these steps is described below. However, even before you have selected your project, it is important to ensure that you have, or have a plan to acquire, the basic skills required to complete the dissertation, including:

**Basic writing skills:** The UTSPH does not provide coursework in basic writing skills. However, such courses are available through several local institutions. Information on writing resources that may be available to UTSPH students can be found at:

- <http://www.sph.uth.tmc.edu/detail.aspx?id=12933&libID=12934>

**Scientific writing skills:** Students who have limited experience writing scientific materials, or who would like to improve their scientific writing skills should consider taking PH5098-500 Special Topics, with Dr. Ellen Breckenridge, or one of the other scientific/proposal writing classes offered at UTSPH.

**Use of electronic and library resources:** The UTSPH library provides formal training on the use of on-line searching techniques and reference management software. In addition, members of the library staff are available to provide one-on-one training and assistance.

- <http://www.sph.uth.tmc.edu/library/>

The Texas Medical Center library also offers classes on a variety of topics:

- <http://resource.library.tmc.edu/cf/cls/index.cfm> (classes)
- <http://www.library.tmc.edu/usingthelibrary/etutorials/> (online tutorials)

### III-A. Identification of a Project

It is never too early to start thinking about topics for your dissertation. There are many potential sources of ideas, including: faculty, staff and students; co-workers and other colleagues; journals; classes; seminars; and professional meetings. 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 proposal.

As you begin to think about your dissertation topic, it may help to keep a notebook or journal that includes project ideas, notes from discussions and seminars, lists of additional people to talk with, and articles on topics of interest. Once you have identified a potential project, it may be helpful to prepare a short overview, summarizing the relevant background information as well as the aims and significance of the proposed project, which can be shared and discussed with your committee members.

The School's website offers several features that can help you to find out about the research interests of the faculty.

The online faculty directory includes brief descriptions of each faculty member's research interests. The directory can be filtered by Division, Campus or Center and can also be searched for specific keywords:

<https://sph.uth.tmc.edu/faculty/>

The Office of Research webpage includes lists of recent publications by the faculty as well as recently funded grants:

<https://sph.uth.tmc.edu/research/office-of-research/>

The project that you select should be of interest to you and relevant to your future career goals. However, it should also be feasible to carry-out given available resources and within a reasonable time period. It is very important that you pick a project that fits with your skills (e.g. statistical, qualitative and analytic). Consequently, 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. Do not be discouraged if your first project idea is determined to be inappropriate, for either scientific or practical reasons. It is not unusual to identify two or three potential projects before an appropriate project is identified. Working through the scientific and practical issues of each potential project provides valuable experience and perspective and is part of the learning process.

***When should the dissertation project be started?*** Although it is never too early to start thinking about ideas for your dissertation project, planning the project and writing the proposal will require the synthesis of knowledge and experiences gained in the classroom. Consequently, the bulk of the dissertation project is undertaken after sufficient public health knowledge and skills have been acquired and the student has passed the preliminary exam.

**TIMELINE:** The time required to identify a dissertation project is extremely variable. However, it can take several months to identify a suitable project.

### **III-B. Preparation of the Proposal**

Once you and your committee have agreed on an appropriate project, the next step is to complete a written project proposal.

#### ***What is the purpose of the proposal?***

The proposal is a requirement for all doctoral students and serves several purposes. First, the proposal prepares you for the work that will be required to complete your dissertation project. As you write your proposal, you are gaining important background knowledge that will help to guide your project, as well as working through the logistics required to complete each step of the project. The proposal also serves as a contract between you and your committee. It is a statement of the goals that you have agreed need to be met to complete the dissertation and move forward towards graduation. Your proposal may also be required to obtain the institutional approvals (e.g. IRB) needed before the project may be initiated.

#### ***Is there a specific format for the proposal?***

The UTSPH does not require a specific format (margins, font, etc.) for the thesis proposal. In general, double-spaced text with 12-point font and 1 inch margins is appropriate for the proposal. Page numbers are also recommended. Check with your committee to determine their preferences on specific structure or style (e.g. APA style) for the references and/or bibliography.

Style Templates are available for the *final* WCE. These templates may also be used for the proposal if desired. The templates are provided for formatting style and “construction,” not content. Templates can be found at: <https://sph.uth.edu/research/student-research/>

#### ***What should the proposal include?***

The length and specific content of your proposal will be determined by your committee. In general, dissertation proposals are not more than 25 double-spaced pages (1 inch margins, 12 point font) and include the following sections:

##### **Background/Introduction and Public Health 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. At a minimum, 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 of your specific project.

##### **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 depend 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 should include the following considerations, as appropriate to your proposed work:

- Study design
- Study setting, including locations and dates
- Study subjects
- Sample size calculations and/or study power
- Data collection
- Data analysis, including statistical, laboratory and other methods that you will use to address your study aims, hypotheses or objectives
- Human subjects, animal subjects, and/or safety considerations

The methods section tells the reader exactly “how” you are going to achieve your aims and/or answer your research questions. It is important to be as specific as possible in this section. For example, stating that you will use logistic regression to analyze your data is not sufficient. Rather, you need to state what independent and dependent variables will be used as well as what potential confounders and effect modifiers will be considered. Additional details, such as how variables will be coded, can also be helpful. Further, you should indicate how the analyses will be interpreted (e.g. p-values, odds ratios and 95% confidence intervals).

When organizing the methods section, it is often helpful to re-state each aim and follow it with the details of the specific methods that will be used to achieve that aim. It is also that you use past and present tense appropriately in this section. For example, if you will analyze previously collected data, sections on study design, setting and subject recruitment should be written in the past tense (e.g. someone collected the data in the past), whereas sections on data analysis should be written in the future tense (e.g. you will analyze the data in the future, after your proposal is approved). It is extremely important that you clearly delineate the work that you will do from the work that has already been done.

## **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. It is, however, recommended that you use reference management software, such as RefWorks.

RefWorks is available free of charge to UTSPH students, and information and training on RefWorks is available through the UTSPH library:

<https://sph.uth.tmc.edu/current-students/library/guides-to-using-library-resources/#refworks>



## Other Sections

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, including work that has been submitted for publication or previously published, 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, in past tense.
- **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.

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, one member of your committee 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.

In general, your proposal will require several drafts and edits before it is finalized. It is reasonable to assume that, on average, it will take two weeks for committee members to provide feedback on each of your drafts and that two to four drafts will be required before the proposal is finalized.

### III-C. Oral defense of dissertation research proposal

Specific requirements for the oral defense of the dissertation research proposal are set by the Office of Academic Affairs and each doctoral program. Upon completion of the dissertation proposal, when the dissertation committee is ready to formally approve the proposal, students will make an open oral presentation of the research proposal followed by questions from a proposal defense examination committee. The proposal defense examination committee will consist of the student's dissertation committee plus at least one additional reviewer (but no more than two additional reviewers), which are chosen by the division director in consultation with the student's advisor and/or dissertation supervisor. Additional reviewers may be faculty members from within or outside of UTSPH. These additional reviewers will provide more unbiased assessment of the proposal.

During the proposal defense examination, questions may be directed at the proposed research as well as contextual questions relating to the field of public health. The defense will be assessed pass/fail. Students will have two opportunities to pass. Passing will be by consensus. If consensus is not reached, passing may be by majority if all non-committee members approve passing. After the defense is complete, the dissertation defense committee will then need to sign the student's Proposal Defense form for forwarding to the Office of Student Affairs. The Proposal Defense form can be downloaded from:

- <https://sph.uth.edu/current-students/student-forms/>

***Setting up the proposal defense:*** The student's advisory committee in communication with the student's division faculty will decide on the most appropriate time and venue for this activity. Students can schedule a room for the proposal defense by completing and submitting a Room reservation form to Betty Claybon, RAS W130 (Regional Campus students should contact their campus Staff Advisor to schedule a room). Presentations should be announced to the public, for example: distribute multiple flyers, or announce the defense in the SPH weekly newsletter by forwarding information to Shon Bower at: [sphannounce@uth.tmc.edu](mailto:sphannounce@uth.tmc.edu)

***Defense presentation Format:*** Although there no specific format for this presentation, it is suggested that you use a standard software package (e.g. PowerPoint) to develop your talk. You should provide drafts of your slides to your dissertation committee, and practice your talk at least once with your committee members. Additional practice sessions with other students or colleagues can also be helpful. 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.

### ***III-D. Approval of the dissertation proposal***

#### ***What approvals are needed?***

Once you have passed your proposal defense, your committee members must approve and sign off on your written proposal. In addition, you must obtain approval for your proposal from the UTSPH Associate Dean for Research (ADR). Some proposals may also need to be submitted to, and approved by:

- UTHSC Committee for the Protection of Human Subjects (UT IRB)
- Another institution's IRB (e.g. for data collection outside of UTHSC)
- UTHSC Animal Welfare Committee
- UTHSC Biosafety/Chemical Safety Committees

To determine whether your project requires such approvals, as well as for additional information on the approval process, please refer to the UTSPH Research Compliance document included in the Appendix to this Guide and available on the School's website:

<https://sph.uth.tmc.edu/research/office-of-research/student-research/>

#### ***How is the proposal submitted to the ADR/Office of Research?***

Students must submit a printed proposal along with signed forms/documents to the Office of Research for approval, as well as an electronic copy of the proposal itself (without the forms). Detailed submission instructions and proposal forms can be found online at the Student Research webpage by clicking on the "Forms and Instructions" tab at:

<https://sph.uth.tmc.edu/research/office-of-research/>

These materials should be submitted after the committee has approved the proposal. If your project requires CPHS or other approvals, and such approvals are pending, you may submit all other documents to the ADR for preliminary review. However, final approval by the ADR requires appropriate documentation from all relevant committees.

All dissertation proposals require the following forms/documentation:

- Student Proposal Cover Sheet
- UTSPH Student Proposal Institutional Approval Document
- Authorship, Publication Plan, and Data Ownership form
- Certification of student's completion of a course on the protection of human subjects through the Collaborative Institutional Training Initiative (CITI):

<https://www.citiprogram.org/>

Additional forms/documentation may be required, such as:

- Data Handling Procedures (proposals that involve use of existing data)
- Letter of permission for use of data (proposals that involve use of existing data which is not publically available)
- Letter documenting that the student is included on, and project is covered under an existing Committee for the Protection of Human Subjects (CPHS) protocol – from the Principal Investigator of the approved protocol (as appropriate)
- UTHSC CPHS documentation that study is exempt or approved (projects using data from humans that is not publically available)
- UTHSC Animal Welfare Committee documentation (project using animals)
- UTHSC Institutional Biosafety/Chemical Safety Committees (as appropriate)
- Certificate of completion from appropriate institutional safety courses (e.g. animals; biohazardous substances, chemical, radioactive materials; microbiological, biological, infectious agents or recombinant DNA)

Approval by the ADR requires that all appropriate forms/documents have been submitted and are complete and accurate.

### ***What are the enrollment requirements?***

You must be enrolled for at least three credit hours during the semester in which the proposal is submitted and in every semester after you submit your proposal until you graduate.

**TIMELINE:** Completion of the dissertation proposal will generally take at least one month and may require several months, depending on the number of revisions required by your advisory committee. Projects that require CPHS or other institutional approvals will generally take longer than those that do not require such approvals.

The dissertation proposal must receive written approval by the ADR and all relevant institutional committees NO LATER THAN the Proposal Approval deadline for the semester in which you intend to graduate. Students should refer to the School's website for information about other deadlines related to graduation:

<https://sph.uth.tmc.edu/current-students/planning-to-graduate/>

### III-E. Completion of the proposed project

The requirements for this step vary considerably from project to project. While the dissertation proposal provides an outline of the work that needs to be accomplished, the student and committee members must work together to determine the details of how and when that work will be accomplished.

The successful and timely completion of any project requires communication, organization and time management. Hence, 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
  - often, you will work more closely with one member than the others
- meeting schedules
  - how often will you meet with the entire committee? individual members?
  - optimally, you will meet at least every other week with a least one member of the committee
- 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 for review by the ADR as well as protocol amendments to other relevant committees (e.g. CPHS).

**TIMELINE:** In general, it will take 1-3 years to complete a doctoral dissertation after all appropriate approvals have been received.

### III-F. Preparation of the Final Dissertation

The dissertation proposal will provide the starting point for your final dissertation document. 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.

#### ***Is there a specific format for the final dissertation?***

The final dissertation document can have one of two general formats:

- Dissertation without journal article
- Dissertation with journal article(s)

Templates for these two formats are available at:

<https://sph.uth.edu/research/student-research/>

These templates are designed to assure that standards of style and document construction are met. They are not intended to define the specific content of the dissertation. Use of these electronic templates is optional, but the Templates and Style Template Checklist must be consulted for the appropriate construction and content of the final document.

#### ***What should the final dissertation document include?***

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

##### **Abstract**

The abstract is a concise summary (~500 words) of the background, methods, primary results and conclusions of your dissertation.

##### **Background/Introduction and Public Health Significance** (previously described)

##### **Specific Aims/Hypotheses/Objectives** (previously described)

##### **Methods** (previously described)

##### **Results**

This section should describe 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**

In this section, the results of your project should be discussed relative to what is already known about the topic. In addition, the conclusions and/or recommendations that can be made based on the results of the project should be stated. Finally, the strengths and limitations of the project should be described.

**References/Bibliography** (previously described)

### ***What institutional approvals are required for the final dissertation?***

In addition to approval by all committee members, the format of the final dissertation must be reviewed by the Office of Research to ensure that it conforms to all structural requirements (margins, page numbering, font, etc.). One or two revisions are often required before the dissertation format is approved. In general, format reviews are returned to the student within one week.

**TIMELINE:** The final dissertation must be submitted to the Research Office by the deadlines indicated on the SPH calendar in the semester you intend to graduate. Students should refer to the School's website for information about these deadlines and other deadlines related to graduation:

<https://sph.uth.tmc.edu/current-students/planning-to-graduate/>

As with all of the steps in the dissertation, the time required to complete the final written document can be quite variable.

## **II-G. Dissertation Defense**

Students will make a formal public (with advertisement to the UTSPH community at least two weeks prior to the defense date) presentation and defense of the completed dissertation research. Questions will be directed at the research topic. The dissertation defense committee will be composed of the student's dissertation committee and one or two external reviewers selected by the dissertation advisor. The defense will be assessed pass/fail. Students will have two opportunities to pass. Passing will be by consensus. If consensus is not reached, passing may be by majority if all external reviewers approve passing.

Although there is not a specific format for this presentation, it is suggested that you use a standard software package (e.g. PowerPoint) to develop your talk. You should provide drafts of your slides to your dissertation committee, and practice your talk at least once with your committee members. Additional practice sessions with other students or colleagues can also be helpful. You should be able to present your work without, or with minimal reference, to written notes and be prepared to answer questions from the audience. It is also important that you are able to go through your entire presentation in the allotted time.

#### IV. What is the General Timeline for Completion of the Dissertation?

There is no set time for the completion of the dissertation. The amount of time required to complete the dissertation is determined by the specific project and the time that the student devotes to the project. In general, this process will require at least one and up to 4 years.

Activity	Timeline
<b>Selection of a project</b> Discussion of ideas with committee members Approval of concept by all committee members	Up to a year
<b>Preparation/oral defense/committee approval of the proposal</b> Draft proposal Review of proposal by committee members Revision of proposal (several revisions may be necessary) Oral defense Committee approval	3-6 months
<b>Other institutional approvals of proposal (if required)</b>	Generally $\leq 6$ wks*
<b>ADR approval of proposal</b>	2 weeks
<b>Conduct of the project</b> Data collection Data management Analysis	1-3 years
<b>Preparation/committee approval of the final dissertation document</b> Update background, methods, bibliography as needed Write results and discussion Prepare figures and tables Submit to committee members Review by committee members Revisions as necessary (several may be required) Committee approval	3-6 months
<b>Formatting review of final dissertation document</b>	$\leq 1$ month

\*Proposals requiring full IRB review may take longer.



## APPENDIX

### **RESEARCH COMPLIANCE**

UNIVERSITY OF TEXAS SCHOOL OF PUBLIC HEALTH

Fall 2013

All research conducted by the faculty, students and staff of the University of Texas School of Public Health (UTSPH), including research projects and analyses of research data that are conducted as part of UTSPH courses, must be reviewed and approved or exempted by the appropriate Institutional committees before the research is initiated. At the University of Texas Health Science Center (UTHSC), these committees, which fall under the Office of Research, monitor research compliance related to: Human Subjects Protection, Care and Use of Animals and Environmental Health and Safety.

UTHSC Office of Research: <http://www.uthouston.edu/research/>

UTHSC Compliance Programs: <http://www.uthouston.edu/compliance/>

It is the responsibility of the investigator (or course instructor) to ensure that a research project has received all necessary approvals prior to initiating a study, and to require all project staff and/or students to receive appropriate training before initiating any research related activities. It is also the investigator's responsibility to obtain approval for any additions or changes to the study, before they are implemented, as well as to maintain all necessary approvals through completion of the study.

This document provides UTSPH investigators with general information regarding the Institutional training that is available, and the oversight that is required for different types of research. In addition, general questions regarding training and oversight may be directed to Ms. Rebecca Novak at the UTSPH Office of Research. However, investigators should visit the appropriate website for the most up-to-date and complete information, and/or contact the appropriate programmatic official in the UTHSC Office of Research, to ensure that they have obtained all necessary training and approvals before initiating any research project.

Rebecca Novak: x9055 or [Rebecca.Novak@uth.tmc.edu](mailto:Rebecca.Novak@uth.tmc.edu)

**Student Research:** The information included in this document relates to students as well as faculty and staff. Additional information related specifically to student research is provided at the end of the document.

## Human Subjects Protection *Committee for the Protection of Human Subjects (CPHS)*

The CPHS is the **Institutional Review Board (IRB)** for the UTHSC. CPHS reviews proposed research as it applies to the individuals being asked to participate as research subjects in order to determine if adequate measures are in place to protect autonomy, safety, emotional health, and financial considerations.

CPHS: <http://www.uthouston.edu/cphs/>

**Most of the research conducted by UTSPH investigators will require review by CPHS. Examples of research that does not require CPHS review include:**

***Research Using Animals:*** Research that is exclusively conducted using animals or animal-derived materials does not require CPHS review. However, such research does require review by the Animal Welfare Committee (see below).

***Research Using Publicly Available Data:*** Research involving publicly available data (e.g. census data, labor statistics) does not require CPHS review. Investigators should contact the CPHS if they are not sure whether their data qualifies as “publicly available”.

***Research Using Simulated Data:*** Research based solely on data obtained through computer simulations does not require CPHS review.

***Research Using Published Literature or other Publicly Available Documents:*** Research that is based entirely on published literature (e.g. systematic literature reviews) or other documents that are in the public domain (e.g. policy analyses) does not require CPHS review.

***Exempt Status:*** Many research projects are exempt from CPHS review. However, the investigator **cannot** make the **decision regarding exempt status**. **Studies that may be exempt must be submitted for review and determination of exempt status by CPHS.**

**Information on exempt research:** <http://www.uthouston.edu/cphs/policies/index.htm>

***Training:*** All individuals participating in research that involves human subjects must receive appropriate training before initiating any research activities, and must receive updated training as necessary.

Courses that satisfy the UTHSC requirement for education on the protection of human subjects are offered online by the Collaborative Institutional Training Initiative (CITI).

Information about CITI: <http://www.uthouston.edu/cphs/for-researchers/training.htm>

Link to CITI: <https://www.citiprogram.org/default.asp?language=english>

In addition to the above requirement, all principal investigators of sponsored projects must complete an online Investigator Briefing in the Responsible Conduct of Research. Further details

on this requirement can be found at: <http://www.uthouston.edu/evpara/investigator-briefing.htm>

**Applications:** The UTHSC CPHS uses an online application. All applications, including those for studies that may be exempt from CPHS review, are submitted through the Integrated Research Information System or iRIS.

Register for iRIS training: <http://www.uthouston.edu/cphs/for-researchers/reg-iris-training.htm>

Basic iRIS instructions: <http://www.uthouston.edu/cphs/for-researchers/basic-iris.htm>

Log in to iRIS: <http://iris.uth.tmc.edu>

## Care and Use of Animals

### ***Center for Laboratory Animal Medicine and Care (CLAMC)***

The CLAMC provides training related to the oversight, care and use of experimental animals, to ensure that the individuals involved in these activities are qualified to accomplish these tasks in a humane and scientifically acceptable manner.

CLAMC: <http://www.uthouston.edu/animal-research/clamc.htm>

### ***Animal Welfare Committee (AWC)***

All research using animal subjects or animal derived materials must be submitted to the AWC, the Institutional Animal Care and Use Committee, for the UTHSC. Faculty with approved animal use protocols must assure the AWC that personnel will be or are adequately trained. Training is provided through CLAMC.

AWC: <http://www.uthouston.edu/animal-research/index.htm>

## **Environmental Health and Safety**

### ***Safety, Health, Environment and Risk Management (SHERM)***

Training in basic laboratory safety as well as radiation, chemical and biosafety is provided by SHERM.

SHERM: <http://www.uth.edu/safety/>

### ***Radiation Safety Committee***

Radiation Safety Committee approval must be obtained prior to the use of radioactive materials or other sources of radiation.

### ***Chemical Safety Committee***

Chemical Safety Committee approval must be obtained prior to using acutely toxic chemical agents, including those listed by the International Agency for Research on Cancer (IARC) or the National Toxicology Program (NTP) as suspected or confirmed carcinogens, or for which toxicological/epidemiological studies have indicated that the chemical has reproduction, acute, and or reactive hazard(s). In addition, any hazardous chemical that is used in such a way as to present the potential for an exposure above the Occupational Safety and Health Administration's Permissible Exposure Limits (PEL) or the American Conference of Governmental Industrial Hygienist's Threshold Limit Values (TLV), requires committee review.

### ***Institutional Biosafety Committee***

Institutional Biosafety Committee approval must be obtained prior to using microbiological/infectious agents and/or recombinant DNA molecules in research.

Additional information about these Committees as well as application materials can be obtained at: <http://www.uthouston.edu/safety/manuals-and-forms.htm>

## Student Research

**Faculty Research:** Many UTSPH students participate in research that is being conducted by UTSPH faculty. A student's involvement in such projects must be approved by all appropriate committees. In general, students can be added to an existing, approved protocol by submitting a change request to the appropriate committee.

**Classroom Projects:** Instructors who include a research project or analysis of existing research data for any purpose (e.g. to explore statistical methods or other methodological issues) as part of a course should obtain appropriate CPHS approvals. In general, applications for class projects that involve contact with, or analysis of data from human subjects should be submitted to CPHS (through iRIS), by the course instructor. Briefly, the application would include: the class objectives; types of research activities that will be included in the course; description of faculty oversight for the project; and an acknowledgement that any student activities that exceed the boundaries of the class would need to be submitted as individual projects (e.g. if a student were to expand a class project for use as a culminating experience). Students who wish to expand on a classroom project (e.g. for use in a written culminating experience) should contact CPHS to determine whether additional project approvals will be required. Questions regarding classroom projects should be directed to Cynthia Edmonds ([Cynthia.L.Edmonds@uth.tmc.edu](mailto:Cynthia.L.Edmonds@uth.tmc.edu)), Director of Research Support Services, UTHSC.

**Student Research:** Many UTSPH students engage in an independent research project, such as the MPH written culminating experience, MS thesis, and PhD/DrPH dissertation. As for all UTSPH research projects, student projects must be reviewed by the appropriate Institutional committees before the research is initiated.

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. Ms. Rebecca Novak in the UTSPH is available to help students determine what approvals may be required for a specific project. However, the student should visit the appropriate website for the most up to date and complete information and/or contact the appropriate programmatic official in the UTHSC Office of Research to ensure that they have obtained the appropriate training and approvals before initiating their project. Students undertaking a written culminating experience, thesis or dissertation project must complete all required training and obtain all necessary committee approvals before their project will be approved by the UTSPH Associate Dean for Research.

In general, the approval processes for student projects are identical to those of faculty projects. However, if a student is conducting a project that falls under or is closely-related to an existing, UTHSC CPHS approved protocol, it may be possible for the study PI to obtain the appropriate approval for the student's work by submitting a change request or protocol amendment for the existing approved protocol.