

Doctor of Philosophy (PhD) in Health Services Research (HSR)

Program Handbook

Version Date: August 14, 2026



**COLLEGE OF
PUBLIC HEALTH**
George Mason University®

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Mission

The mission of the College of Public Health (CPH) is to create a healthier tomorrow for all by prioritizing the use of preventive services today. (<https://publichealth.gmu.edu/about-college>)

Vision

Our vision is to build healthier futures for all through interprofessional education, innovative research, and dynamic partnerships.

Core Values

We seek to make health visible and are guided by the core values of integrity, compassion, excellence, respect, and a growth mindset.

George Mason University Policy Statement

George Mason University (GMU) and the Department of Health Administration, Policy, and Informatics (HAPI) reserve the right to change the policies, curricula, or any other matter in this handbook without prior notice.

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Welcome to the Health Services Research PhD Program!

This handbook for doctoral students covers various aspects and processes of the Health Services Research (HSR) PhD program. It should be used as a reference guide throughout your program of study. It contains information on the coursework, and key milestones such as the preliminary PhD Exam, field exam, dissertation proposal defense as well as guidelines and forms needed whenever a student reaches a key milestone in the program. We encourage you to review this handbook and discuss any questions with your Academic/Dissertation Advisor.

Our primary goal as Faculty in the Health Services Research PhD Program is to provide you with the support and advice needed to navigate the program so you can succeed in achieving each PhD program milestone and make steady progress toward your future career goals. We look forward to working with you throughout your program of study.

Best wishes,



Gilbert Gimm, PhD, FGSA
Professor & HSR Doctoral Program Director

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Jinshan Tang, PhD
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Hong Xue, PhD

Quick Reference Guide

Subject	Contact Information
PhD Academic Program Director General questions regarding the HSR PhD program and requirements, advisor assignments, HSR PhD events, post-PhD career advising, etc.	Dr. Gilbert Gimm Peterson Hall, Rm. 4410 703-993-9165 ggimm@gmu.edu
PhD Program Coordinator Questions about student forms, GMU deadlines, PhD student newsletter, conference travel, etc.	Mrs. Regina Young 703-993-3583 ryoung26@gmu.edu
Provost Awards and Grants to Support Mason Graduate Students (e.g., Dissertation Completion Grant)	https://provost.gmu.edu/academics-and-research/graduate-education/awards-and-grants
Career Services	https://careers.gmu.edu/ 3400 Student Union Building 703-993-2370
Data & Digital Scholarship Services	https://dsc.gmu.edu/ Debby Kermer, 703-993-9417 Fenwick Library, Wing 2700 Email: datahelp@gmu.edu or dkermer@gmu.edu
Disability Services	https://ds.gmu.edu/ Office on Disability Services Student Union Building, Suite 2500 703-993-2474
Financial Assistance	https://www2.gmu.edu/admissions-aid/financialaid Student Union Building, Suite 1100 703-993-2353
Graduate Registered Student Organizations (e.g., Health Informatics AI Club)	https://graduate.gmu.edu/graduate-student-life/getting-involved/graduate-registered-student-organizations
Graduate Student Life Office (Well-Being) (e.g., Recreational Facilities, TimelyCare)	https://graduate.gmu.edu/graduate-student-life/well-being
GMU Graduate Student Travel Fund	https://gstf.gmu.edu Email Regina Young for Student Travel Fund Form
GMU Graduate Student Academic Policies Provost's Office (AP.6)	https://catalog.gmu.edu/policies/academic/graduate-policies/
Health Services Research (HSR) PhD Program Overview	https://publichealth.gmu.edu/program/health-services-research-phd

Housing and Resident Life	https://housing.gmu.edu/ Piedmont Building, 1 st floor 703-993-2720
International Programs and Services	https://oips.gmu.edu/oips/ 4300 Student Union Building 703-993-2970
Mason Center for the Arts: Free Student Tickets for Performances	https://cfa.gmu.edu/tickets/free-student-tickets Signups available roughly 2 weeks before the event date
Mason Dining: Student Meal Plans	https://masoncard.gmu.edu/meal-plans/
Mason Information Technology services	https://its.gmu.edu/
Parking and Transportation	https://transportation.gmu.edu/ 102 Nottoway Annex 703-993-2828
Stearns Center for Teaching and Learning	https://stearnscenter.gmu.edu/
Student Health Services	https://shs.gmu.edu/ 2300 Student Union Building (SUB-1) 703-993-2831
Student Services Center	https://mssc.gmu.edu/ 1003 Student Union Building (SUB-1) Email: mssc@gmu.edu
The Writing Center	https://writingcenter.gmu.edu/
University Libraries Crystal Boyce Health and Biosciences Librarian	https://library.gmu.edu/subject-librarians Mercer Library (GMU Sci-Tech Campus – Manassas, VA) 703-993-8347. Email (cboyce4@gmu.edu)
University Libraries University Dissertation & Thesis Services	https://library.gmu.edu/udts Sally Evans, University Dissertation Coordinator
Zotero For organizing your research study citations	https://infoguides.gmu.edu/search_help/zotero Free, unlimited subscription for GMU students and faculty

Introduction

This 72-credit hour, CEPH-accredited doctoral program in the Health Administration, Policy, and Informatics (HAPI) department is designed to prepare graduates to become research scholars, educators, and leaders in health care organizations, higher education, government and nonprofit organizations, and businesses that support health care service delivery and outcomes. HSR PhD students will acquire the interdisciplinary knowledge and skills to examine research issues that affect health care systems and outcomes. This interdisciplinary research training will enable the PhD candidate to conduct analyses and generate new findings in health policy and applied health analytics to improve the financing, organization, and delivery of health care services for individuals, organizations, and communities in the United States and beyond.

Students in the HSR PhD program will pursue one of two concentrations:

1. Health Systems and Policy (HSYP)

Provides training in analytic methods to develop an in-depth understanding of health system functioning and health policy (state and federal), and the factors affecting healthcare service delivery and public health. The HSYP concentration includes management and health policy issues related to improving health care delivery systems, health care quality, population health, and the financing of healthcare services.

2. Knowledge Discovery and Health Informatics (KDHI)

Provides the interdisciplinary knowledge and skills to creatively research complex health and health system issues by applying machine learning methods for data analysis. The KDHI concentration focuses on advanced data analytics and data complexity, as well as information generation, processing, and use for clinical, administrative and research purposes

Sequence and Key Milestones in the PhD Program

The Health Services Research PhD program requires students to achieve defined program milestones in order to meet the program's curriculum requirements and graduation. These milestones must be completed in sequence. Milestones are documented and approved using the appropriate program form (#1-10 listed below).

1. Admission to the PhD Program
2. Assignment of Academic Program Advisor
3. Proposed Program of Study Approval (**Form #1**)
4. Preparation of Annual Progress Report (**Form #2**)
5. Preliminary Examination (**Form #3**)
6. Independent Study Course Guidelines & Approval Form (**Form #4**)

7. Field Examination (**Form #5**)
8. Doctoral Dissertation Committee (**Form #6**)
9. Dissertation Concept Abstract (**Form #6B**)
10. Dissertation Proposal Approval (**Form #7**)
11. Advancement to Candidacy (**Form #8**)
12. Final Program of Study Form Needed for Advancement to Candidacy (**Form #9**)
13. Dissertation Defense Signature Sheet
14. Graduation

All completed forms are stored in the student's official program file, which is maintained and used by Mrs. Regina Young to complete the PhD student's paperwork for graduation.

An explanation of the milestones and the fulfillment of requirements are presented in relevant areas of the handbook.

Admission to the PhD Program

Applicants must hold a master's degree from a regionally accredited institution and should have a minimum cumulative GPA of 3.0 for consideration. Admission to the program is competitive, and a variety of criteria are evaluated in making the admission decision. This includes the strength of the applicant's undergraduate and master's level academic transcripts, career goals, letters of recommendation, professional and volunteer experience, evidence of the ability to write and conduct research at the doctoral level, GRE scores, and other evidence of potential for success in the program.

Applicants must submit the GMU online application with the following supporting documents:

1. Official transcripts from every college or university attended.
2. Completion of introductory graduate-level courses in statistics, economics, health systems and public health, health policy and health informatics is recommended as preparation for the curriculum in PhD in Health Services Research program.
3. A 1,000-word written statement of academic goals describing the applicant's research area of interest for advanced study in health services research and post-graduation goals.
4. Graduate Record Examination (GRE). **In 2026 and 2027, GRE test scores will continue to be optional for all PhD program applicants.**
5. Curriculum vitae or resume, including an up-to-date employment history, list of publications, awards, grants submitted and grants received to date by the applicant;
6. Two letters of recommendation;
7. PhD in Health Services Research Department Form (uploaded with online application).

PhD applicants will have their documents screened by two independent faculty reviewers. A select group of finalist applicants will then be invited to participate in a Zoom video interview. Admission decisions will be made only after a required Zoom video interview is conducted.

Additional information about the application process, admission requirements, application deadlines and fees may be found on the [CPH Office of Graduate Admissions website](#).

You may contact Mr. Chris Williams (Associate Director of CPH Graduate Admissions) at cwilli23@gmu.edu or 703-993-4621 with questions about the application process or your application status. Information on requirements for international GMU students (especially those on F-1 and J-1 visas) may be found at <http://oips.gmu.edu/>.

Financial Aid

In addition to the graduate application form, applicants should indicate their interest in receiving a Graduate Research Assistantship (GRA) and/or a scholarship. A limited number of GRA positions, tuition assistance and scholarship support are available for students each year. To be eligible for a GRA position, students must be enrolled as a full-time student. More information about financial aid for Mason graduate students is available at the [Office of Financial Aid](#).

Curriculum Information

The PhD in Health Services Research program of study consists of core courses, as well as concentration specific and elective courses, and dissertation sequence courses. The curriculum was carefully developed so students graduating from the program will achieve career-focused competencies related to a specific area of study. A set of core competencies comprise the basis for the program of study; concentration competencies are developed through concentration and elective courses that must be approved by the Academic Advisor.

Most courses in the program are offered on a one class per week basis, scheduled in the late afternoon and evening, and some are scheduled on weekends (alternate Saturdays). Some courses are also taught in an online format (e.g., Zoom synchronous or asynchronous classes). Evening, weekend, and on-line course scheduling provides doctoral students with options that fit with a variety of student schedules as well as full-time and part-time study. The on-campus classes are primarily offered at the Fairfax or Arlington campuses. It is not possible to complete the program fully online.

It is also not possible to successfully complete the program through class participation alone. While the department understands the importance of balancing the demands of graduate studies with a personal life and/or work demands, it is not realistic for any student to assume they can complete their PhD in Health Services Research based solely on class participation. Attendance in a variety of monthly colloquium seminars, engagement with graduate students and faculty, participation in research conferences, and other forms of scholarly enrichment and career development activities are an important part of doctoral work in the PhD in Health Services

Research program. **These activities are expected of all PhD students in order to further the development of student research and cultivate future professional opportunities. After completing the coursework, the PhD dissertation is a major independent research project.**

Core Courses (30 credit hours)

The core courses cover topics in statistics, research methods, health care databases, health economics, casual inference, health informatics and health policy.

Concentration and Elective Courses (30 credit hours)

Students pursue additional courses in one of two concentrations: Health Systems and Policy (HSYP) or Knowledge Discovery and Health Informatics (KDHI).

Dissertation (12 credit hours minimum)

Students can complete their degree at their own pace provided that they advance to candidacy within six years. Students then have three years from the time of advancement to candidacy to graduation. International students attending in F-1 or J-1 status also have more restrictive limits; contact the Office of International Programs and Services for information.

Transfer (Reduction) of Credit

Students must have a master's degree, from a regionally accredited institution, before being admitted to the 72-credit PhD program. Students who enter with a master's or other advanced degree may have their PhD credit hour requirement reduced by up to 30 credits for previous coursework (completed within the past 10 years) that closely corresponds with doctoral program requirements. Up to 15 credits may be applied to the core and 15 credits toward concentration elective courses; the student must provide a copy of non-GMU course syllabi to their Academic Advisor as part of their transfer of credit request. **Courses older than 10 years are not eligible for a transfer of credit.**

The credit reduction decision will be made by the Academic Advisor and approved by the PhD Program Director. Requests for credit transfers are reviewed only after a student is accepted to the doctoral program. Students who transfer courses equivalent to core courses, are not exempt from knowledge needed to complete the Preliminary comprehensive exam. Thus, we discourage the transfer of credit of non-GMU courses toward most PhD core classes.

Training in Responsible Conduct of Research (Ethics and IRB)

The HAPI PhD Program Review Committee supports the principle that all individuals who are involved in research projects, regardless of funding source, must become familiar with the professional and ethical standards expected in an academic research setting. Thus, all HSR PhD students are expected to complete the online training or the university-offered 8-hour face-to-face faculty led course in the responsible conduct of research, which includes modules on basic human subject research protections as well as authorship and contribution. All PhD students must pass this online course and obtain a CITI program certificate of completion prior to advancement to candidacy.

Academic Program Advisor

Upon acceptance into the program, the student will be assigned an Academic Program Advisor. The name and email address of the Academic Advisor are included in the acceptance letter. It is imperative that the PhD student contact their assigned Advisor to schedule an advising check-in appointment at least once per semester to discuss development of an individualized program of study and enrollment in classes. If a student cannot reach their Academic Advisor, the student should follow-up with the HSR PhD Program Director to assist with course planning.

The student may request to change his/her Academic Program Advisor after completing the first semester of coursework. In that case, the student needs to contact the PhD Program Director to discuss this change and potential transition to a new Academic Advisor. Please note that any Academic Advisor changes must be pre-approved by the HSR PhD Program Director in writing and will be reflected in the annual student progress report.

Proposed Program of Study (and Transfer of Credit)

In consultation with the Academic Advisor, the student develops a detailed program of study (including identification of how HAPI coursework taken in non-degree status as well as graduate courses taken prior to admission will be treated in the PhD program). The program of study plan is documented on **Form #1**. The student's individual program of study (as indicated on the program of study **Form #1**) must be approved by the Academic Advisor and filed with the Health Services Research PhD program office. All proposed transfers of credit for prior courses taken within the last 10 years must be approved by the Academic Advisor and PhD Program Director before they are submitted to the GMU Registrar (during the first academic year). All PhD students are encouraged to check their Degree Audit (in the PatriotWeb online portal) after 2 weeks to confirm it was processed by the GMU Registrar.

Student Progress Evaluations

I. First Year and Annual Progress Reports

All first-year students in the program are required to complete an end-of-year progress report (**Form #2**). This report must be submitted by May 15 to the Academic Advisor.

The HAPI PhD Program Review Committee assesses the progress of each student annually. The purpose of this committee is twofold: (1) to review students' specific plans of study, and (2) to evaluate the students' progress and issue recommendations based on such progress. The evaluation is based on an assessment of coursework, including grades, activities, teaching,

papers, research and teaching assistantships, and other materials the student includes in the annual progress report (**Form #2**)

Special attention is paid to annual reports submitted upon completion of the first year of study. Based on the first-year progress report, the PhD Annual Review Committee may encourage or discourage further continuation in the program. If continuation is recommended, the student may continue towards the next important program milestone/goal.

In addition to required course work, the following professional extracurricular activities are encouraged for advanced students: assistance with teaching, attending professional lectures and colloquia on campus and in the greater Washington DC region; writing grant proposals with faculty, other students, or individually; participating in faculty research projects; writing and publishing in peer-refereed journals, including disciplinary journals in the health sciences as well as the more specialized health informatics, and health systems and policy journals; learning the art of effective teaching; presenting research work at professional conferences; attending summer training opportunities; and participating in professional organizations. Students should consider participating in workshops on teaching and writing offered through the Stearns Center for Teaching and Learning. Students with a writing deficiency may be required to take one or more courses in English as a Second Language (international students) or in technical and scientific writing. Such courses must be taken in addition to the required program of study.

Preliminary Exam, Independent Study, and Field Exam

II. Preliminary (“Prelim”) Comprehensive Exam

1. Once a student has completed all their core courses, the student must take the Preliminary (“Prelim”) comprehensive exam before enrolling in further courses. If they fail the exam, they must retake it in the following semester. The exam is offered during the first week of the fall and spring semesters or a week prior to the start of each semester. The Preliminary Examination may include 2 to 3 multi-part questions, it is in written format, and covers questions from the curriculum core, including research and computational methods, knowledge discovery and health informatics, and health policy.
2. The PhD Program Director solicits general questions from the faculty. The in-person exam is administered and taken on campus and completed without collaboration.
3. The exam questions must be submitted by the HAPI Faculty to the HSR PhD Program Director at least one week prior to the examination.
4. The Preliminary Examination is graded by HSR PhD program faculty who inform the HSR PhD Program Director in a timely manner. The examination shall be graded as pass/fail.
5. The HSR PhD Program Director informs the student of the results.
6. Students have two opportunities to pass the Preliminary Examination.
7. Students who do not pass the Preliminary Examination after two attempts will be dismissed from the PhD program and are not eligible for readmission.
8. Students who fail the Preliminary Examination after two attempts may be eligible to receive a Master’s degree in Health Policy/Health Informatics or a certificate in one of the concentration areas in HAPI, if all of the necessary degree requirements are satisfied.

III. Result of Preliminary (“Prelim”) Comprehensive Examination

The HSR PhD Program Director informs the student of their pass/fail result by email and notifies the program coordinator (Regina Young) who completes **Form #3** which is forwarded with the graded exam to be saved in the student’s official file. Graded exam answers are NOT returned to students, who only receive a pass/fail decision from the HSR PhD Program Director.

IV. Identifying a Dissertation Advisor

Once a student has completed their required core classes, and passed the Preliminary Exam, the student should begin to work with their assigned Academic Advisor to select a general area of scientific investigation and identify a Dissertation Advisor, who must be a full-time HAPI faculty member. The Dissertation Advisor will assist the student in preparing a topic, learning objectives and deliverables for their independent study. Identifying a Dissertation Advisor and an additional Dissertation Committee member is necessary to complete the Field Exam.

V. Independent Study

Each student is expected to enroll in at least one Independent Study as a Concentration Elective course, with a full-time HAPI faculty member (usually the Dissertation Advisor) with whom they begin to develop an area of research. As part of their independent study work, the student will prepare a list of readings in their chosen area of specialization with faculty guidance.

Only independent study courses approved in advance by an Academic Advisor or Dissertation Advisor may be counted toward fulfillment of a student's program of study requirements. In undertaking an independent study, the student must prepare an independent study proposal that describes the purpose of the independent study, learning objectives and deliverables (see form and syllabus, **Form #4**). Note that in order to register for the independent study, students need to contact the HAPI Office to obtain a Course Registration Number (CRN). Up to 12 credits from independent studies (repeated across semesters) may be designated as Concentration Electives.

VI. Field Examination

1. The Field Examination is taken after a student has successfully passed the Preliminary Examination and usually completed an independent study. The Field Examination is administered primarily by the Dissertation Advisor in conjunction with an additional dissertation committee member. The Dissertation Advisor and the additional dissertation committee member are responsible for grading the Field Examination. **The Field Examination must be completed within six years of admission to the program** and prior to the development of the dissertation proposal.
2. The field exam will be offered on individual basis, but must be conducted within one semester (beginning, in the middle or at the end of a semester). The Field Examination shall cover core and advanced material specific to the student’s concentration and dissertation readings, and shall consist of both written and computational/practice

formats. This field exam must be completed by the student independently without collaboration. **The student will have up to 14 days to complete the exam and must submit the exam by email directly to the Dissertation Advisor by 11:59pm on the due date.** Late exams will not be accepted for any reason. The field exam may include a literature review, data manipulation, a computational analysis, and/or write-up of the background, methods and results. The exam questions will be specific to a student's concentration (health policy or informatics). The required format is usually an article in HSR for students in the health policy concentration and the Journal of the American Medical Informatics Association (JAMIA) for students in the informatics concentration.

3. After the Field Examination is graded, the Dissertation Advisor is expected to inform the HSR PhD Program Director in a timely manner. All parts of the field examination shall be evaluated in terms of a **pass or fail grade**. All exam sections are required and an overall grade of pass is necessary for its successful completion. A Dissertation Advisor may also ask that the student make revisions and resubmit the Field Examination before it is approved. This “conditional pass” status of the exam must be changed to a “pass” grade before it is considered a successful completion.
4. The Dissertation Advisor informs the student of the results.
5. Students have two opportunities to pass the Field Examination.
6. Students who do not pass the Field Examination after two attempts will be dismissed from the program and are not eligible for readmission.

VII. Results of Field Examination

Form #5 is filled out and signed by the HAPI faculty members involved in grading the exam and the HSR PhD Program Director; and forwarded along with the graded exam to the program office coordinator (Mrs. Regina Young) to be filed in the student's official record.

Dissertation Committee

VIII. Doctoral Dissertation Committee

Upon successfully passing the Preliminary Examination, the student selects a faculty member, from among full-time, tenure-track or tenured faculty in HAPI who is willing to become the Dissertation Advisor. The Dissertation Advisor has the primary responsibility for guiding the technical direction and content of the student's research.

Once the Dissertation Advisor is selected, the student forms a Dissertation Committee, which consists of a **minimum of three members including the Dissertation Advisor/Chair**. The Dissertation Advisor/Chair and at least one other committee member should be tenured or tenure-track, full-time HAPI faculty members who are part of the Graduate Faculty. The third

Dissertation committee member may have a primary affiliation outside the HAPI department. A fourth committee member, if needed, may be added on an optional basis.

Dissertation Committee service by Personnel other than Tenure-Track or Tenured GMU Faculty: Personnel with suitable academic training and research experience who are not GMU full time, tenured, or tenure track faculty may be recommended for inclusion on a Dissertation Committee. This category includes non-GMU personnel as well as Research Faculty, Administrative Faculty, Instructors, Affiliate Faculty, Adjunct Faculty, Retired or Emeritus Faculty, and Term Faculty at GMU. However, such personnel must have an appropriate terminal degree.

Overall, non-GMU members are encouraged where the individual has relevant research expertise or programmatic insights that would contribute positively to the dissertation. All such personnel must be appointed to the graduate faculty by the Office of the Provost. If such members are on a temporary appointment, there should be assurance that they will be available throughout the student's dissertation period. They may share dissertation supervision responsibilities and enjoy voting rights and privileges. A curriculum vitae for the proposed committee member must be included with the request for graduate faculty status and the particular advantages of including this person on the committee should be cited. Once approved for graduate faculty status, a new request is not required for service on additional committees. Faculty, staff, and students are urged to check with the Associate Provost for Graduate Education with regard to the list of approved graduate faculty members.

The Chair (Dissertation Advisor) of the Dissertation Committee should be familiar with HAPI and university policies and procedures regarding the advancement of a student through the entire process leading to the doctorate. The Committee Chair is responsible for organizing all meetings of the committee and ensuring that the proper procedures are followed.

The purpose of the dissertation committee is to guide the student through the research and writing of the dissertation proposal and dissertation, evaluate whether the student is prepared to advance to doctoral candidacy, and determine if the student has successfully completed and defended their dissertation. The Chair (Dissertation Advisor) is the final decision-maker.

Once the committee is formed, **Form #6**, must be signed by all committee members, the PhD Program Director, and the Department Chair. Also, **Form #6B** (dissertation concept abstract) is required of all PhD students who are developing a dissertation proposal.

A faculty member may leave the dissertation committee at any time. Therefore, doctoral students are strongly encouraged to ask each committee member if they plan to remain at Mason for at least the next three years. The PhD student is also expected to discuss suggestions for other committee members with the Dissertation Chair and obtain consent before reaching out to extend an invitation to join the committee. Any replacement faculty member serving on a dissertation committee must be pre-approved by the Dissertation Chair, the HSR PhD Program Director, and the HAPI Department Chair.

Dissertation Proposal & Advancement to Candidacy

IX. Dissertation Proposal (HAP 998)

1. Students must prepare a detailed dissertation proposal and present the proposal to their committee for approval. Proposals must be approved by the Dissertation Chair (Director) and all other Dissertation Committee members.
2. The written proposal should include clearly specified research question(s) and provide sufficient text, illustrations, tables, equations, and a bibliography.
3. The proposal should include a detailed description of the research topic and work to be undertaken; its relation to previously published work in the literature; a conceptual framework, and analytic methods to be employed. Proposals should also include a set of research questions, study aims, and a discussion of expected results (before conducting the analysis). The discussion should also indicate potential study or data limitations, which may affect the generalizability of results.
4. A completed abstract of the dissertation proposal is submitted on **Form #7**.
5. Unless waived by approval of a written request from the Doctoral Dissertation Advisor and approved by the HSR PhD Program Director, students must enroll in HAP 998 each semester after completing Field Examination until they have an approved dissertation proposal. Students can apply up to 6 credits of HAP 998 to the 12-hour HAP 998/999 requirement. HAP 998 will be graded as pass (satisfactory) or fail based on continued progress made by the student and meetings with their HAP 998 advisor.
6. Doctoral students must take at least 3-6 credits of dissertation proposal (HAP 998) credits during the semester prior to the defense of the dissertation.

X. Advancement to Candidacy (“Successful Proposal Defense”)

1. After successful completion of the Preliminary Exam, Field Exam, completion of all courses, and successful defense of dissertation proposal, the student is eligible to advance to Doctoral Candidacy. Advancement to candidacy is documented by **Form #8**. Also, **Form #9** is needed to document the updated student’s Program of Study.
2. After submission of **Forms #8 and #9**, the student will be advanced to candidacy and the CPH Academic Affairs Office will notify the GMU Registrar. At that time, the student’s academic status will formally convert to doctoral candidate.

XI. Dissertation Research and Writing (HAP 999)

1. HAP 999 is only open to PhD students who have advanced to candidacy. Once a student has reached candidacy by passing the Field Exam and having their Dissertation Proposal approved by the committee, then the student must maintain continuous enrollment in

HAP 999, Doctoral Dissertation, until the dissertation is completed. **The student must complete at least 3 credits of HAP 999 in the first semester of registration.**

2. **The total number of credit hours of HAP 998/999 must be at least 12 for graduation.** Furthermore, the number of HAP 999 hours must be at least 6 credits.
3. The student must take at least one credit of HAP 999 during their last semester.
4. Upon successful defense of the dissertation, the dissertation cover sheet must be signed.

Student Grievance Procedures

PhD students who have a grievance are encouraged to speak first with the PhD program director about their concerns to clarify if there is a misunderstanding or miscommunication before filing a written grievance. If the issue cannot be resolved through clarifying discussions, HSR PhD students who wish to appeal decisions on the application of doctoral policies and procedures, grades, or other matters affecting their academic progress, should follow the steps listed below:

1. The student should discuss the matter with the instructor, advisor, or other faculty member involved in an effort to reach a mutually agreeable solution.
2. If a satisfactory solution is not reached, the student should write a letter to the HSR PhD Program Director describing the issue, the nature of the appeal and efforts that have already been made to resolve the matter, and asking that an appeals committee be formed to consider the appeal.
3. The HSR PhD program Committee will decide whether consideration should be given to the appeal. If their decision is affirmative, they will appoint a three-person ad hoc appeals committee, including two HSR doctoral faculty members and one doctoral student (at the post-comprehensive stage of his/her study). This committee will investigate the matter. Normally, this investigation will include interviews with the student and faculty involved in the appeal and a review of the evidence submitted to the committee and/or requested. It is the responsibility of the doctoral student to present relevant documents and information in support of the appeal.
4. The appeals committee will present its recommendation to the HSR PhD Program Director within two months of its appointment.
5. Final determination of appeals will need to be made by the College of Health and Human Services (CHHS) Associate Dean for Academic Affairs and in some cases, the Associate Provost for Graduate Education. For additional information about the appeal process within the Office of the Provost, students may refer to the Graduate Student Academic Appeals process on the Graduate Education pages of the Office of the Provost's website: <http://provost.gmu.edu/graduateeducation/graduate-student-academic-appeal-procedures/>

Doctoral Dissertation

A dissertation is a written piece of original, independent research that demonstrates the doctoral candidate's mastery of the subject matter, methodologies, and conceptual foundations in research in their chosen field of study. Content should:

- be relevant and current in the chosen area;
- demonstrate a mastery of tools and techniques in Health Services Research;
- make a contribution to knowledge through new results or applied methods;
- be potentially acceptable for publication in a refereed journal; and
- may in consultation with the Dissertation Advisor be organized as a monograph or a manuscript-style dissertation.

Note: The dissertation must be submitted directly to the GMU Fenwick Library along with all approval signatures per their instructions. **Students are responsible for planning well ahead of time for library submission deadline dates (which are fixed).** In addition, Mason PhD student dissertations are available for viewing at Fenwick Library for GMU students.

University guidelines for the content and format of doctoral dissertations may be found at <https://library.gmu.edu/udts>. Please contact the Dissertation Resource Librarian at (703) 993-2222, for step-by-step instructions on preparing the dissertation for the mandatory format review. PhD students can issue a 2-year temporary embargo on the public release of their dissertation to provide additional time for submitting journal manuscripts.

1. When the doctoral dissertation thesis is completed, a candidate must arrange with his/her committee to schedule the final defense, which is open to the public. Students must email Mrs. Regina Young the scheduled defense date and dissertation title at least 2 weeks in advance to allow for paperwork preparation and a formal announcement.
2. Regina Young will prepare a flyer announcing the candidate's dissertation topic, including a 150-to-250-word abstract, and dissertation defense date. This will be emailed to the CPH community at least 2 weeks prior to the final defense. Also, the candidate must email a final copy of the doctoral dissertation to the Dissertation Chair and all Committee members at least 2 weeks prior to the final defense.
3. After the dissertation defense, the candidate must obtain all required signatures (in black ink or electronic signature) and must submit all documents and payment of dissertation fees as required by the Fenwick Library. See <https://udts.gmu.edu/process/> for more information on dissertation submission and dissertation submission deadlines.

Graduation Procedures

Students may access GMU Graduation information on the web at registrar.gmu.edu. The student must complete and submit a Graduation Application early in the semester in which they plan to graduate (fall or spring semester) as specified on the University calendar. PhD students who successfully defend their dissertation in the summer and submit their final dissertation to GMU's Fenwick Library by August 1 are eligible to participate in the December hooding ceremony.

The Application for Graduation must be completed by the student, reviewed by the Chair of the dissertation committee. The Graduation Application form is completed on-line by the student. The student will meet with their Dissertation Chair to complete a full graduation degree audit to verify all PhD degree requirements have been met and are credited in the official student record maintained by the GMU Registrar's Office. Mrs. Regina Young (PhD program coordinator) is available to help students with the Mason Degree Audit. Once this review is complete, the student will submit a graduation application online with the Registrar's Office (see below).

Mason Graduation Application Process

Students must review their Mason Degree Audit (in PatriotWeb) to ensure all PhD requirements are met AND appear in the official record maintained by the Registrar's Office. Also, students are responsible for submitting their own [graduation application](#) online.

For more information, please see <https://registrar.gmu.edu/students/graduation/process/>.

Please note the GMU timelines and deadlines for students to submit their graduation applications at <https://registrar.gmu.edu/students/graduation/graduation-timelines/>. Students who defend their final dissertation by mid-April are eligible to graduate in May. However, students who complete their defense in the summer are eligible to participate in the December graduation ceremony.

At the end of the spring and fall semesters (usually in May or December), a **doctoral hooding ceremony** is offered that is separate from the main graduation ceremony. The PhD hooding ceremony is specifically for the graduating PhD student and their Dissertation Chair (Advisor) only. Students who wish to attend the PhD hooding ceremony should notify their Dissertation Chair at least 2 months in advance so that appropriate regalia can be reserved. If the Dissertation Chair is not available to attend the hooding ceremony, PhD students should email the PhD program director to identify an alternative faculty member to participate in the ceremony.

PhD Dissertation Guidelines

The dissertation is a scientific product that requires the use of rigorous research designs and analytic methodologies to address a research topic in order to produce new and significant knowledge. Furthermore, a dissertation needs to be innovative as it relates to using existing methodologies to examine a new problem area, or a methodology that can be extended or modified in a significant way to address a specific set of research aims. A dissertation should produce generalizable knowledge.

In consultation with the Dissertation Advisor, the dissertation may be organized in a manuscript-style dissertation that includes at least 3 publishable papers (“3-essays” model) or as a traditional monograph (e.g., 5 chapters: introduction, literature review, methods, results, and discussion). The Dissertation Committee members must approve the dissertation proposal type before the proposal oral defense is scheduled.

Manuscript-Style Dissertation

The manuscript-style dissertation is a type of dissertation format that consists of at least 3 papers in published or close to publishable form. The manuscript-style (“3-essays”) dissertation is considered original research, and the student completes it under the guidance of the Dissertation Committee. The papers may be related in some way by either content or methodology, although this is not a requirement. Once the dissertation proposal is completed, and the student’s dissertation committee approves it, an oral defense of the proposal needs to be scheduled. Upon successful defense of the dissertation proposal, the candidate needs to develop and complete the dissertation manuscripts that are evaluated and approved by the Dissertation Committee.

Components of a Manuscript-Style Dissertation Proposal

(Typically, proposals can range from 40-70 pages in length)

Names of Dissertation Committee Members:

Type of Dissertation: “3-Essays Model” or “Traditional Single Topic / Monograph”

A. INTRODUCTION (3-10 cover pages introducing the papers that are part of the dissertation proposal)

It should provide a summary of the multiple papers in the dissertation proposal. This may include background information, purpose and aims/objectives of each paper, significance of the studies, theoretical content/framework (if applicable), and implications.

B. DESCRIPTION OF THE DISSERTATION PAPERS

The description of each distinct dissertation paper (3 or more) should include the following components:

Title of each study

Purpose: State the purpose of the study, and how it connects to the overall research area and conceptual model (if applicable).

Research aims and questions: State clearly the research aims and questions, including hypotheses if applicable for each paper/study.

Study design: Describe the overall study design.

Data: If the study is a secondary data analysis, then state the data sources and a description of the sample. Include demographic information on the population from which the sample is drawn (e.g., age, gender/sex, race/ethnicity, household income, education level, etc.). If data are to be collected, then describe data collection procedures, including setting of where data were collected. Describe any eligibility inclusion/exclusion criteria.

Measures: Describe in detail the measures to be used in the study. You may present a summary table of the variables, classified as independent, mediating, moderating, dependent, etc. If possible, specify the nature of the variables, and present a graphical analytical model of the set of relationships held to be operative among the variables.

Methodology: What methodology or methodologies will be employed to address the research questions? If applicable, describe the data analysis plan to address the research aims as they pertain to each study/paper.

Study assumptions: Include any underlying assumptions for the study.

Limitations: Describe limitations related to the study design and data, analytical methods, etc.

Implications: Discuss potential implications of the results for practice, policy and management.

Timeline: An estimated timeline of when these papers will be completed.

Dissemination: Provide journal information and possible conferences where these manuscripts may be submitted for potential publication and presentation, respectively.

Institutional Review Board (IRB) Approval: Provide details on IRB approvals that may be needed prior to carrying out the study.

Authorship: The student discusses authorship for manuscripts with the Dissertation Advisor and/or Committee.

Reference list: Using APA formatting.

Components of the Manuscript-Style Dissertation

1. A title page which can be obtained from the template the GMU library provides
2. Table of contents
3. Biography is placed at the end of the dissertation document
4. One main abstract summarizing all of the papers

Each paper needs to include the following:

- (a) Title and an abstract for each paper
- (b) The main body of the paper that includes the introduction, methods, results and discussion and conclusions sections. The paper will include all of the references and tables; the paper can be formatted using any “schools of style” (e.g., APA, MLA, etc.) which can be decided by the candidate with the dissertation committee’s guidance.
- (c) An optional appendix can be included. If the paper is published, a copy of the actual publication can be placed in the appendix.

The student and the Dissertation Committee should also include appropriate use of the university’s embargo policy for dissertations where appropriate.

Monograph-Style Dissertation

This is a traditional monograph-style dissertation that consists of five or more chapters. These include the following: Chapter 1 is the introduction, Chapter 2 includes the literature review, Chapter 3 is the Methods section, Chapter 4 is the Results section, and Chapter 5 includes the Discussion section. After a student successfully defends the dissertation proposal and advances to candidacy, the monograph-style dissertation can be completed with the incorporation of Chapters 4 and 5. Any changes in the implementation phase should be incorporated in the first 3 Chapters of the dissertation. The final dissertation piece includes all 5 Chapters.

Components of the Monograph-Style Dissertation Proposal

(Typically, proposals can range from 40-100 pages in length and dissertations are 100+ pages)

Proposed Title for Dissertation:

Names of Dissertation Committee Members:

Abstract: Provide a summary of the problem (background information), purpose statement, why it is important (significance), data to be used, proposed methods, and potential implications. The abstract should not exceed 350 words.

The outline below is an example of a typical dissertation proposal and dissertation. The organization of the dissertation should be driven by its content. In general, it is suggested that proposals follow a general outline with sections or chapters. Moreover, there may be differences in the organization of dissertations that are methodological from those that are application focused. An example guide to the organization of a Health Informatics dissertation is presented by Shortliffe (2016).¹

CHAPTER 1: Introduction (background information, problem, purpose, aims, and significance)

Background, purpose, and study aims: Present background information on the problem the study is addressing, purpose of the study, significance and specific study aims of the research (hypotheses to be tested can be included as applicable).

¹ Shortliffe, E. H. (2016). The organization and content of informatics doctoral dissertations. Journal of the American Medical Informatics Association, 23(4), 840-843.

Significance, Innovation, Impact: Describe how the expected outcomes add to the literature, and how the expected findings could affect policy, management or practice. Explain how the study is innovative (e.g., newly developed methodology, using unique data sets to address a research purpose, etc.)

Theoretical content & framework (if applicable): What is the conceptual model and what is the rationale for it? What is novel about the use of existing models OR what new model, or method is being proposed? How will your inquiry contribute to model development?

Definitions of terms may be added to this chapter or/and the methods chapter:

Provide a conceptual and operational definition of the variables to be used in the study. You may present a summary table of the variables, classified as independent, and dependent with definitions.

Study assumptions: Include any underlying assumptions for the study.

Study limitations: Limitations of the study may be related to the study design, data sources and/or data collection, methodologies, etc.

CHAPTER 2: Review of the Literature

Literature Review: What is the state of the literature review on this problem? The literature review should be a focused, critical review of the relevant literature that clearly provides a rationale for both the study topic and the conceptual approach to it. A table summarizing research findings as they pertain to the study aims may be included.

For dissertations that have a conceptual or theoretic framework for the study:

Provide detailed information on the conceptual or theoretic framework of the study. Include diagrams depicting variable associations as they relate to the study.

Note: For certain types of dissertations such as those in Health Informatics, the Methods chapter may include additional literature reviews of specific methods and approaches applicable. In addition, definitions of main terms and mathematical formulas may be included in this chapter as well as other subsequent chapters, particularly in the Chapter 3 that covers the Methods.

CHAPTER 3: Methods

Research study design: Describe research design (if applicable)

Population and sample: Description of subjects (specify criteria for inclusion/exclusion), including sample size information, and sample size calculations (if applicable).

Data source(s): State the data sources and describe the study sample. Include demographic information on the population from which the sample is drawn (e.g., age, gender/sex, race/ethnicity, household income, education level, etc.). If data are collected, then describe data collection procedures, including setting of where data were collected. Describe any eligibility inclusion/exclusion criteria. Methodological dissertations that utilize multiple data sources need to have a detailed description of these data sets and an explanation for their usage in testing developed methods.

Measures: Describe in detail the measures to be used in the study. You may present a summary table of the variables, classified as independent, mediating, moderating, dependent, etc. If possible, specify the nature of the variables, and present a graphical analytical model of the set of relationships held to be operative among the variables.

Methodology: What methodology or methodologies will be employed to address the research questions? If applicable, describe the data analysis plan to address the research aims as they pertain to each study/paper.

Definitions of variables: Provide a conceptual and operational definition of the variables to be used in the study. You may present a summary table of the variables, classified as independent, and dependent with definitions.

Note: For certain dissertations, Chapter 3 may include several subsections that present and discuss specific sub-problems considered in the dissertation. Each of these subsections may include their own results. This is particularly applicable to Health Informatics dissertations

Limitations: Discuss limitations related to the data, data analysis, and methodologies

Contributions and Implications: Contributions and implication of the expected study findings need to be included.

Timeline: An estimated timeline of when these papers will be completed. The timeline should include a specific list of deliverables.

Dissemination: Provide journal information and possible conferences where these manuscripts may be submitted for potential publication and presentation, respectively.

Institutional Review Board (IRB) Approval: Provide details on IRB approvals that may be needed prior to carrying out the study.

Authorship: The student discusses authorship for potential manuscripts with the Dissertation Advisor and/or Committee.

References

Appendix (if applicable)

Components of the Monograph-Style Dissertation

DISSERTATION: Once a student successfully defends the dissertation proposal and advances to candidacy, the monograph-style dissertation can be completed with the incorporation of chapters 4 and 5.

CHAPTER 4: Results

Study results: Present study results and interpretation of results as it relates to the aims and study framework. Tables and graphs are included in this chapter

CHAPTER 5: Discussion of Results: Compare and contrast your findings to those of previous relevant research studies. Provide explanations for research findings. Discuss implications of the study and study limitations. Include suggestions for future research.

Job Market Preparation / Conference Travel

All students are strongly encouraged to begin job market planning **at least 2 years in advance** of completing a dissertation. The entire job search process (e.g., job opportunity research, preparing a CV, job market paper, practicing a “job market talk”, interviewing, etc.) can take 12 months. Post-PhD pathways can include post-doc fellowships, academia, policy research think-tanks, consulting, government, and industry positions in diverse health care organizations.

Informal discussions with PhD classmates, Dissertation Advisor, and the HSR PhD Program Director can help you to brainstorm ideas and develop a plan to seek future job opportunities at research conferences and engage in student affiliates of national conferences (such as AMIA, APHA, and AcademyHealth). Many PhD alumni are happy to share their personal job search experiences with you and several faculty have worked outside of academia. Be sure to connect with other PhD students and faculty before you go on the job market!

The PhD program encourages all students to submit an abstract and present a poster at the annual CPH Celebration of Scholarship (usually held in mid-April). The research poster presentation is a requirement for PhD students with CPH-funded GRA scholarships. You must have a faculty sponsor on your abstract. Students with accepted abstracts (and a faculty sponsor) for national research conferences are eligible to apply for SSDF funding support (see Regina Young).

Important GMU Policies for Doctoral Degrees

(PhD Time Limits, Leave of Absence, International Students)

AP.6.10 Requirements for Doctoral Degrees

Candidates must satisfy all applicable university degree requirements and all requirements established by the doctoral program faculty. Departmental degree requirements are listed under the respective doctoral programs in this catalog. Programs may impose more stringent requirements.

- Admission. Students must have been fully admitted into degree status.
- Credit Level. Only graduate courses may apply toward the degree.
- Credit Hours. Candidates must earn a minimum of 72 graduate credits, which may be reduced on the basis of a completed master's degree or other suitable, approved transfer work. (See [AP.6.5 Credit by Exam, Reduction or Transfer](#))
- Unique Credit. A minimum of 42 credits must apply only to the doctoral degree.
- Institutional Credit. More than half of the required credits (minimum 72) for the doctoral degree must be earned at Mason or in the case of programs offered through joint, cooperative, or consortium arrangements, at the participating institutions.
- Residency. More than half of the required credits (minimum 72) must be taken in doctoral degree status, after admission to the degree program.
- Candidacy. Candidates must pass a written or oral doctoral candidacy (qualifying) exam.
- Dissertation. Candidates must complete at least 12 total credit hours of doctoral proposal (998) or doctoral dissertation research (999).
- Defense. Candidates must pass a final public defense of the doctoral dissertation.
- Quality. Candidates must have a minimum GPA of 3.00 in coursework presented on the degree application, which may include no more than 6 credits of C. (Grades of C+, C-, or D do not apply to graduate courses. The GPA calculation excludes all transfer courses and Mason extended studies or nondegree credits not formally approved for the degree.)

AP.6.10.1 Time Limit (6 years to Advance to Candidacy; 9 years to Complete Dissertation)

- For both full-time and part-time students enrolled in doctoral programs, whether entry is post-baccalaureate or post-master's, **the total time to degree will not exceed nine (9) calendar years** from the time of first enrollment as a doctoral student. Doctoral students are expected to progress steadily toward their degree and to advance to candidacy within no more than six (6) years, although colleges may set a shorter time limit.

Graduate Leave of Absence Policy

- Students who need to take a one-semester **leave of absence** for medical, parental, or other reason should notify their Academic Advisor, Dissertation Advisor, and the PhD program director at least 4 weeks before the anticipated leave of absence. For a leave of absence of two semesters or more, a formal request with the Mason Registrar's office is required. For more information, please refer to <https://graduate.gmu.edu/studying-here/graduate-policy-resources/graduate-leave-absence>.
- Students who do not meet published time limits because of compelling circumstances beyond their control may petition the Dean of the College for an extension of one full calendar year at any point during their program. If such an extension is granted, the total time limit for completion of the degree will not exceed ten (10) years.
- Reenrollment following an absence from Mason does not change the student's time limit, which is based on the date of initial admission. Failure to meet the time limits or to secure approval of an extension request shall result in termination from the program. Faculty and students share in the responsibility to progress toward completion of degree requirements, and faculty must be actively involved in helping students conform to the nine (9) year time limit. This policy does not supersede a student's university-approved disability accommodation plan.

International PhD Students (F-1 Visas)

- International students with a F-1 or J-1 visa may have additional requirements that apply to their stay in the United States. George Mason University issues visa documents (forms I-20 and DS-2019) that indicate the estimated length of the student's academic program. Students who need extensions beyond the initial period of stay must formally request them through the Office of International Programs and Services (OIPS).
- For more information, please see <https://oips.gmu.edu>. Documents to justify the special circumstances for the visa extension request are required by federal regulations. Be sure to consult directly with an OIPS advisor before undertaking any paperwork or leaving the United States for an extended period of time (3 months or more).

Link to Graduate Policies (AP.6) and Requirements in the GMU Catalog:

<https://catalog.gmu.edu/policies/academic/graduate-policies/#text>

PhD Student Forms & Advising Tips

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PROPOSED PROGRAM OF STUDY
Doctoral Program in Health Services Research

Student Name: _____ G# _____ Date: _____

Phone: _____ E-mail: _____

PhD Program Concentration: _____

Academic Advisor: _____

			Transfer of Credit (see criteria below)*			
Core requirements (30 credits)	Semester	Grade	Course to be replaced in program of study	Transferred course number and name	Institution & Semester	Grade
Concentration & Elective Courses (30 credits)						
Independent Study						
Dissertational Proposal						
Dissertation						

*A course may be transferred with a grade of B or better; up to 15 credits may be applied towards the core and 15 credits toward concentration/elective courses; the student must provide a copy of non-GMU course syllabi to their Academic Advisor as part of their transfer of credit request. Courses older than 10 years are not eligible for a transfer of credit.

Academic Advisor Signature: _____ **Date:** _____

PhD Program Director Signature: _____ **Date:** _____



Form 2 – End-of Year Progress Report

Doctoral Program in Health Services Research (HSR) PhD Progress Report for Academic Year

INSTRUCTIONS:

1. Please attach a copy of the degree evaluation showing the courses you have taken and grades you received to this report, and any other supporting materials as outlined below.
2. Once you complete this form, you need to share it with your Academic Advisor. The Academic Advisor needs to review and approve this form. Student's and Academic Advisor's signatures are required.

1. STUDENT INFORMATION

Academic Year: _____

Student Name: _____ G# _____

Status: Full-Time _____ Part-Time _____

Concentration _____

Academic Advisor _____

2. RESPONSIBLE CONDUCT OF RESEARCH

CITI online training Date: _____

3. DEGREE REQUIREMENTS

Provide information on the course requirements that you have met so far in your program of study:

	Semester	Grade	Planned courses for the coming academic year
Core Courses			
Concentration & Elective Courses			

Dissertation Proposal (998 credits)			
Dissertation (999 credits)			

Add more rows to display additional course coursework

Preliminary PhD Exam

Date: _____

Field Exam

Date: _____

Dissertation Proposal Defense

Date: _____

Dissertation Defense

Date: _____

Dissertation Title:

Dissertation Committee Members:

4. FUNDING

Please provide information about any support you've received for each year since enrolling in the program, including fellowships, graduate research assistantships, teaching assistantships or external funding (if external funding, please provide the amount, title of study and the name of the Principal Investigator (PI) and/or Co-PI):

Year	Funding Source	Amount	Part-Time or FullTime

5. RESEARCH PRESENTATIONS

5.1. Research Conference or Seminars Talks Including Poster Presentations:

#	Title	Conference Event / Sponsoring Organization	Date	Location
1				

2				

5.2. Publications:

List all of your peer-reviewed publications to date. Include accepted manuscripts only; do not include working papers in progress. Provide the title and full names of all authors, date of publication (month/year), and where it was published or is under review.

Sample journal references (APA formatting) – indicate student authors with an asterisk (*):

* Hill, A. J., * Durbha, N., Eaglehouse, Y. L., Hong, Y. A., & Xue, H. (2025). Equal access, unequal outcomes? racial disparities in mortality between black and white women with breast cancer: a 10-year systematic review and meta-analysis. *Journal of cancer survivorship : research and practice*, 10.1007/s11764-025-01791-8. Advance online publication.

Ko, H., * Alsadah, G., & Gimm, G. (2025). Association of Social Vulnerability and Access to Higher Quality Medicare Advantage Plans. *Journal of general internal medicine*, 40(8), 1869–1876. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s11606-024-09252-1>

5.3. Graduate Research Assistantship (GRA):

Discuss with the supervising faculty your overall GRA performance.

#	Supervising Faculty	Very Brief Description of Duties	Dates of Employment
1			

6. TEACHING

List all Graduate Teaching Assistantships and Courses Taught or Co-Taught:

#	Course Number and Name	Instructor	Semester and Year
1			
2			
3			

7. ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

List any other pertinent information, e.g. summer internships, significant life events, prizes and fellowships, etc.

8. GOALS FOR THE COMING ACADEMIC YEAR

Describe very briefly your goals for the coming academic year. Quantify and include target dates, e.g. GOAL="Present research findings at 1 conference", ACTION PLAN="Work on a research project XYZ and submit an abstract to Academy Health", TARGET DATE="January of 2020" etc. Attach additional pages as needed.

GOALS	ACTION PLAN	TARGET DATE

NOTE: Students with ABD status (Advanced to Candidacy) should share a copy of their resume/CV with the Dissertation Advisor and seek feedback.

Once you complete this form, you need to share it with your Academic Advisor. The Academic Advisor needs to review and approve this form. Student's and Academic Advisor's signatures are required.

Student Name (Print)

Student's Signature

Date

Advisor's Name (Print)

Advisor's Signature

Date

Doctoral Program in Health Services Research (HSR)
Results of Preliminary Examination

1. STUDENT INFORMATION

Student Name: _____ G# _____

Academic Year: _____ Concertation: _____ Date: _____

Academic Advisor: _____

2. EXAMINATION RESULTS

Preliminary Exam PART I, Statistics and Methods, Policy, and Economics

Result (Pass/Fail) _____

Feedback _____

Preliminary Exam PART II, PART II: Knowledge Discovery and Health Informatics Section

Result (Pass/Fail) _____

Feedback _____

HSR PhD Director: _____ Date _____
(Signature)

Form 4 – Independent Study



Department of Health Administration, Policy, and Informatics

4400 University Drive, MS 1J3, Fairfax, Virginia 22030

Phone: 703-993-1982; Fax: 703-993-1953

Independent Study Form

Date:

To:

From:

Title of Independent Study:

Purpose of Independent Study:

Learning Objectives:

Deliverables and Grading:

Agreed:

_____ (Student)

_____ (Instructor)

**Syllabus
HAP 940: Advanced Independent Study**

Course Description:

Prepares doctoral-level students for the field comprehensive exam in their program of study, and builds knowledge and skills in a specific or individualized health related topic. Designed for doctoral-level students, this independent study course is built by the student with the advice of the potential independent study faculty/dissertation director. It may involve data analysis, synthesis and/or evaluation of research evidence, theory and/or exemplary practice in an area of inquiry or scholarship depending on the student's program of doctoral study.

Course Objectives: The objectives of this course depend on the content of the independent study. The objectives are to be determined by the faculty/dissertation director in conjunction with the student.

Course Assignments:

Course assignments depend on the objectives of the independent study.

General Guidelines for the Independent Study:

- a. General theme or topic should be identified
- b. Relevance to the student's program of study should be specified
- c. Learning objectives to be achieved (listing what the student is to know or be able to do by the conclusion of the study)
- d. Learning activities to be undertaken or performed
- e. Procedure(s) to be followed
- f. Paper(s), project(s), or other product(s) to be prepared
- g. Tutorial schedule to be followed
- h. Evaluation procedures

Doctoral Program in Health Services Research (HSR)

Description of Field Examination

Student Name: _____ G# _____ Date: _____

Phone: _____ Email: _____

PhD Program Concentration: _____

Dissertation

Advisor _____

Description of Field Examination: Provide a description of the questions to be addressed by the student in this Field exam.

Field Examination Results

Field Exam

Date: _____

Result (Pass/Fail): _____

Feedback to the student: _____

Dissertation Advisor: _____
(Signature)

Dissertation Committee Member: _____
(Signature)

PhD Program Director: _____
(Signature)

Form 6 - Dissertation Committee Members

Doctoral Program in Health Services Research (HSR)

Dissertation Committee

Student Name: _____ G# _____ Date: _____

Phone: _____ Email: _____

PhD Program Concentration: _____

Dissertation Advisor/Committee Chair: _____

Dissertation Topic: _____

Dissertation Committee

Name

Signature

Date

Committee Chair and Affiliation

Member and Affiliation

Member and Affiliation

Member and Affiliation

Member and Affiliation

Student:

Signature

Date: _____

PhD Program Director:

Signature

Date: _____

Chair of HAPI:

Signature

Date: _____

HAP 998 Dissertation Proposal – Concept

STUDENT NAME: _____ FACULTY MENTOR NAME: _____

STUDENT EMAIL: _____ FACULTY EMAIL: _____

PROPOSED TERM: _____ CREDITS: _____

POTENTIAL DISSERTATION TOPIC:

ATTACHMENTS

Check the following boxes to confirm you have attached the specified items to this form:

- ☐ DISSERTATION PROPOSAL CONCEPT – Abstract (2-3 pages)
- ☐ ESTIMATED TIMELINE (*Table 1*)
- ☐ COMMITTEE MEMBERSHIP LIST (*Table 2*)

SIGNATURES

Signature

Date

Student _____

Faculty Mentor _____

PhD Program Director _____

DISSERTATION PROPOSAL CONCEPT (Abstract)

In a separate Word document, write an abstract (2-3 pages) that includes your:

- Overall research question with 2 or 3 study aims for your proposed dissertation topic.
- Study design (including methods and data) and potential contribution to knowledge.
- Specify if you plan to write a “3-essays model” or “Traditional single topic” dissertation.

For the “3-essays model”), be sure to include a short description of the following for each essay:

- Research question and/or study objective within each of the 3 essays.
- Study design (including methods and data) if it differs across the 3 essays.
- Potential contribution to knowledge based on the existing literature.

TIMELINE (Table 1)

Please include the expected dates to submit the following materials to the dissertation committee.

Table 1. Proposed timeline including term (e.g. Spring 2024) and anticipated due date (dd/mm/yy)

	TERM	DUE DATE
Rough proposal draft		
Final proposal draft		
Oral proposal presentation		
Revised proposal (if applicable)		

COMMITTEE MEMBERSHIP LIST (Table 2)

*Table 2. Proposed Committee Members (three minimum). If member is EXTERNAL to HAPI, please add asterisks (**)*

	FULL NAME	EMAIL	DEPARTMENT / COLLEGE
COMMITTEE CHAIR (internal)			
SECOND MEMBER			
THIRD MEMBER			
FOURTH MEMBER (optional if needed)			

Please provide a brief justification, consisting of approximately one or two sentences, explaining why the member was selected to serve on the dissertation committee. If the committee member does not possess graduate faculty status, please describe the steps taken to ensure they will attain graduate faculty status. Note that it is the responsibility of the PhD student and their Dissertation Chair to verify the committee member's graduate faculty status. If the proposed committee member does not currently hold graduate faculty status, it is incumbent upon the PhD student and Dissertation Chair to complete any paperwork.

JUSTIFICATION OF DISSERTATION COMMITTEE MEMBERS

COMMITTEE CHAIR – (Background, Area of Expertise)
SECOND MEMBER – (Background, Area of Expertise)
THIRD MEMBER - (Background, Area of Expertise)
FOURTH MEMBER (optional if needed)

SIGNATURES

	Signature	Date
<i>Dissertation Committee Chair</i>	_____	_____
<i>Second Member</i>	_____	_____
<i>Third Member</i>	_____	_____
<i>Fourth Member</i>	_____	_____

Dissertation Proposal Approval (PhD in HSR)

Student Name: _____ **G#** _____ **Date:** _____

PhD Program Concentration:

Proposed Dissertation Title:

Dissertation Abstract:

Attach a brief 1-page abstract of the dissertation proposal. This can be the same abstract as Form 6B.

Dissertation Committee Members

	Signature	Date
_____ Name of Committee Chair & Affiliation	_____	_____
_____ Name of Member & Affiliation	_____	_____
_____ Name of Member & Affiliation	_____	_____
_____ Name of Member & Affiliation	_____	_____

Student: _____ **Date:** _____
Signature

PhD Program Director: _____ **Date:** _____
Signature

Chair of HAPI: _____ **Date:** _____
Signature



**Doctoral Advancement to Candidacy
And Non-Course Requirements**

The Form is online and available through the Registrar's website.

<https://registrar.gmu.edu/forms/>

Please contact Mrs. Regina Young if you have any questions.

Form 9 – Final Program of Study

Doctoral Program in Health Services Research FINAL PROGRAM OF STUDY (Needed for Advancement to Candidacy)

Student Name: _____ G# _____ Date: _____

Phone: _____ E-mail: _____

PhD Program Concentration: _____

Academic Advisor: _____

Core Requirements	Credit Hours	Semester	Grade	Transfer of Credit			Substitutions
				Transferred Courses	Institution & Semester	Grade	
Concentration & Elective Courses (30 credits)							
Independent Study							
Dissertation Proposal							

Student Signature : _____ Date: _____

Advisor Signature: _____ Date: _____

Program Director Signature : _____ Date: _____

PhD Core Courses (Sequencing) Note: Prerequisites are highlighted	Semester when a course is offered	Instructor
FALL SEMESTER		
HI 671 - Health Care Databases Thurs. (4:30pm-7:10pm) in fall 2026	Fall, Spring, Summer	Dr. Abdul Hafeez
HAP 761 – Philosophy of Science and Research Methods Wed. (4:30pm-7:10pm) in fall 2026	Fall (1 st year)	Dr. Gibert Gimm
HI 780 – Data Mining in Health Care PhD students must complete HAP 671 before taking HAP 780	Fall, Summer	Dr. Janusz Wojtusiak
HAP 819 – Advanced Statistics in Health Services Research II Tues. (4:30pm-7:10pm) in fall 2026	Fall (1 st year)	Dr. James Shine
HAP 846 - Advanced Health Economics PhD students must complete HAP 835 before taking HAP 846	Fall (2 nd year)	Dr. Priyanka Anand
GCH 700 - Social & Ecological Determinants of Health	Fall or Spring	Varies
SPRING SEMESTER		
HAP 824 – Systematic Reviews and Meta-Analysis in HSR	Spring (1 st year) or Fall (2 nd year)	Dr. Alicia Hong
HAP 835 – Causal Inference in Health Services Research PhD students must complete HAP 819 before taking HAP 835	Spring (1 st year)	Dr. Alison Cuellar
HI 850-Health Informatics Research PhD students must complete HAP 780 before taking HAP 850	Spring (2 nd year)	Health Informatics Faculty
HAP 865 - Health Services Research Seminar	Spring (2 nd year)	Dr. Jeah Jung

HSR PhD CORE COURSE SEQUENCING - EXAMPLE

	Full-time student (Example) 3 courses per semester	Part-time student (Example) 2 courses per semester
Year 1		
Fall semester	HI 671 (HC Databases)	
	HAP 761 (Philosophy of Science)	HAP 761 (Philosophy of Science)
	HAP 819 (Stats 2)	HAP 819 (Stats 2)
Spring semester	HAP 835 (Casual Inference)	HAP 835 (Causal Inference)
	HAP 824 (Systematic Reviews)	HI 671 (HC databases)
	GCH 700 (Social Determinants)	
Year 2		
Fall semester	HI 780 (Data Mining)	HI 780 (Data Mining)
	HAP 846 (Advanced Health Econ)	HAP 846 (Advanced Health Econ)
	A concentration elective	
	<i>Students can take the PhD Prelim Exam in January or August.</i>	<i>Students can take the PhD Prelim Exam in January or August.</i>
Spring semester	HAP 865 (HSR Seminar)	HAP 865 (HSR Seminar)
	HI 850 (HI Seminar)	HI 850 (HI Seminar)
	HAP 940 (independent study)	

Notes:

(1) The sequence and schedule of mainly core courses in the first two years of study as listed in the above Tables do not include summer courses that PhD students (full- or part-time) may take.

(2) PhD students who have taken Master's level courses within the past 10 years can apply for a transfer of credit during the first year by **completing Form 1** and obtaining **approvals** from their academic advisor and the PhD program director