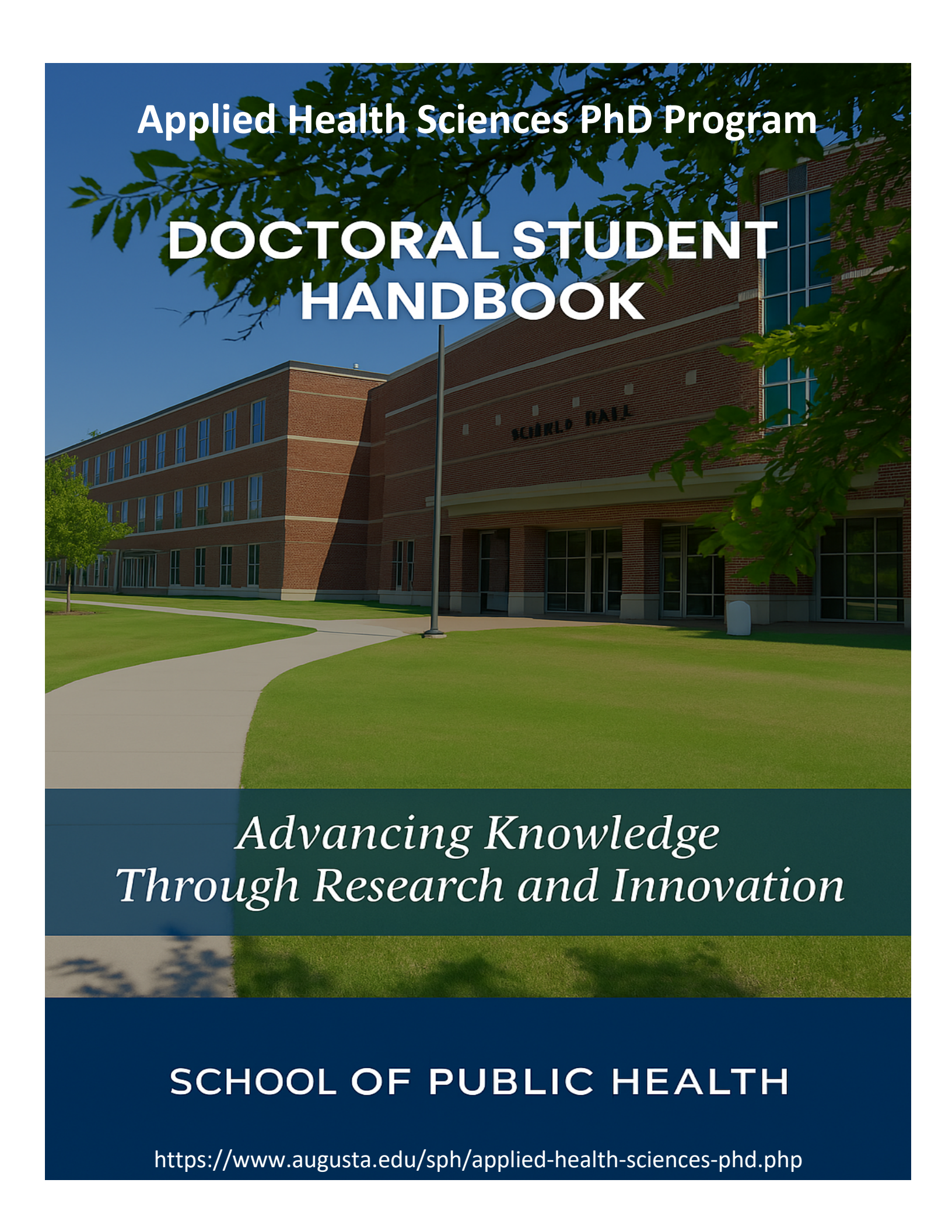


The background of the cover is a photograph of a large, multi-story brick building with many windows. In front of the building is a green lawn and a paved walkway. There are trees with green leaves in the foreground and background. The sky is blue.

Applied Health Sciences PhD Program

DOCTORAL STUDENT HANDBOOK

*Advancing Knowledge
Through Research and Innovation*

SCHOOL OF PUBLIC HEALTH

<https://www.augusta.edu/sph/applied-health-sciences-phd.php>

Preface

This Doctoral Student Handbook is a comprehensive guide designed to support you throughout your academic journey. This handbook serves as a central resource, offering essential information about program requirements, key milestones, policies, and available support services. Whether you are just beginning or well into your research, we hope this guide empowers you to navigate your doctoral experience with clarity, confidence, and purpose.

We strive to provide the most up-to-date and comprehensive information to support you throughout your doctoral journey. However, due to the evolving nature of academic programs and policies, occasional omissions or updates may occur. Any new or revised information will be communicated to students in a timely manner. If you have questions, need clarification, or encounter any concerns, please reach out to your faculty mentor and/or the program director – we are here to guide and support you every step of the way.

Key program contacts:

Dr. Vahé Heboyan

Professor and Program Director

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Ms. Kim Dyches

Program Coordinator

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This handbook was developed with the support of artificial intelligence (AI) tools to assist in drafting, editing, and organizing content. All AI-generated material was reviewed and refined by the Program Director to ensure accuracy, clarity, and alignment with program standards.

Welcome Message from the Dean

Dear PhD in Applied Health Science Students,

Welcome to Augusta University School of Public Health! You are on a transformative journey of advanced scholarship and research that has the potential to make a profound impact on public health locally and globally.

As scholars and innovators, you hold the key to addressing some of the most pressing health challenges of our time. Throughout your time here, you will have the opportunity to collaborate with world-class faculty, engage in cutting-edge research, and develop the skills necessary to lead in your field.

We are here to support you every step of the way. The path ahead will be rigorous, but it will also be deeply rewarding. Together, let us advance the frontiers of knowledge and contribute to a healthier world.

Once again, welcome - I look forward to witnessing all you will achieve.

Warm regards,

Teresa M. Waters, PhD
Professor and Dean
School of Public Health



Welcome from the Program Director

Dear Students:

Welcome to our doctoral program! We are excited to have you join our academic community and embark on this exciting journey of discovery and innovation.

As you begin your PhD studies, you are stepping into a world of rigorous research, intellectual growth, and academic excellence. Our program is designed to challenge you, inspire you, and support you in achieving your highest potential. You will have the opportunity to work with distinguished faculty, engage in cutting-edge research, and contribute to the advancement of knowledge in your field.



We understand that the path to a PhD can be demanding, but it is also incredibly rewarding. You will develop critical thinking skills, deepen your expertise, and make meaningful contributions to your discipline. Remember, you are not alone on this journey. Our faculty, staff, and fellow students are here to support you every step of the way.

We encourage you to take advantage of the resources available to you, participate in seminars and workshops, and collaborate with your peers. Your time here will be filled with challenges, but also with opportunities for growth and success.

As Albert Einstein once said, "*Life is like riding a bicycle. To keep your balance, you must keep moving.*" I challenge you to keep moving forward, stay curious and hungry for knowledge, and embrace the journey ahead. Importantly, do not forget to have fun along the way!

Once again, welcome to our program. We look forward to seeing the remarkable work you will accomplish and the impact you will make in your field.

Best regards,

Vahé Heboyan, PhD

Professor and Program Director

Applied Health Sciences PhD Program

Health Management, Economics, and Policy Department

School of Public Health

A. PROGRAM OVERVIEW

Our PhD in Applied Health Sciences program offers an advanced research-focused program that examines various aspects of population health, emphasizing interdisciplinary approaches while preparing graduates for academic and non-academic careers.

The degree is designed for individuals seeking to deepen their understanding of public health and health services research (HSR) through advanced coursework, rigorous research, and the completion of a doctoral dissertation.

By choosing to earn your doctorate in Applied Health Sciences from Augusta University's School of Public Health, you will be part of a program seeking to produce public health and healthcare researchers prepared to advance the discovery, dissemination, and application of new knowledge in public health and health sciences.

Key Highlights:

- Offers a strong methods-oriented, didactic program combined with opportunities to conduct advanced health outcomes and health services research.
- Trains graduates to analyze data from diverse sources, apply appropriate analytic methods, address complex public health and healthcare challenges, and contribute to the population health improvements in various settings.
- Equips students with the skills and knowledge needed to conduct rigorous original research and contribute to the advancement of health outcomes and health services research.
- Prepares doctoral students to make meaningful contributions to population health improvement through original research, critical analysis, and the application of their expertise in various professional settings.
- Program Length: Minimum 3 years to maximum 7 years.

Program website: <https://www.augusta.edu/sph/applied-health-sciences-phd.php>

B. PROGRAM FACULTY

The faculty at Augusta University's School of Public Health are a diverse and accomplished group of scholars, educators, and practitioners dedicated to advancing public health through research, teaching, and community engagement. Their expertise spans a wide range of disciplines, including epidemiology, biostatistics, health policy, health economics, behavioral health, and data science. Faculty members are actively involved in cutting-edge research and are committed to mentoring the next generation of public health professionals. To learn more about their backgrounds, research interests, and areas of specialization, please visit the [School of Public Health Faculty Directory](#).

C. COURSE OF STUDY; PROGRESSION THROUGH THE PROGRAM ROADMAP

Embarking on a doctoral journey is both a profound intellectual pursuit and a deeply personal transformation. It is a path marked by curiosity, perseverance, and discovery – where questions evolve, ideas mature, and scholars grow into independent researchers. While each journey is unique, there are key milestones that shape the experience and guide the way forward. The following diagram outlines the main steps involved in this rigorous yet rewarding process.

PhD Journey: Key Milestones



Below, you will find a more detailed look at what each step involves – designed to help you navigate the journey with clarity, confidence, and purpose.

1. **Coursework.** The journey begins with intensive coursework, providing foundational knowledge and introducing students to advanced research methodologies essential for their doctoral studies. This initial phase helps students build a strong academic base and identify potential areas of specialization.

The program curriculum schema is displayed in Table 1, which provides detailed outlines of the coursework in this program. This structured overview is designed to guide doctoral candidates through a rigorous and comprehensive academic journey. The curriculum is strategically organized into three main components: core courses, which establish foundational knowledge and theoretical frameworks; elective courses, which allow for specialization and interdisciplinary exploration; and research courses, which are integral to developing scholarly inquiry and methodological expertise. This tripartite structure ensures that students not only gain depth in their chosen field but also acquire the critical thinking and research skills necessary for original contributions to academic and professional discourse.

Students will follow the course sequence as outlined in the curriculum schema, progressing through the program in a structured and intentional manner. While the majority of courses are delivered in person to foster engagement and collaboration, select courses are available in an online format to provide flexibility.

Research training begins in the summer of the first year with the Investigation of a Problem (APHS 9210) course, where students initiate exploration of their research interests and begin shaping their dissertation concept. This course continues each semester until students complete their core and elective coursework, pass their comprehensive examinations (end of the second year), and successfully defend their dissertation proposal. At that point, students transition into the Dissertation Research (APHS 9300) course, which they will enroll in continuously until graduation.

Full-time students are required to maintain a minimum enrollment of 9 (nine) credit hours each semester, including summer terms, to ensure steady academic progress.

Important considerations for international students

- Graduate students who are in international student status are required to be enrolled in a “full course of study”, which is 9 (nine) credit hours, with no more than 1 course (worth 3 credit hours or less) online, to remain in compliance with student visa requirements. Courses that are considered “online” at AU for this purpose are courses that are coded “partially at a distance,” “fully at a distance,” or “entirely at a distance.”
- The restrictions on online courses apply only to the number of credit hours required to meet a student’s “full course of study” requirements for international students. As long as students meet these requirements, they may enroll in additional online or distance-learning courses, as desired, and those courses would still count towards earning their degree.
- Since the PhD in Applied Health Sciences is a 12-month program, international students in the program must be enrolled in a “full course of study” in the summer as well.

Transfer/Substitution of Courses

As a general rule, transferring graduate-level courses from other institutions is strongly discouraged. A student wanting to transfer graduate-level courses from another institution must submit to the AHS PhD Program Director a list of courses for which transfer credit or substitution is requested, along with descriptions, syllabi, topics covered and textbooks used for the corresponding equivalent courses, taken as part of a prior graduate degree program. The Program Director, in consultation with the PhD Program Faculty Committee, will evaluate the request and make the final decision regarding the transfer. Also, only under extenuating circumstances, the PhD program may allow the transfer of core courses. Transfer of graduate credit is never automatic, and any credits transferred do not reduce the requirement for the degree. Please see the Augusta University Graduate and Professional Regulations on transferring credits at <http://catalog.augusta.edu/content.php?catoid=32&navoid=3765#-transfer-credit>.

A student entering from Augusta University Master of Public Health (MPH) program, who has taken courses that are also part of the PhD coursework, will be required to substitute those with more rigorous equivalent courses at the approval of the Program Director. A “Transfer Credit Authorization Form” must be completed and approved by the AHS PhD Program Faculty Committee, the Graduate Program Director, the Department Chair, and the Dean of TGS.

2. **Major Advisor Selection.** The doctoral major advisor (also known as the PhD advisor, dissertation advisor, or doctoral supervisor) plays a central and multidimensional role in a PhD program. the advisor will guide your research direction, help you develop and refine your dissertation topic, and provide ongoing feedback on your academic work. They will mentor your professional growth by offering career advice, connecting you with opportunities like conferences, publications, and networking with other professionals in the field, and helping you build essential skills needed for your success. Additionally, the advisor will assist with forming your dissertation committee, ensuring you meet program milestones, and navigating program and institutional requirements. The advisor will also serve as a source of personal support and advocacy, helping you manage challenges and stay motivated throughout your doctoral journey.

When selecting a major advisor for a PhD program, students should prioritize alignment between their research interests and the advisor's expertise. It is important to assess the advisor's mentorship style, availability, and communication habits to ensure a good working relationship. Evaluating their academic reputation, publication record, and the success of their former students can provide insight into their effectiveness as a mentor. Additionally, students should consider whether the advisor has the institutional support and resources necessary to facilitate their research. Talking to current or past advisees can offer valuable perspectives on what to expect.

The Major Advisor must be a full-time faculty at the AU School of Public Health and have an AU Graduate School faculty appointment with major advisor privileges. You can check if a faculty has such an appointment at: <https://www.augusta.edu/gradschool/faculty-directory.php>. Additionally, Graduate School policy and forms for faculty appointment are available at <https://www.augusta.edu/gradschool/faculty-resources.php>.

3. **Advisory Committee meetings.** Forming an advisory committee ensures diverse expert perspectives and multidisciplinary guidance, enriching the research and offering robust academic oversight. This committee typically consists of faculty members whose expertise aligns with different aspects of the student's research. Students are required to meet with their advisory committee at least one time each semester to discuss their progress in coursework and research and seek committee input and advice.
4. **Comprehensive exams.** The comprehensive examination for Applied Health Sciences PhD students serves as a critical milestone that evaluates students' readiness to advance to the dissertation phase. Its primary purpose is to assess the student's mastery of foundational public health knowledge, including core and elective content. It also tests the student's ability to integrate and synthesize information across the field, critically appraise research literature, and demonstrate sound judgment in applying research methods. Additionally, the exam confirms the student's depth of understanding in their area of specialization and their preparedness to undertake independent, rigorous research. Successfully passing the comprehensive exam signifies that the student is equipped to contribute meaningfully to the field of public health through their doctoral research. Upon conclusion of the coursework, students will take a Comprehensive Exam. Comprehensive exam consists of a written and an oral component.

Phase	Format	Audience	Focus
Written Exam	Group (Cohort-based)	Faculty Panel	Core research course knowledge
Oral Exam	Individual (Committee-based)	Advisory Committee	Research readiness and disciplinary depth

Written Exam

Timing: Full-time students will take this exam at the end of Year 2 and part-time students will take it once their core and elective courses are completed. This exam will be arranged towards the end of the 2nd year's Spring semester.

Format:

- Closed book, no phones or other electronic devices. Students will take this exam on a program-provided computer that has no internet access.
- Administered to the entire cohort simultaneously.
- Content for this exam will be based on the core and elective courses.
- Duration: 4 hours

Assessment Criteria:

- Accuracy and depth of responses
- Application of research methods
- Clarity of argumentation
- Integration of theory and practice

Written Exam Outcome

Result	Description
Pass	Student advances to oral examination
Fail	Retake opportunity ¹ or program exit

Oral Exam

Students are allowed to advance to oral examination if they pass the written examination. Oral examination takes place within 2 weeks of passing the written examination. Additional guidance on the comprehensive exam's structure and logistics will be provided.

Additional information about comprehensive examinations will be communicated to the students.

5. Dissertation Work

The dissertation phase is the capstone of your PhD journey, transforming your research ideas into a significant academic contribution. This process involves a series of critical steps, from formalizing your research plan to presenting your original findings for final approval.

¹ Students will have 1 (one) attempt to retake the written examination.



Dissertation Proposal

A dissertation proposal is a formal document that outlines the intended research for your doctoral dissertation. It serves as a roadmap for your study, detailing the research questions, objectives, theoretical framework, methodology, and significance of the work. The proposal demonstrates your understanding of the topic and your plan for contributing original knowledge to your field. It is reviewed and approved by the doctoral advisory committee, marking a critical milestone in your doctoral journey.

In our doctoral program, we offer two primary formats for the dissertation – a traditional and “three-paper” dissertation. Below you will find a brief description of both. We strongly encourage you to consult your research mentor/advisor on the selection of the dissertation format.

Traditional dissertation. A traditional dissertation is a comprehensive research project that involves the following key components:

- **Introduction:** This section outlines the research question, objectives, and significance of the study.
- **Literature Review:** A review of existing research related to the topic, identifying gaps that the dissertation aims to fill.
- **Methodology:** Detailed description of the research methods used to collect and analyze data.
- **Results:** Presentation of the findings from the research.
- **Discussion:** Interpretation of the results, linking them back to the research question and literature review.
- **Conclusion:** Summary of the research findings and their implications, along with suggestions for future research.

‘Three-paper’ dissertation. A ‘three-paper’ dissertation is a dissertation format where the final document consists of three related, publishable papers, along with an introduction (provides an overview of the general topic and links the three papers), a literature review (reviews existing research related to the topic), and a conclusion that ties the papers together. This approach is an

alternative to the traditional dissertation format, which typically involves a single, comprehensive document. In this format, each paper is designed to be published in a peer-reviewed academic journal, the papers are related but can be read independently, and the introduction and conclusion chapters tie the papers together into a cohesive body of work. The advantage of the 'three-paper' dissertation is that at its conclusion, students already have at least one published peer-reviewed manuscript and two submission-ready manuscripts written.

Admission to Candidacy

After successfully completing comprehensive exams and receiving approval for the dissertation proposal, students are formally admitted to candidacy. This milestone signifies that the student has demonstrated academic readiness and research capability to pursue independent scholarly work. Being admitted to candidacy means the student is now recognized as a *doctoral candidate* – a title that reflects their advanced standing in the program. From this point forward, the student focuses primarily on conducting original research and writing the dissertation under the guidance of their advisor and committee.

Conducting Dissertation Research

Following the successful presentation and approval of the dissertation proposal, students begin the critical phase of conducting their research. This involves implementing the approved research design – refining research questions if needed, collecting data through appropriate methods, and analyzing the results with academic rigor. Throughout this process, students are expected to adhere to ethical research standards and maintain regular communication with their advisor and committee. This stage is where the core contribution to knowledge is developed, requiring persistence, critical thinking, and adaptability.

Writing the Dissertation

As research findings take shape, students transition into writing the dissertation – a structured and scholarly document that presents their research in a clear, coherent, and compelling manner. This process includes drafting individual chapters and/or papers, integrating feedback from advisors, and revising for clarity and academic quality. Writing the dissertation is both a creative and analytical endeavor, culminating in a final manuscript that reflects the student's original contribution to their field.

Dissertation Defense

The dissertation defense is the culminating event of the doctoral journey, where students formally present and defend their research before a committee of faculty members. During the defense, students summarize their study's purpose, methods, findings, and contributions, and respond to questions and feedback from the committee. This is both an academic evaluation and a scholarly dialogue, designed to assess the quality, originality, and significance of the work. A successful defense signifies that the student has met the highest standards of doctoral scholarship and is ready to finalize and submit the dissertation.

Dissertation Submission Process

Once the dissertation has been successfully defended and approved by the advisory committee, students must follow Augusta University's formal submission procedures. This includes preparing the manuscript according to the formatting guidelines outlined in the [Thesis/Dissertation Preparation Booklet](#), submitting the corrected draft to the major advisor, committee members, and designated readers, and completing the online graduation application. Final submission is done electronically through the [ProQuest ETD Administrator](#), which facilitates archiving and publication. Students are encouraged to attend an ETD Boot Camp and consult with the Graduate School and University Libraries to ensure all requirements are met. For full details, visit the [Graduate School Dissertation Page](#).

More information is available at:

- Augusta University Libraries: Electronic Theses and Dissertations (ETD) - <https://guides.augusta.edu/etd>
- Augusta University Graduate School Dissertation Guidelines, Policies, and Forms - <https://www.augusta.edu/gradschool/dissertation.php>

Table 1. Applied Health Sciences Curriculum Schema 2025 Enrollment

Year	Semester	Course		Modality	Credits
		Prefix	Number	Title	
1	Fall			Foundations of Public Health*	n/a
1	Fall	EPID	7130	Introduction to Epidemiology	3
1	Fall	STAT	7010	Biostatistics I	3
1	Fall	MPHC	8011	Ethical Conduct in Research	1
1	Fall	APHS	8503	Research Process	4
1	Fall	APHS	9010	Doctoral Seminar - Research in Public Health	1
					12
1	Spring	EPID	7370	Intermediate Epidemiology	3
1	Spring	STAT	7020	Biostatistics II	3
1	Spring	APHS	9020	Qualitative Research Methods	3
1	Spring	APHS	8130	Grant Writing	3
1	Spring	APHS	9010	Doctoral Seminar - Research in Public Health	1
					13
1	Summer	MPHS	8300	Social Determinants of Health and Health Disparities	3
1	Summer	APHS	9210	Investigation of a Problem	6
					9
2	Fall	APHS	9040	Methods in Health Services Research	3
2	Fall			ELECTIVE - STAT 7360 (Systematic Review)	3
2	Fall			ELECTIVE COURSE	3
2	Fall	APHS	9010	Doctoral Seminar - Research in Public Health	1
2	Fall	APHS	8012	Scientific Communications	1
					11
2	Spring	APHS	9030	Methods in Health Outcomes Research	3
2	Spring			ELECTIVE - APHS 9050 (Methods in Econ Evaluations)	3
2	Spring			ELECTIVE COURSE	3
2	Spring	APHS	9210	Investigation of a Problem	3
					9
Research Courses					
2	Summer	APHS	9210	Investigation of a Problem (min 6 credits)	3 to 9
3-5	Every	APHS	9300	Dissertation Research (min 18 credits)**	1 to 12
** to enter APHS 9300, student must be admitted to candidacy (passed comps & dissertation research proposal)					
Elective Courses					
<i>Select APHS 9050 and STAT 7360 and 6 credits from remaining for 12 credits total</i>					
	Semester	Prefix	Number	Title	Credits
	Spring	APHS	9050	Methods of Economic Evaluation of Health Projects, Programs, &	3
	Fall	STAT	7360	Systematic Review	3
	TBA	APHS	7001	Educating for Public Health: Theory, objectives, and Assessment	3
	every	MPHC	8600	Fundamentals for Health Promotion	3
	every	MPHS	8200	Integration Social & Behl Theory into Public Health	3
	every	MPHS	8400	Soc Beh Change at Individual, HH, Comm Levels	3
		APHS	9001	Advanced Topics (3)	3

* This is a foundational course required for all programs at the School of Public Health. It is offered by Boston University. We will send additional information in a due time.

D. GRADES, ACADEMIC PERFORMANCE AND PROGRESS

1. Overall Progress

Proficiency in the classroom and collaborative research, satisfactory progress in doctoral research, and continuing professional behavior are required of all students. A student who is unable to maintain consistent overall progress may ultimately be recommended for dismissal. The student has the opportunity to appeal the decision of his/her dismissal. The policies of the Graduate School on dismissal from the program and appeal of dismissal are described in detail in the Augusta University Student Manual.

Applied Health Sciences PhD program general policy (GP):

- a) A student who receives a grade below a C in any of the core courses will be recommended to the Dean of Graduate School for removal from the program immediately. A student who receives a grade lower than what is minimally required in any course, if it does not call for the removal from the program, will be placed on academic probation for a maximum of one calendar year. Within that timeframe the student must retake the course and obtain a better grade. Failure to improve the grade within a year will result in dismissal from the program.
- b) Only courses with a grade lower than the minimum grade required by the AHS PhD program may be repeated.
- c) A student on academic probation is not eligible for an Assistantship unless the PhD Faculty Committee, Research Advisor, Program Director, and School of Public Health Dean approve an exception.
- d) A student on academic probation is not eligible to graduate.
- e) A student who obtains an incomplete grade ("I") will have one semester to have it converted to another grade. If work is not completed within that time, the grade will be changed to F.

2. Specific Performance Requirements for the Ph.D. Program

Satisfactory progress toward the PhD degree requires that a student maintain a cumulative GPA of 3.25 for all didactic courses attempted. In particular:

- A. A minimum grade of B is required for all 7000-level, 8000-level, and 9000-level core courses.
- B. A student who receives a grade below B in any one of the core courses will be immediately placed on academic probation for a maximum of one calendar year. If the situation arises, refer to GP a) and b).
- C. A minimum grade of C (or S in courses graded S or U) must be earned in all other courses. A student is allowed to have a maximum of 6 credit hours of C grades in the entire curriculum. When such a maximum is exceeded, a student will be immediately placed on academic probation for a maximum of one calendar year.
- D. Any student whose cumulative GPA falls below 3.25 in an academic year is placed on academic probation. Such status is noted on the student's academic record (transcript). While on probation, the student must earn a minimum GPA of 3.50 during each semester until the cumulative GPA is raised to at least 3.25. If a student fails to earn at least 3.50 during each semester while on probation, he/she may be dismissed from the program.

3. Technical Standards

All AHS PhD graduate students must follow the Technical Standards required by Augusta University Graduate School and any violation of the terms listed in the Technical Standards may lead to probation or dismissal from the program.

E. FREQUENTLY USED FORMS

Doctoral students are required to complete various administrative and academic forms throughout their program. Below is a list of frequently used forms (not exhaustive), all of which are available on the Graduate School's official webpage at <https://www.augusta.edu/gradschool/student-resources.php>.

All forms must be prepared and submitted for signature with the support of the Program Coordinator, who will ensure that they are completed accurately and routed to the appropriate individuals for approval. Students should never submit forms directly for signatures on their own, as this may result in delays or processing errors.

- Major Advisor Selection Form
- Advisory Committee Form
- Advisory Committee Meeting Report Form
- Coursework Proposal Form
- Research Progress Report
- Research Proposal Approval Form
- Research Proposal Confirmation Form
- Request for Reader Form
- Timeline Form
- Faculty Agreement Form; Date and Time of Final Oral Examination
- Electronic Thesis and Dissertation Submission for Publication Approval Form
- Dissertation Approval Form
- Defense of PhD Dissertation Procedures
- Announcement Template
- Comprehensive Examination Pre-Approval
- Comprehensive Examination Results
- Admission to Candidacy

F. FINANCIAL SUPPORT

Our PhD Program offers a limited number of Graduate Research Assistantships (GRA), which are awarded to qualified students admitted into the program. The assistantships may be continued contingent on satisfactory progress toward the degree and availability of funds. Should a student fail to meet the academic standards of the AHS PhD graduate programs or the Graduate School, they forfeit the award. Appeals and grievances should be directed to the Director of the Graduate Program. (See the Augusta University Student Manual for other grievance procedures.)

A research assistantship entails 19 hours of work a week on average. No student should be devoting more time than this to assistantship duties at the expense of his/her studies. Faculty from other departments may support research assistantships, and students are expected to perform professionally and to account for their time to the AHS PhD Faculty overseeing the work. A student is expected to fulfill all duties assigned in a timely and professional manner at all times.

Roles and responsibilities of the GRA

- Work 19 hours per week on research projects under the supervision of the Faculty Mentor.
- Assist in research activities as directed by the Faculty Mentor.
- Maintain a high level of professionalism and academic integrity.
- Meet regularly with the Faculty Mentor to develop work plans, discuss scientific approaches, and set timelines for completing tasks. Submit regular progress reports (last week of the semester) to the Faculty Mentor and copy the Program Director.

Responsibilities of the Faculty Mentor

- Provide structured mentorship and guidance to the GRA, including work assignments and timelines for their completion.
- Ensure the GRA's work aligns with the core competencies of the PhD in AHS program.
- Conduct regular meetings (at least once a week) with the GRA to discuss work assignments, monitor progress, review work products, and provide feedback.

Research Productivity Metrics

The GRA will work with the Faculty Mentor to ensure GRA productivity as outlined below:

- GRA should publish at least one peer-reviewed article within each academic year (12-month period). During the first year, a manuscript that is under review in a peer-reviewed journal will satisfy this requirement but can only be counted once for meeting this annual goal.
- GRA should make at least one presentation at a regional or national conference in each academic year (12 months). As a PhD student in our program, the GRA may apply for travel funding from the AU Graduate School for up to \$1,000. The GRA may also apply for up to \$1,000 travel funding from SPH for domestic travel.
- Faculty Mentors are also encouraged to offer their GRAs other research mentorship opportunities, such as participating in grant writing and/or community-based research project implementation.

Student Breaks and University Holidays

Individuals on a GRA, GTA, or GA are considered to be not only a student of the institution but also an employee. They are considered an employee without benefits and do not accrue annual, or sick leave as full-time benefit-eligible employees do at the institution. As an employee of the institution, you are only given official institutional holidays as time off from work.

Approved Leave or Vacation

The faculty understands the need for a break or vacation. All time away from the institution that does not coincide with an official institutional holiday needs to be approved by the Graduate Program Director, the major advisor, and the SPH Dean. A form must be duly filled and submitted for approval. Approval will be granted on a case-by-case basis.

Leave of Absence

Course registration each semester indicates that a student is making progress toward his/her degree objective. Students who do not plan to enroll for an upcoming semester should request a leave of absence from the Graduate School Dean's office through the Graduate Program Director. Failure to do so could result in being required to reapply for admission. A leave of absence does not modify a student's obligation to complete the degree within the required time limit. Any student granted a leave of absence by the Graduate School must withdraw from Augusta University in accordance with the institutional Student Withdrawal Policy: <https://www.augusta.edu/registrar/withdrawal.php>.

SPH hardship support

The School of Public Health (SPH) at Augusta University has established the SPH Student Scholarship Fund for students who demonstrate financial hardship. Administered by the SPH Office of Academic and Student Affairs (OASA), this fund provides limited financial assistance to enrolled students facing financial hardship. Scholarship funds are available for both online and on-campus students at SPH.

How the Fund Operates

Students who are experiencing financial hardship are encouraged to apply for an SPH Student Scholarship through the SPH OASA. Students can receive up to \$1,000 to cover the costs of tuition, room and board, books, and/or student fees. Applications must include a letter describing the situation (see Eligibility Criteria below) and necessary documentation. These scholarships are intended as one-time financial support and are non-renewable. Applicants may be required to meet with SPH Associate Dean for Academic and Student Affairs to discuss their application. The Council of Program Directors will review the submitted applications and allocate the available scholarship funds based on need.

Eligibility Criteria (All must be met):

- Applicants must be currently enrolled in one of the programs of AU SPH.
- Applicants must have financial hardship.
- Applicants must be able to provide sufficient documentation of financial hardship.
- Students with a graduate assistantship, such as GRA and GTA, are not eligible to apply.
- Students on Augusta University Tuition Assistance Program (TAP) are not eligible to apply.

G. PHD PROGRAM CHECKLIST

No.	Milestone	Deadline	Status
1	Major advisor selection		☐
2	Coursework design		☐
3	Advisory Committee selection		☐
4	Completion of core courses		☐
5	Completion of elective courses		☐
6	Completion of research courses		☐
7	Comprehensive examinations		☐
8	Dissertation prospectus defense		☐
9	Completion of the dissertation		☐
10	Dissertation defense		☐
11	Dissertation submission to the Graduate School		☐
12	Exit interview with the Program Director		☐