



## **Department of Public Health**

*Dr. Suzanne Lazorick, Chair*

# **Program Manual 2025-2026 DrPH Health Policy Administration & Leadership (HPAL)**

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## Welcome and Introduction

Congratulations on your acceptance into the Doctor of Public Health, Health Policy Administration and Leadership Concentration (DrPH HPAL). The enclosed handbook contains guiding principles, degree specific information as well as policies and procedures to guide you to degree completion.

The DrPH HPAL degree is offered by the Department of Public Health at the Brody School of Medicine, East Carolina University. This program boasts unique strengths, including competency-based learning, practice-oriented education, and evidence-based teaching. The faculty involved in the DrPH HPAL concentration are multidisciplinary, student-focused, and recognized leaders in public health research and practice. Instruction is provided by both the Department of Public Health faculty and the Health Services Information Management faculty from Allied Health.

Our students come from diverse backgrounds reflecting the diversity of public health including government, non-government, private and non-profit health care institutions. A common thread our students share is that they are committed to the practice of public health and dedicated to serving their communities. On behalf of my colleagues in the department of public health, health policy administration concentration and faculty from health services information management, we welcome you as you begin your DrPH HPAL degree journey.

**Dr. N. Ruth Gaskins Little**  
DrPH HPAL Program Director

## **Mission**

The mission of the department of public health is to promote health and well-being of communities across North Carolina and beyond through innovative education, research and service.

## **Guiding Principles**

- Provide accessible, stakeholder-informed learning opportunities
- Conduct applied and impactful research
- Serve communities through collaboration
- Advance the health of rural populations
- Develop professionals who adapt to meet current challenges

## **Vision**

Our vision is to be a national model for engaging with communities to address regional needs and rural health disparities.

# Faculty

Department	Faculty Name	Education
BSOM Dept of Public Health	N. Ruth Little	EdD, MPH
BSOM Dept of Public Health	Huabin Luo	PhD, MA
BSOM Dept of Public Health	Doyle (Skip) Cummings	PharmD
BSOM Dept of Public Health	Rashmita Basu	PhD, MS
BSOM Dept of Public Health	Kavita Mosalpuria	PhD, MHA, MBBS
BSOM Dept of Public Health	Qiang Qu	PhD, Pstat
BSOM Dept of Public Health	Jimmy Clifford	PhD, MS
BSOM Dept of Bioethics	Bege Dauda	PhD, MPH
BSOM Dept of Bioethics	Sheena Eagan	PhD, MPH
Allied Health HSIM	Ray Hylock	PhD, MS

## Admission Information

We are delighted that you are interested in applying to the DrPH HPAL degree. Admission into the graduate programs within the Brody School of Medicine, Department of Public Health is competitive; and decisions are based on the application as a whole. The DrPH degree is nationally accredited by the Council on Education for Public Health. We are unable to accommodate international applicants at this time.

**FYI regarding the SOPHAS application fee:** Applicants may apply for a [fee waiver through SOPHAS](#), as instructed. However, if your fee waiver application is declined and you are impacted by financial hardship, please contact the ECU DrPH Program Director to inquire about available resources.

## Deadlines

Applications for the DrPH HPAL degree are accepted for **Fall** admission only every year. Applications and ALL supporting documents must be **uploaded and verified** in SOPHAS no later than the [DrPH HPAL Application Deadline](#) to be considered for admission. It is highly recommended that your application is uploaded in SOPHAS with all supporting documents received by SOPHAS **a minimum of**

**(4) weeks but ideally no later than (8) weeks** prior to the April 15<sup>th</sup> application deadline date. All applications must be **verified and have all supporting materials** to be considered for admission. **Early application is highly recommended.**

What does it mean to be **verified** in SOPHAS? **Verification** in SOPHAS is the process used to ensure all of an applicant's coursework is entered correctly and consistently. This standardization is achieved by using the applicant's coursework to create a standard set of grade point averages (GPA)s, ensuring they are compared to other applicants fairly and equally. Several things happen during verification including comparing all components of coursework to the official transcripts received. Each course entered in the transcript entry section is placed under a specific course subject category, and each grade entered is converted to a CAS grade value. Then, GPAs are calculated using the converted grade values. Lastly, degrees are authenticated. Once verification is completed, the applicant's application status will move from Complete to Verified. **An application will not be processed until it is verified, and all supporting documents have been received in SOPHAS.**

*(Important: Your application will be marked as incomplete and will not be considered for admission if any of the supporting documents are not in SOPHAS by the deadline date.)*

- February 1 - Fall priority admission deadline for consideration for DrPH HPAL graduate assistantship (for full-time students)
- April 15- Final deadline for ALL applicants. Note applying before the deadline date will NOT give SOPHAS time to verify your application. Only verified applications can be reviewed

## Application Timeline

Please allow enough time for processing when submitting an application and supporting documents. You are encouraged to apply early. The entire admissions application process can take **approximately twelve (12) weeks**. SOPHAS takes approximately **4 weeks** to verify an application before the university can begin reviewing an application. Once the university begins reviewing the application, it can take approximately **8 weeks** before an admissions decision is made. **Important to Note:** Processing times vary throughout the cycle; therefore this timeline may not apply to every applicant's situation. It is highly recommended that you request official transcripts/test scores, and reference letters **early as this information is essential for the verification process; a minimum of (4) weeks but ideally no later than eight (8) weeks** prior to the April 15<sup>th</sup> application deadline date. Keep in mind that it takes 7-10 business days from the date of receipt to post transcripts and official test scores to your application.

Evaluations or Letters of Recommendation are immediately updated once received from your recommender.

Please see this helpful timeline link: [SOPHAS Quick Start Guide](#)

- **SOPHAS Timeline** - To ensure your app is on time, all materials should be received by SOPHAS at **least eight (8) weeks** prior to the ECU BSOM DrPH application deadline date. Once your application is considered complete, it can take approximately **four (4) weeks** to be processed and verified by SOPHAS.
- **Once you complete your SOPHAS application, you also have to apply to the ECU Graduate School.** This fee is \$75.00. Information from SOPHAS is pulled to your ECU application but you must complete BOTH the SOPHAS and ECU application. You are encouraged to apply the ECU Graduate School immediately after completing your SOPHAS application!
- **ECU Graduate School Timeline** – The ECU Graduate School does not review an application until every official document has been received and verified by SOPHAS. It can take approximately **eight (8) weeks** for a completed application to be processed
- **ECU Admissions Committee Review Steps:** (1) Your completed/verified application is reviewed by the admissions committee, (2) Selected applicants will be invited to provide a writing sample. (3) Selected applicants are invited for a virtual interview. (4) Once an admissions decision has been made, students will receive an admission notification of accepted, denied, or waitlisted.
- **Waitlist** - Applicants **may be placed on a waitlist** to be considered for admission later in the admissions review cycle. In this case, the applicant will be notified by email and offered the opportunity to remain on the waitlist or to be removed from the applicant pool. Waitlist candidates will receive information regarding their **final status from ECU Graduate School.**

## Application Support

For technical support questions such as how to submit supporting documents, please visit the [SOPHAS Applicant Help Center](#).

## Program Description

The Doctor of Public Health in **Health Policy Administration and Leadership** prepares graduates for positions with preparation for executive administrative leadership, research and teaching in academic settings.

For more information on our programs, visit [Department of Public Health](#).

## **Application Requirements For Regular Admission\***

We are unable to accommodate international applicants at this time. Admission to the DrPH HPAL degree has the following requirements:

- MPH or master's degree in closely related field from an accredited institution
- Minimum GPA 2.7 Minimum of two years Public Health work experience at the professional level (post master's degree)
- Selected applicants will be invited to provide a writing sample and then participate in a virtual interview.

If you need information regarding ECU policies for students with disabilities, please find this information here [The Department for Disability Support Services](#)

## Newly Admitted Student Information

**The DrPH HPAL degree is currently only offered online.** Newly admitted students into the DrPH HPAL degree will automatically be designated as distance education students and therefore not eligible for university sponsored health insurance. It is the students' responsibility to know that selection of university sponsored health insurance changes your designation face to face with associated higher tuition rates.

On admission, you will be assigned an academic advisor whose role as your **Academic advisor** is to advise students on what courses to take by semester in the DrPH HPAL degree utilizing the degree plan found in Degree Works as well as program policies. Note that the student services coordinator will register you for all classes, you will not self-register.

It is recommended that you begin thinking about your dissertation topic early. As you decide on a potential topic, it is highly recommended that you begin identifying a DrPH HPAL faculty member with expertise on the topic to serve as your dissertation chair when that milestone is achieved. Note that the role of the dissertation chair is different than the role of your academic advisor. Each student invites a member of the DrPH HPAL teaching faculty to serve as their **Dissertation Committee Chair** depending on their topic and expertise according to the guidelines found in the Dissertation Research Guide provided to you at orientation.

### Continued Academic Eligibility

Doctoral students admitted to the DrPH HPAL concentration must adhere to graduate school guidelines for remaining in good academic standing. Students who do not achieve a grade B or higher on any interdisciplinary or concentration course must retake the course earning a grade B or higher. Eligibility for students to sit for comprehensive exams requires at least a grade B or higher in all interdisciplinary and concentration courses. Students who do not earn a grade B or higher in an interdisciplinary or concentration course after their 2<sup>nd</sup> attempt will be dismissed from the program. Annually, the DrPH HPAL teaching faculty will meet with students to review progress toward development of your dissertation topic.

### DrPH HPAL Competencies

Students who do not have an MPH degree complete the 18- credit hour core MPH curriculum to achieve foundational competencies in public health at the Master's level. Students with an MPH and ready to achieve foundational and core public health competencies at the doctoral level, achieve competency mastery through doctoral coursework comprised of assessments to assure competency attainment.

Listed below are the foundational and concentration competences for the DrPH degree.

# Course Mapping of Foundational Competencies for DrPH in HPAL Concentration

## Data & Analysis

DrPH Foundation Competency	Course number(s) and names*
1. Explain qualitative, quantitative, mixed methods and policy analysis research and evaluation methods to address health issues at multiple (individual, group, organization, community, and population) levels	PUBH 8025 - Advanced Quantitative Research Methods PUBH 8350 - Advanced Qualitative Research Methods
2. Design a qualitative, quantitative, mixed methods, policy analysis or evaluation project to address a public health issue	PUBH 8025 - Advanced Quantitative Research Methods PUBH 8350 - Advanced Qualitative Research Methods
3. Explain the use and limitations of surveillance systems and national surveys in assessing, monitoring and evaluating policies and programs and to address a population's health	PUBH 8350 - Advanced Quantitative Research Methods

## Leadership, Management & Governance

DrPH Foundation Competency	Course number(s) and names*
4. Propose strategies for health improvement and elimination of health inequities by organizing stakeholders, including researchers, practitioners, community leaders and other partners	PUBH 8020 - Organizational Theory and Leadership
5. Communicate public health science to diverse stakeholders, including individuals at all levels of health literacy, for purposes of influencing behavior and policies	PUBH 8025 – Advanced Quantitative Research Methods
6. Integrate knowledge, approaches, methods, values and potential contributions from multiple professions and systems in addressing public health problems	PUBH 8245 - Health Policy Analysis
7. Create strategic plans	PUBH 8245 - Health Policy Analysis
8. Facilitate shared decision making through negotiation and consensus-building methods	PUBH 8245 - Health Policy Analysis
9. Create organizational change strategies	PUBH 8020-Organizational Theory and Leadership
10. Propose strategies to promote inclusion and equity within public health programs, policies, and systems	PUBH 8245 - Health Policy Analysis
11. Assess one’s own strengths and weaknesses in leadership capacities, including cultural proficiency	PUBH 8020 - Organizational Theory and Leadership
12. Propose human, fiscal, and other resources to achieve a strategic goal	PUBH 8020 - Organizational Theory and Leadership
13. Cultivate new resources and revenue streams to achieve a strategic goal	PUBH 8245 - Health Policy Analysis

## Policy & Programs

DrPH Foundation Competency	Course number(s) and names*
14. Design a system-level intervention to address a public health issue	PUBH 8025-Advanced Quantitative Methods
15. Integrate knowledge of cultural values and practices in the design of public health policies and programs	PUBH 8350-Advanced Qualitative Methods
16. Integrate scientific information, legal and regulatory approaches, ethical frameworks and varied stakeholder interests in policy development and analysis	HUMS 7004-Ethics and Research
17. Propose interprofessional* team approaches to improving public health	HUMS 7004-Ethics and Research

## Education & Workforce Development

DrPH Foundation Competency	Course number(s) and names*
18. Assess an audience's knowledge and learning needs	ECU OFE Teaching Instruction zero credit hours
19. Deliver training or educational experiences that promote learning in academic, organizational and community settings	HUMS 7004-Ethics and Research
20. Use best practice modalities in pedagogical practices	ECU OFE Teaching Instruction zero credit hours

## Coverage of Concentration Competencies for DrPH Degree in HPAL Concentration

Competency	Course number(s) or other educational requirements
1. Design decision making processes in healthcare settings utilizing health systems frameworks	PUBH 8352 Quality Improvement and Cost Effectiveness analysis
2. Assess the vitality of a public health organization's human and fiscal resources.	PUBH 8240 - Human Resources Management PUBH 8134 - Financial Planning & Management
3. Evaluate an organization's commitment to workforce disparateness and assess its employee's cultural competency.	PUBH 8240 - Human Resources Management
4. Assess and enhance leadership skills (such as negotiation, mediation and collaboration) that empower organizations/communities to address challenging issues	PUBH 8134 - Financial Planning & Management
5. Create and assess programs that facilitate improvements in rural health and to reduce health disparities	PUBH 8130 Strategic Planning, Theory and Practice

## DrPH HPAL Curriculum

Students without an MPH will complete the 18- hour MPH foundation core classes for preparation of doctoral coursework. The DrPH HPAL curriculum is comprised of 36 hours of coursework; five (5) hours of applied field experience; nine (9) hours of integrated learning experience of dissertation. Listed below is a list of courses that include interdisciplinary, concentration, electives, field experience and integrated learning experience.

### **Prerequisite Graduate Level Foundation Courses in Public Health or MPH (required) (18 hours)**

#### **MPH Core Courses**

- MPH 6042 – Public Health Organization and Administration (3)
- MPH 6044 – Principles of Health Policy (2)
- MPH 6046 – Environmental Public Health Principles (2)
- MPH 6041 – Principles of Epidemiology (2)
- MPH 6043 – Public Health Planning and Evaluation (3)
- MPH 6034 – Foundations of Rural Health (1)
- BIOS 7021 – Biostatistics for Health Professionals I (3)
- MPH 6045 – Strategies for Public Health Communication (2)

#### **Interdisciplinary Core Courses (required) (14 hours)**

- PUBH 8020 - Organizational Theory and Leadership (3)
- PUBH 8025 - Quantitative Research Methods (4)
- PUBH 8245 – Health Policy Analysis (3)
- PUBH 8350 - Qualitative Research Methods (2)
- HUMS 7004 - Ethic Research: Humanities and Basic Medical Science (2)

#### **Concentration Core Courses (required) (22 hours)**

- PUBH 8130 - Strategic Planning, Theory and Practice (3)
- PUBH 8134 - Financial Planning and Management (4)
- PUBH 8240 - Human Resources Management (3)
- PUBH 8352 - Quality Improvement and Cost Effectiveness Analysis (3)
- PUBH 8460 - Economic Analysis in Health Systems (3)
- PUBH 8463 - Health Information Systems (3)
- PUBH 8571 - Public Health and Aging (3)

#### **Dissertation and Field Experience**

- PUBH 8684 Field Experience (5)
- PUBH 9000 Dissertation Research (9)

## DrPH Applied Field Practicum (PUBH 8684, HPAL Concentration)

Successful passage of comprehensive exams is required prior to enrollment in the Applied Practicum course. The DrPH is the highest professional degree in public health and is designed to advance an individuals' skills and competencies. The program is designed to prepare graduate students for senior level administrators, applied policy researchers, and public health educators with a goal to protect and improve public health. Graduates may pursue careers in leadership positions in a variety of public health settings. The Council on Education for Public Health (CEPH) requires that each DrPH student be able to demonstrate the DrPH competencies through a practicum experience in addition to the coursework, qualifying exams and dissertation. All DrPH HPAL students regardless of their previous experience will complete the field practicum course for five (5) hours of course credit for completing 400 hours in an agency where students engage in real- world projects involving public health challenges and take responsibility for the successful completion of at least one project.

Students are eligible to enroll in the DrPH HPAL Applied Field Practicum **after** they have completed the interdisciplinary courses, concentration courses and successful passage of comprehensive exams. Students may enroll in the Applied Field Practicum concomitantly with their elective course (s). Students will identify a minimum of **five (5)** competencies total **three (3)** foundational and **two (2)** concentration competencies that are clearly assessed through this course. Students **must** choose as one of their **five** competencies, a foundational leadership competency or HPAL concentration competency #4 as one of the competencies.

The work project may be a single project or a set of related projects that demonstrate a depth of competence that is meaningful for an organization and to advanced public health practice (CEPH, 2024). The practicum must be discipline specific, appropriately planned, supervised and evaluated. Students must have completed the interdisciplinary courses and concentration courses in HPAL before registering for PUBH 8684.

### Agency Practicum Sites

Students should investigate practicums that provide them opportunities to practice their doctoral level public health skills. Students will work with their faculty instructor to seek out public health organizations and agencies for completion of their applied field practicum.

Examples of appropriate practicum sites include but are not limited to federal public health agencies such as the CDC, HRSA and NIH, state and county departments of public health, federally qualified health centers, community based public health organizations, non-profit health care organizations, private health care industry organizations and other organizations involved in public health work.

The practicum should take place within an organization external to the student's school or program so that it is not merely an academic exercise, but application of learning to a "real world" setting. The field practicum may be conducted at a variety of public health practice settings. The agency and project proposal must be approved by both the agency leadership and the faculty instructor. In addition, a University Affiliation Agreement must be fully executed prior to the beginning of the field practicum.

DrPH HPAL students who may be currently working in a public health organization and can perform the field practicum at their current place of employment; however, the practicum must be beyond or something other than their current work duties, allowing for the application of advanced (doctoral) level public health knowledge and skills to be applied in the practice (real-world) setting.

## Preceptor Requirements

The student onsite agency mentor or preceptor will have training in public health at the professional level, be in a top leadership position and ideally have at a minimum a Master's in Public Health or closely related field, with substantial experience in public health at the professional level. Ideally, the preceptor will have a degree beyond the master's level. The preceptor will meet with the doctoral student on a regular basis; the student's current employer supervisor may serve as the preceptor. During the course of the 400- hour field practicum there must be at least three meetings between the doctoral student, agency preceptor and faculty instructor.

## DrPH Applied Field Practicum Roles & Responsibilities

**DrPH Student:** Identifies practicum site, community preceptor, faculty instructor, and ensures that all arrangements – including learning contract completion and electronic signatures – have been completed before registration. Student then completes the practicum as outlined in the learning contract and participates in the practicum course throughout the semester. The student maintains ongoing contact with the faculty instructor throughout the field placement course. The student maintains time log of hours worked provided in canvas course shell on monthly basis.

**Agency Preceptor:** Works for the organization where the student will complete the practicum. They will mentor the student throughout the practicum experience. The community preceptor should be in a leadership position with substantial experience in public health and be able to provide an experience that will allow the student to *develop or further develop as a leader in public health*. The community preceptor should be able and willing to work with the faculty instructor; and be able to and willing to devote sufficient time to the field practicum to ensure appropriate and comprehensive evaluations. The agency preceptor will provide the day-to-day supervision throughout your practicum and complete an evaluation of your performance at the midterm and at the end of the semester.

**Faculty Instructor:** This is a faculty member teaching in the DrPH HPAL concentration. Often, students choose their academic advisor, but this is not a requirement. The faculty instructor provides guidance for the students as they develop their learning contract and throughout the practicum experience and communicates with the community preceptor as needed. The faculty instructor assigns the student's grade based on the preceptor's evaluation of the student's performance and completion of the practicum course project graded by the faculty instructor.

## Program Procedures

While it is desired that the practicum requirement be completed in one semester, some instances may require that practicums last longer than one semester. Students must register for the five-hour field practicum course and follow the timeline established and agreed upon by the faculty instructor, agency preceptor and doctoral student as part of the integrated learning contract. The doctoral student will clearly document the plan in the Practicum Description Agreement in order that all parties are in complete agreement.

It is advised that doctoral students begin working on their Practicum Description with their faculty advisor/instructor the semester prior to the semester they wish to register for PUBH 8684.

## Registration

Prior to registering for the applied field practicum course (PUBH 8684), the doctoral student will complete the Practicum Description and Agreement Proposal consisting of the following:

- A current resume or CV;
- A description of the proposed project (it should address a public health change);
- Goals or Aims;
- The public health issue and background of the problem justifying its significance (i.e. how this work will promote public health and well-being of the population that it will address) (appropriately cited);
- The expected project(s) outcomes or expected results;
- Outline that includes all aspects of the project(s) including timeline, deliverables and student, faculty and preceptor's roles;
- Competencies that will be addressed through the practicum experience that clearly outlines how the competencies will be achieved as evidenced by the final project(s).
- Fully Executed University Affiliation Agreement with the precepting agency and ECU.
- Please be aware that some agencies may require criminal background check, drug screen and orientation modules prior to the beginning of your field practicum.

Students will identify a minimum of **five (5)** competencies total (**three (3)** foundational and **two (2)** concentration competencies that are clearly assessed through this course. Students **must** choose as one of their **five** competencies, a foundational leadership competency or HPAL concentration competency #4 as one of the competencies.

*The faculty instructor and preceptor must approve the practicum description and agreement form prior to the student registering for the practicum.*

## Deliverables

Students as outlined by CEPH 2024 criteria, page 26, are “responsible for completion of at least one project that is meaningful for an organization and to advanced public health practice.

The work product may be a single project or a set of related projects that demonstrate a depth of competence.” “This may take the form of a journal or other written product, a professional portfolio, or another deliverable as appropriate for the program.” During the practicum, students should complete a monthly written reflection to describe the progress to date including the “student’s expression of personal and/or professional reactions to

the applied practicum experience.” These reflections will be reviewed by the student’s faculty instructor who may initiate additional communication.

In addition, the preceptor will complete a midpoint and final review of student performance in achieving the foundation and concentration competencies using the DrPH HPAL Applied Practicum Competencies Achievement Table found in the canvas course shell. The student will complete a leadership self-assessment at the beginning of their APE as will their preceptor and again at the final review. All three parties will meet to discuss assessment scoring for achieving final consensus on student leadership competency mastery. At the conclusion of the practicum, the doctoral student will develop a written paper that outlines the project (s) aims, introduction, background, methods, results, discussion and conclusion that explains the contribution to the field of public health as well as a reflective component that expresses how the applied practicum experience has demonstrated mastery of the five selected competencies in addition to the one or more projects completed over the APE.

## Practicum Leadership Self-Assessment

**Instructions:** At baseline and final evaluation both the student and field supervisor will complete the leadership self-assessment of the student with results reviewed by the course instructor. Students assess their current competency levels at the beginning and end of the practicum and reflect any improvements made as a result of their practicum experience for the foundation and concentration competencies selected in the field practicum. Students must then use a separate page to provide a detailed description of the practicum task/s or deliverable/s that led to specific competency attainment scores. The student, field supervisor and course instructor will review together the evaluation findings.

## Doctor of Public Health Policy Administration & Leadership Comprehensive Exam Policy

### Purpose

The doctoral comprehensive examination is a single examination consisting of questions from interdisciplinary and concentration coursework. The DrPH HPAL comprehensive exam is offered annually over a five (5) period starting the first Monday of June and ending on Friday.

The purpose of the examination is to assess students on the following areas. Knowledge of foundational issues that transect the broad field of public health.

This includes students' recognition of important questions and issues, as well as their resourcefulness, judgment and understanding regarding information acquisition, integration, and synthesis within the field.

- Mastery of an area of specialization within, or complementary to, the field of public health.
- Student's readiness for the research phase, including their knowledge of research methods appropriate to their area(s) of specialization.

## **Eligibility**

To be eligible, the student must meet the following criteria:

- Complete all interdisciplinary and concentration courses. Documentation must be provided to the student's academic advisor indicating their successful completion; this includes no deferred or missing grades.
- A grade of B or higher must be achieved for all interdisciplinary and concentration courses at the time the examination is given for doctoral work done at East Carolina University.
- At this time, the student needs to provide their academic advisor that all interdisciplinary and concentration course requirements must have been completed and students must provide documentation that all the requirements have been met prior to receiving approval to sit for comprehensive exams.

# Comprehensive Exam Procedures

1. **Request to take comprehensive exam** - Doctoral Student(s) emails their advisor stating they have completed all interdisciplinary/concentration courses and request to take comprehensive exam with copy to student services coordinator and program director. Note that students currently completing interdisciplinary/concentration courses are eligible to request to take comprehensive exams pending final grades. Request/approval to take comprehensive exams must be made at least 6 months in advance; for example, student receive approval to take comprehensive exams must be made by January 5th in order to sit for comprehensive exams the first Monday of June same year. It is strongly recommended that students meet with each instructor of courses covered on comprehensive exams regarding requirements and expectations.
2. **Develop the questions** - The comprehensive exam comprises written questions or case studies from the PUBH interdisciplinary and core classes developed in collaboration by the faculty members teaching in the DrPH HPAL curriculum. Note HUMS 7004 is excluded.
3. **Exam is developed** – A question covering each interdisciplinary and concentration course is developed by faculty encompassing course content and placed in the Canvas course shell for comprehensive exam delivery. While each course has one question, there can be multiple parts to each question. A grading rubric is provided for each question for grading their question response. The comprehensive exam questions are collated and reviewed by both the teaching faculty and program director before the comprehensive exam questions are finalized.
4. **Schedule the written and examinations – Comprehensive exams are offered once annually. Once the advisor responds to the student’s request with approval with copy to the student services coordinator and program director; the program director will respond with the dates/times for comprehensive exams.**  
 Comprehensive exams are offered through Canvas. The comprehensive exam opens on a Monday (9:00am) and closes on Friday 11:59pm. While the written comprehensive exam is “open book”, students must complete the exam independently.
5. **Emergencies and deadlines** - In the event of an emergency (e.g., critical illness, death in the family) during the exam period, a student may ask their academic advisor or program director to extend the deadline (see [ECU Policy for Excused Absence from Dean of Students](#)).
6. **Comply with academic integrity policies** - The written comprehensive exam is a take-home, open book exam, representing the student’s independent work. In preparing to write the examination, learning resources from previous classes may be used. However, the comprehensive exam questions should not be discussed with anyone, including faculty, except in cases where clarification is needed for their specific question(s). The final written product must represent the student’s unassisted work. Prior to the submission of the examination, no one except the student should read or edit the written responses for any reason. A signed statement certifying that the comprehensive exam answers are the student’s original work, and that the exam has been completed without the assistance of other students, colleagues, or faculty members is required as part of the exam. This attestation includes no sharing of exam questions with any other students during or after the exam. Students should add the attestation at the top page of each assignment that states, “I certify that this is my own independent work” followed by their typed name.
7. **Formatting the essays (style)** - The examination document should consist of separate, coherent essays (unless otherwise noted) in answer to the questions. The essays should conform to APA or AMA style. Each essay should be answered as a separate question in Canvas.
8. **Formatting the essays (length)** - Answers to each question need not be of equal length. Each professor will specify the format and desired length of a response.
9. **Submitting the essays** – Instructors are encouraged to request responses for each exam question to be

uploaded to Canvas through Turnitin.

10. **Exam Grading:** A score of 70% or higher is required for each question response in order to successfully pass the comprehensive exam.
11. **Reviewing student responses** - Faculty grading the exam questions will have two weeks to review their question(s). Individual committee members may choose to return the written examination with comments, but it is not required.
12. **Student Notification of Comprehensive Examination** - Grade Students will be notified by the program director with copy to their academic advisor within two weeks of taking comprehensive examinations on whether they have 1) successfully passed. Students should request meeting with instructors regarding specific exam results questions they failed. 2) Students who fail their first attempt are allowed one opportunity to retake portions of the comprehensive examination with new questions on the same subject matter. The second attempt will occur 8 weeks after the first failed attempt. Students cannot enroll in further coursework until successful passage of the comprehensive examination has occurred. Students who fail to be successful in passing the comprehensive examination after the 2nd attempt will be terminated from the program.

## **Advancement to Doctoral Candidacy**

Students should begin developing a dissertation topic at the outset of their DrPH HPAL degree journey. See information for “Newly Admitted Students.” Once students have successfully passed comprehensive exams, they should choose and contact the faculty member, teaching in the DrPH HPAL program, that they would like to serve as their dissertation committee chair (an important role!). Reference “Dissertation Research Guidelines” provided to you by the student services coordinator at orientation.

## **East Carolina University Brody School of Medicine Department of Public Health DrPH HPAL Integrated Learning Experience Guidelines**

### **Overview**

The DrPH HPAL Integrated Learning Experience (ILE) serves as the culminating project that results in award of the DrPH HPAL degree for doctoral candidates. The ILE is known as the dissertation providing the evidence of both foundational and concentration competencies that demonstrates doctoral candidates are ready for executive-level positions within public health agencies, industries, organizations or in academic public health programs. Students apply principles and skills learned in coursework and other parts of the DrPH curriculum to a significant topic of public health. The purpose of the ILE is to bring the interdisciplinary perspective obtained through the DrPH curriculum on a topic selected by the students to enhance student professional and scholastic development in their public health leadership careers.

The ILE consists of the following steps: 1) Proposal Development; 2) Proposal Defense that clearly describes how the competencies selected will demonstrate mastery;

3) ILE dissertation; 4) ILE Defense that clearly demonstrates mastery of the DrPH competencies outlined in the proposal.

The ILE must address a question or issue that advances the knowledge and practice of leadership in public health relevant to a public health problem or challenge and that entails clear implications for leadership at organizational, community, and/or policy levels. The Project should address a significant public health issue at the individual, group, organization, community, or population level and should strive to address multiple levels whenever possible. The ILE should aim to:

1. identify new approaches to existing problems or apply existing approaches to a new problem, or identify new principles for addressing existing public health issues, or identify existing principles that can be used to guide new efforts in public health; or
2. result in an implementation plan, generated during the ILE, that has the potential to make one or more important improvements in the health of the public, or result in identification and analysis of past failures and successes that lead to principles for leading organizational, policy or community change that have potentially important ramifications for the public's health; and
3. provide for leadership experience either by directly playing leadership roles in designing, implementing, and/or evaluating responses to the public health problem of interest, and/or using findings from research and evaluative activities to propose mechanisms or policy initiatives for future organizational, policy or community change consideration.

## **Competencies to be Addressed in the ILE**

The process of preparing and defending the proposal, completing a dissertation project, preparing the final product summarizing the project, and publicly presenting and defending the project are part of the learning process leading to the successful completion of requirements for the DrPH degree.

This process provides faculty with opportunities to observe student mastery of program competencies, as well as opportunities for the student to develop additional competency. Students will incorporate at least three (2) DrPH HPAL foundational competencies and at least two (3) DrPH concentration competencies in their ILE from list below:

## **ILE Committee**

### **The Dissertation Committee**

Before students can begin the ILE, students must complete DrPH HPAL core, concentration and elective coursework; (2) successfully pass comprehensive exams; and (3) receive approval from their dissertation chair to form their dissertation committee (see dissertation research plan policy). DrPH HPAL students follow the protocol set forth in the Guidelines for DrPH HPAL Research Dissertation provided to students by the student services coordinator upon beginning the DrPH HPAL degree.

After consultation with the dissertation Chair, the student will select their dissertation committee comprised of a minimum of three (3) but no more than five (5) members. The chair, methodologist and at least one committee member must be faculty members who teach in the DrPH and/or who have substantial experience in public health practice.

Students may select an additional committee member from faculty who teaches in the DrPH, MPH, or other ECU faculty member, or community member who has served as a mentor for the student's Applied Practicum Experience (APE) project. Students should expect that a Chair will not agree to serve in this capacity without meeting with the student, learning about the student's ideas for a Dissertation and discussing possible revisions that may need to be made to the Project ideas.

## **ILE Committee Role**

The Committee will guide the student and assist in defining the direction of the ILE Proposal. The Committee has the ultimate authority in the direction of the Dissertation; thus, data collection or other Dissertation activities shall not begin until the Committee approves the Dissertation Proposal. If a committee member leaves during the course of their ILE Project, she or he may continue service on the Committee with the approval of the program director. Otherwise, the member will be replaced with the approval of the Committee Chair. Should the Committee Chair leave, she or he may continue service as a Committee Chair or as a member with the approval of the program director. Changes to dissertation committee members require initiation of new form via docusign.

## **ILE (Dissertation) Proposal and Proposal Defense**

The Dissertation proposal ("the Proposal") is a formal written document that outlines the topic of the Dissertation, all Dissertation activities, and benchmarks and timelines for initiation, implementation, and completion of the ILE Project. It also establishes the criteria that define what will constitute a final written product that will be acceptable to the Committee at the completion of the ILE (Dissertation). (See Guidelines for DrPH HPAL Research Dissertation).

Students must register for three (3) Dissertation credit hours in every semester for three semesters (total of 9 hours). If the dissertation is not completed by this time, students must register for one (1) hour per ECU policy until the project has been completed and successfully defended.

## **The ILE Final Product and Defense**

See guidelines for DrPH HPAL Research Dissertation.

# **DrPH HPAL Integrative Learning Experience (Dissertation) Approval Form**

DrPH students fulfill the Integrative Learning Experience through the completion of a dissertation. DrPH dissertations must meet the following criteria:

- Students must generate field-based products consistent with advanced practice that are designed to influence programs, policies or systems addressing public health.
- Students must demonstrate synthesis of a minimum of three (3) DrPH Foundational Competencies and two (2) concentration competencies through the dissertation work and final products.

*The rubric included in this form does not need to be completed until the final dissertation submission and defense. The criteria provided in the rubric below are not the only criteria by which students are assessed. The committee is encouraged to provide a comprehensive assessment of the student's dissertation proposal and final dissertation.*

*Students should familiarize themselves with the criteria to ensure successful completion of the DrPH dissertation requirement.*

**Students are required to submit a copy of this form upon submission of the dissertation proposal to the Office of Student Records along with other required documentation per the submission guidelines. Completion of this form is required for accreditation purpose.**

## To be completed by the student:

Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Student ID: \_\_\_\_\_ Major: \_\_\_\_\_

Course of Enrollment: **PUBH 9000 - Dissertation Research**

Completed **Final Product: Dissertation**

### ***To be completed by DrPH students only:***

*The DrPH dissertation (Integrative Learning experience) must demonstrate synthesis of foundational and major competencies where the student produces a high-quality written professional product(s) that is appropriate for their educational and professional goals.*

1. \_\_\_\_\_ 2. \_\_\_\_\_ 3. \_\_\_\_\_

*Final DrPH Foundational Competencies (i.e. DrPH 1; DrPH 2)*

1. \_\_\_\_\_ 2. \_\_\_\_\_ 3. \_\_\_\_\_

*Final Concentration Competencies (DrPH-H1; DrPH-H3)*

*Briefly describe how the proposed dissertation will synthesize the selected competencies above.*

## To be completed by the Dissertation Advisor (in consultation with all committee members) Submit documents to program director

*Successful completion of the final dissertation and defense requires that students score a minimum of “Sufficient (1)” on each criterion.*

### Evaluation of the Doctoral Dissertation and Defense

Type	Not Sufficient (0)	Sufficient (1)	Outstanding (2)	Score
Knowledge	Student did not sufficiently demonstrate knowledge and understanding of the area of study.	Student demonstrated sufficient knowledge and understanding of the area of study.	Student demonstrated outstanding knowledge and understanding of the area of study.	
Design	Student did not sufficiently describe the design and methods for their research-based study.	Student sufficiently described the design and methods for their research-based study.	Student clearly and comprehensively described the design and methods for their research-based study.	
Interpretation of Results	Student did not sufficiently interpret research findings and limits of the study.	Student sufficiently interpreted research findings and addresses limits of the study.	Student clearly and concisely interpreted research findings and addresses limits of the study.	
Implications of Findings	Student did not sufficiently articulate original ideas about the usefulness of the study’s findings to public health.	Student sufficiently articulated original ideas about the usefulness of the study’s findings to public health.	Student clearly articulated original and innovative ideas about the usefulness of the study’s findings to public health.	
Communication	Written and oral presentation does not meet formatting, grammatical and clarity expectations.	Written and oral presentation is sufficient. Student wrote with clarity and concision. Student did a good job delivering the oral presentation.	Dissertation was very well written and in the appropriate format. Student did an outstanding job delivering and defending during the oral presentation.	

**To be completed for DrPH students only:**

Type	Not Sufficient (0)	Sufficient (1)	Outstanding (2)	Score
CEPH Expectation for DrPH ILE Final Products	Student did not produce field-based products consistent with advanced practice designed to influence programs, policies or systems addressing public health.	Student produced quality field-based products that are consistent with advanced practice designed to influence programs, policies or systems addressing public health.	Student produced outstanding field-based products consistent with advanced practice designed to influence programs, policies or systems addressing public health.	
Synthesis of DrPH Foundational and Concentration-Specific Competencies	Student did not demonstrate synthesis of the selected DrPH <i>Foundational and Concentration Competencies</i> .	Student's demonstration of synthesis of the selected <i>DrPH Foundational and Concentration Competencies</i> were sufficient.	Student's demonstration of synthesis of the selected <i>DrPH Foundational and Concentration Competencies</i> were comprehensive.	

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Student, Printed

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Student, Signature/ Date

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Dissertation Advisor, Printed

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Dissertation Advisor, Signature/ Date

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Faculty Advisor  
(if different than dissertation advisor), Printed

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Faculty Advisor  
(if different than dissertation advisor), Signature/Date

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Program Director, Printed

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Program Director, Signature/ Date

## Application to Graduate

Following successful completion of the requirements of the doctorate degree as determined by the Major Professor, students must make a formal application for graduation ([Graduation Information](#)).

The *Application for Graduation* must be made and submitted to the Office of the Registrar at least one semester prior to completing the requirements of the degree as stated by the *Graduate Catalog* (. Students must also complete the Graduate Summary Form. Submit both completed and printed forms to the Graduation Services office in the Office of the Registrar. The weblinks for the application and graduate summary form can be found on the ECU Graduate School website.

## Student Attestation of Handbook Review

I hereby acknowledge I have reviewed, understand and agreed to comply with all policies contained in the DrPH HPAL handbook.

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Student Name & Date

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Academic Advisor & Date

\*Designated Administrative Support Staff may sign for academic advisor