

**Doctoral Program in Public Health**

**Program Handbook for Doctoral Students**

**Epidemiology Specialization**

**Social and Behavioral Health Specialization**

**Fall 2021**

**Table of Contents**

[**Program Overview** 3](#_Toc66112293)

[Programs of Study 3](#_Toc66112294)

[New Student Information 4](#_Toc66112295)

[**University of Nevada Student ID and Communication** 4](#_Toc66112296)

[**Class Registration** 4](#_Toc66112297)

[Required Prerequisite Coursework 4](#_Toc66112298)

[PhD Competencies 5](#_Toc66112299)

[**Degree Requirements** 7](#_Toc66112300)

[Epidemiology Specialization 7](#_Toc66112301)

[Social and Behavioral Health Specialization 9](#_Toc66112302)

[**Committees and Exams** 10](#_Toc66112303)

[Advisor/Committee Chair 10](#_Toc66112304)

[Advisory Committee 10](#_Toc66112305)

[Comprehensive Exam / Admission to candidacy 11](#_Toc66112306)

[**Dissertation Requirements and graduation/hooding** 12](#_Toc66112307)

[Oral Defense of Dissertation 12](#_Toc66112308)

[Graduation and Hooding 14](#_Toc66112309)

[**Academic and Professional Standards and Policies** 14](#_Toc66112310)

[**Graduate Assistantships** 17](#_Toc66112312)

[**Health insurance** 18](#_Toc66112313)

[**Graduate Student Association** 18](#_Toc66112314)

[**List of Forms and links** 18](#_Toc66112315)

# **Program Overview**

On behalf of faculty and staff at the School of Public Health (SPH), we welcome you to the Public Health Ph.D. Program! This handbook can be used throughout your program to provide guidance for requirements, expectations, and opportunities within the SPH and the Graduate School.

**Vision of the School of Public Health**

*Equitable, healthy, and resilient communities.*

We achieve this vision through these **values:**

* 1. Promoting health equity
  2. Embracing diversity
  3. Advancing knowledge
  4. Succeeding through collaboration
  5. Developing workforce excellence

**Mission of the School of Community Public Health**

To develop, disseminate, and apply knowledge to protect and promote the health and well-being of individuals, families and communities.The school’s **goals** that describe strategies to accomplish the defined mission:

* 1. Develop and advance knowledge for public health through research and practice
  2. Cultivate and prepare a skilled and diverse workforce that can sustain equitable and healthy communities
  3. Prepare students to become public health practitioners, researchers, educators and leaders
  4. Lead innovative approaches to improve public health and reduce health disparities
  5. Engage with diverse communities through professional, educational, and scholarly service

## Programs of Study

The SPH offers a Council on Education for Public Health (CEPH) accredited Doctor of Philosophy (Ph.D.) degree in Public Health with specializations in Epidemiology and Social and Behavioral Health. The Ph.D. in Public Health emphasizes the expertise necessary for a research career in either epidemiology or social behavioral health. The Ph.D. is designed to prepare students for careers in which advanced analytical and conceptual capabilities are required, such as university teaching, research, consulting, policy development or other high-level positions.

**Contact Information**

For any program or application related questions or inquiries, please contact the Director of Graduate Studies, Dr. Kristen Clements-Nolle, at [clements@unr.edu](mailto:clements@unr.edu). For questions about the Epidemiology specialization, please contact Dr. Kristen Clements-Nolle at [clements@unr.edu](mailto:clements@unr.edu) . For questions about the Social and Behavioral Health specialization, please contact Dr. Paul Devereux at [devereux@unr.edu](mailto:devereux@unr.edu).

## New Student Information

New student orientations are held after admission into the Ph.D. program to provide students with important information and to facilitate the start of their program. The orientations also allow students to be introduced to the UNR campus, faculty members, and to fellow students in the program. Additionally, the orientations will allow the students to meet their advisor and ask any prepared questions.

**University of Nevada Student ID and Communication**

* After admission to UNR, students need to obtain and set up an account with [MyNevada](https://mynevada.unr.edu/).
  + Under “For Current Students,” “Create My Profile”, students can set up their university account, including providing an email address that will be used for all university and program communication. Use of the Nevada.edu email address is required.
* Set up NetID and password at [Net ID Activation](https://security.unr.edu/)
  + This site assists students in activating their NetID and user password, which will be used to access MyNevada, WebCampus, and other university resources.
* Log into [WebCampus](https://wcl.unr.edu/webapps/login/) with your UNR NetID to view course content and announcements.
* Purchase a [WolfCard](http://www.unr.edu/wolfcard) student ID
  + Visit the WolfCard office on the first floor of the Joe Crowley Student Union and bring a valid U.S. State or Federally issued photo ID or a passport to purchase a Wolfcard.

**Class Registration**

After admission into the Ph.D. program, an email will be sent to each student from the Office of Admissions and Records with a fall semester enrollment date. All students need to register for fall courses after discussion with and approval from the Director of Graduate Studies or a faculty advisor. Students can register for classes at [MyNevada](https://mynevada.unr.edu/).

**Academic Calendar and Deadlines**

* [Academic Calendar](https://www.unr.edu/academic-central/academic-resources/academic-calendar)
  + Important dates and holidays
* [Graduate School Deadlines](https://www.unr.edu/grad/graduation-and-deadlines) 
  + Deadlines for the academic year

## ****Required Prerequisite Coursework****

Students will typically enter the Ph.D. in Public Health after having completed a relevant master’s degree, such as the Master of Public Health (MPH) or Master of Science (MS) in epidemiology or biostatistics (for the epidemiology specialization) and Master of Public Health (MPH) in social and behavioral health, or health education (for the Social and Behavioral Health Specialization). Occasionally, students can be admitted with a health-related bachelor’s degree with a minimum grade point average of 3.0 that is confirmed before beginning classes. Additionally, students must have documentation that they have completed the following MPH courses (or their equivalent). Students missing any of the required prerequisites may be admitted, contingent on successful completion of specified courses, typically before starting classes or during the first semester.

* CHS 780: Biostatistics in Public Health (3 credits)
* CHS 712: Epidemiology in Public Health (3 credits)
* \*Basics of Public Heath (0 credits. Online self-paced)

\* Students who did not graduate from an undergraduate or graduate program accredited by the Council on Education in Public Health must complete the Basics of Public Health course that covers the 12 Foundational Public Health Knowledge learning objectives. The Basics of Public Health course is completed for no academic credit and the student pays no fees or tuition for completing the course. This course should be completed before the start of the fall semester.

## ****PhD Competencies****

Table 1: Ph.D. Core Competencies

| **Competency** | **Course number(s) and name(s)** |
| --- | --- |
| 1. PHD1. Critically evaluate and synthesize scientific literature | **CHS 791**: Seminar in Public Health  **CHS 799**: Dissertation |
| 1. PHD2. Develop original research hypotheses and research questions that will advance public health knowledge | **CHS 799**: Dissertation |
| 1. PHD3. Evaluate, justify, and apply appropriate methodological and analytical approaches to address public health research questions | **CHS 710**: Grant Writing for Public Health  **CHS 799**: Dissertation |
| 1. PHD4. Examine ethical principles pertaining to the collection, maintenance, use, and dissemination of public health data | **CHS 710**: Grant Writing for Public Health  **CHS 791**: Seminar in Public Health |
| 1. PHD5. Effectively defend research methodology and findings through concise scientific writing and oral presentations | **CHS 710**: Grant Writing for Public Health  **CHS 745**: Advanced Survey Methods in Public Health  **CHS 799**: Dissertation |
| 1. PHD6. Manage and analyze data using classic and modern approaches appropriate for various study designs using software packages such as SAS, R, STATA, Splus, and WinBUGS | **CHS 745**: Advanced Survey Methods in Public Health  **CHS 766**: Public Health Data Programming |
| 1. PHD7. Interpret results from statistical analyses of epidemiologic studies | **CHS 766**: Public Health Data Programming  **CHS 786**: Biostatistical Analysis in Cohort Studies |
| 1. PHD8. Defend analytical models and the results from statistical inferences to diverse audiences through written and oral presentations | **CHS 782**: Analysis of Categorical Data  **CHS 799**: Dissertation |
| 1. PHD9. Justify and apply statistical theory and methodology in public health and medical research | **CHS 782**: Analysis of Categorical Data  **CHS 786**: Biostatistical Analysis in Cohort Studies |
| 1. PHD10. Formulate appropriate sampling strategies | **CHS 745**: Advanced Survey Methods in Public Health  **CHS 766**: Public Health Data Programming |
| 1. PHD11. Demonstrate theoretical knowledge about the influence of diversity and social determinants on health | **CHS 791**: Seminar in Public Healtha |
| 1. PHD12. Design and evaluate psychometric properties of health surveys | **CHS 745**: Advanced Survey Methods in Public Health |

Table 2: Epidemiology Ph.D. Competencies

| **Competency** | **Course number(s) and name(s)** |
| --- | --- |
| 1. PHD\_Epi1. Construct and evaluate models for causal inference and demonstrate their practical application to epidemiologic data | **CHS 713**: Epidemiology III |
| 1. PHD\_Epi2. Demonstrate theoretical knowledge of systematic error through the use and application of directed acyclic graphs | **CHS 713**: Epidemiology III |
| 1. PHD\_Epi3. Develop and apply statistical methods appropriate for time-to-event data | **CHS 765**: Survival Analysis for Public Health |
| 1. PHD\_Epi4. Judge and design statistical models to investigate mediation, confounding, interaction, and effect modification in the context of epidemiologic research | **CHS 714**: Critical Evaluation of Epidemiologic Research  **CHS 765**: Survival Analysis for Public Health |
| 1. PHD\_Epi5. Critique individual published epidemiologic research studies | **CHS 714**: Critical Evaluation of Epidemiologic Research |

Table 3: Social and Behavioral Health Ph.D. Competencies

| **Competency** | **Course number(s) and name(s)** |
| --- | --- |
| 1. PHD\_SBH1. Justify appropriate qualitative research methodology | **CHS 718**: Advanced Qualitative Research Methods in Public Health |
| 1. PHD\_SBH2. Formulate the history, principles, goals or methods in community engaged research | **CHS 711**: Community engaged Research Approaches |
| 1. PHD\_SBH3. Demonstrate an interdisciplinary approach by integrating an outside academic area into scholarly work | **CHS 727**: Health Policy Approaches to Health Behavior |
| 1. PHD\_SBH4. Demonstrate an understanding of the fundamental principles for designing and implementing mixed methods studies | **CHS 732**: Mixed Methods Research in Public Health |
| 1. PHD\_SBH5. Examine and evaluate theoretical knowledge about the influence of diversity and social determinants on health. | **CHS 718**: Advanced Qualitative Research Methods in Public Health |

# **Degree Requirements**

Ph.D. students in the Epidemiology specialization must complete a minimum of 63 graduate-level credits to graduate and Ph.D. Students in the Social and Behavioral Health Specialization must complete a minimum of 66 credits to graduate. The Ph.D. program requires passing a written qualifying exam after the first year of coursework, a written and oral dissertation prospectus, and a dissertation defense.

Please see the required curriculum outlined for each specialization below.

## Epidemiology Specialization

Students will complete 29 credits in the Epidemiology Ph.D. core. In addition to the core courses, students will work closely with their academic advisor to select 9 credits of Epidemiology electives (may be prescribed). Students will also take the comprehensive exam (1 credit) and will complete, on average, 24 dissertation credits.

#### **Epidemiology Core (29 credits required)**

* CHS 708: Epidemiology II (3 credits) \*
* CHS 710: Grant Writing for Public Health (3 credits)
* CHS 713: Epidemiology III (3 credits)
* CHS 714: Critical Evaluation of Epidemiologic Research (3 credits)
* CHS 745: Advanced Survey Methods in Public Health (3 credits)
* CHS 765: Survival Analysis for Public Health (3 credits)
* CHS 766: Public Health Data Programming (3 credits)
* CHS 782: Analysis of Categorical Data (3 credits)
* CHS 786: Biostatistical Analysis in Cohort Studies (3 credits)
* CHS 791: Seminar in Public Health (2 credits total)

\* Students who received an A in CHS 708: Epidemiology II at UNR within 1 year of enrollment in the doctoral program can apply the credits to the Ph.D. program of study.

#### **Epidemiology Electives (9 credits required; advisor APPROVED) \***

* CHS 706: Social Epidemiology (3 credits)
* CHS 723: Epidemiology of Infectious Diseases (3 credits)
* CHS 724: Environmental Epidemiology (3 credits)
* CHS 784: Conduct and Analysis of Clinical Trials (3 credits)
* CHS 717: Applied Bayesian Statistics (3 credits)
* CHS 722: Epidemiology of Chronic Diseases (3 credits)
* CHS 707: HIV/AIDS Epidemiology (3 credits)
* CHS 740: Epidemiology of Cardiovascular Diseases (3 credits)
* CHS 739: Cancer Epidemiology (3 credits)
* CHS 730: Biomarkers of Human Disease (3 credits)
* CHS 735: Introduction to Exposure Assessment and Control (3 credits)
* CHS 754: Health Informatics Methods (3 credits)
* CHS 731: Advanced Evaluation in Public Health (3 credits)
* CHS 726: Biopsychosocial Foundations of Health (3 credits)
* CHS 741: Methods in Health Policy Analysis (3 credits)

\*Other courses may be acceptable with advisor approval

#### **Comprehensive exam and Dissertation (25 credits)**

* CHS 795: Comprehensive Examination (1 credit)
* CHS 799: Dissertation (24 credits)

#### **Sample schedule for epidemiology specialization**

*Full-time Student (pre-requisites met, and advisor approved)*

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **YEAR 1** |  |
| **Fall semester (10 credits)** | **Spring semester (10 credits)** |
| CHS 708: Epidemiology II (3) \*  CHS 782: Analysis of Categorical Data (3)  CHS 766: Public Health Data Programming (3)  CHS 791: Seminar in Public Health (1) | CHS 713: Epidemiology III (3)  CHS 714: Critical Evaluation of Epidemiologic Research (3)  CHS 786: Biostatistical Analysis in Cohort Studies (3)  CHS 791: Seminar in Public Health (1) |
| **Summer Semester (1 credit)** |  |
| CHS 795: Comprehensive Exam (1) |  |
| **YEAR 2** |  |
| **Fall Semester (9 credits)** | **Spring Semester (9 credits)** |
| CHS 710: Grant Writing for Public Health Research (3)  CHS 765: Survival Analysis for Public Health (3)  Epidemiology Elective 1 (3) | CHS 745: Advanced Survey Methods in Public Health (3)  Epidemiology Elective 2 (3)  Epidemiology Elective 3 (3) |
| **YEAR 3** |  |
| **Fall Semester (6 credits)** | **Spring Semester (6 credits)** |
| *Dissertation Prospectus*  CHS 799: Dissertation (6) | CHS 799: Dissertation (6) |
| **YEAR 4** |  |
| **Fall Semester (6 credits)** | **Spring Semester (6 credits)** |
| CHS 799: Dissertation (6) | *Dissertation Defense*  CHS 799: Dissertation (6) |

\* Students who received an A in CHS 708: Epidemiology II at UNR within 1 year of enrollment in the doctoral program can apply the credits to the Ph.D. program of study.

## Social and Behavioral Health Specialization

Students will complete 41 credits in the Ph.D. core. Students also will take the comprehensive exam (1 credit) and after advancing to candidacy, will complete 24 dissertation credits (on average).

#### **Social and Behavioral Health Core (41 credits required)**

* CHS 706: Social Epidemiology (3 credits)
* CHS 710: Grant Writing for Public Health (3 credits)
* CHS 711: Community Engaged Research Approaches (3 credits)
* CHS 718: Advanced Qualitative Research Methods in Public Health (3 credits)
* CHS 719: Advanced Research Methods in Social and Behavioral Science (3 credits)
* CHS 727: Health Policy Approaches to Health Behavior (3 credits)
* CHS 729: Applied Multivariate Statistics (3 credits)
* CHS 732: Mixed Methods Research in Public Health (3 credits)
* CHS 745: Advanced Survey Methods in Public Health (3 credits)
* CHS 750: Advanced Theory in Health Promotion (3 credits)
* CHS 766: Public Health Data Programming (3 credits)
* CHS 782: Analysis of Categorical Data (3 credits)
* CHS 786: Biostatistical Analysis in Cohort Studies (3 credits)
* CHS 791: Seminar in Public Health (2 credits)

#### **Comprehensive exam and Dissertation (25 credits)**

* CHS 795: Comprehensive Examination (1 credit)
* CHS 799: Dissertation (24 credits)

#### **Sample schedule for social and behavioral health specialization**

*Full-time Student (pre-requirements met, and advisor approved)*

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **YEAR 1** |  |
| **Fall semester (10 credits)** | **Spring semester (10 credits)** |
| CHS 719: Advanced Research Methods (3)  CHS 750: Advanced Theory in Health Promotion (3 credits)  CHS 766: Public Health Data Programming (3)  CHS 791: Seminar in Public Health (1) | CHS 729: Applied Multivariate Statistics (3)CHS 718: Advanced Qualitative Research Methods in Public Health (3)  CHS 745: Advanced Survey Methods in Public Health (3)  CHS 791: Seminar in Public Health (1) |
| **Summer Semester (1 credit)** |  |
| CHS 795: Comprehensive Exam (1) |  |
| **YEAR 2** |  |
| **Fall Semester (9 Credits)** | **Spring Semester (9 Credits)** |
| CHS 706: Social Epidemiology (3)  CHS 710: Grant Writing for Public Health Research (3)  CHS 782: Analysis of Categorical Data (3) | CHS 711: Community Engaged Research Approaches (3)  CHS 732: Mixed Methods Research in Public Health (3)  CHS 786: Biostatistical Analysis in Cohort Studies (3) |

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **YEAR 3** |  |
| **Fall Semester (9 credits)** | **Spring Semester (6 credits)** |
| *Dissertation Prospectus*  CHS 727: Health Policy Approaches to Health Behavior (3)  CHS 799: Dissertation (6) | CHS 799: Dissertation (6) |
| **YEAR 4** |  |
| **Fall Semester (6 credits)** | **Spring Semester (6 credits)** |
| CHS 799: Dissertation (6) | *Dissertation Defense*  CHS 799: Dissertation (6) |

# **Committees and Exams**

## Advisor/Committee Chair

Each student must complete a Declaration of Advisor/Major Advisor/Committee Chair form and submit it to the Graduate School no later than the end of the second semester of coursework. This form is available online at [Declaration of Advisor.](https://powerforms.docusign.net/de6efd52-ab95-4d44-8b56-a10041a83469?env=na3-eu1&acct=00b1dddc-e55a-4962-9660-d691e16a2f23)

Although uncommon, circumstances may arise that require the change of advisor/committee chair. The School of Public Health (SPH) will consider the request for an advisor change for a legitimate, professional reason. All conversations and documents relevant to an advisor change are confidential, will be added to the student’s file, and will not be disclosed to unrelated parties. Either the student or the faculty advisor may initiate a change. In the event that a student wishes to initiate the change, please communicate directly with the Director of Graduate Studies about your intention to change advisors and s/he will go over the required procedure and documentation.

## Advisory Committee

**Epidemiology Specialization**

The student will work with his/her advisor to identify the 5-person faculty committee. The student’s advisor will serve as the committee chair to oversee the dissertation process and must be an epidemiology faculty member. The committee must consist of at least 2 Epidemiology or Biostatistics faculty members (in addition to the chair) and 1 graduate faculty member outside of the SPH who serves as the graduate school representative. The fifth member can be from a different area of specialization within SPH (Environmental Health, Social and Behavioral Health, Health Administration and Policy) or a related field. Students should form this committee before the end of their 4th semester. A program of study, including the proposed committee, must be completed and submitted to the graduate school. This form is located at [https://www.unr.edu/Documents/graduate-school/program-of-study.pdf.](https://powerforms.docusign.net/f4c5cda5-9551-4439-863f-c63295f484e4?env=na3-eu1&acct=00b1dddc-e55a-4962-9660-d691e16a2f23) Formal approval of all student advisory committees is made by the Graduate Dean.

**Social and Behavioral Health Specialization**

The student will work with his/her advisor to identify the 5-person faculty committee, 4 of whom must be faculty from within SPH. The committee must consist of at least 2 Social/Behavioral Health graduate faculty and 1 graduate faculty member outside of the SPH who serves as the graduate school representative. The other members from within SPH can be graduate faculty from a different area of specialization within SPH (Epidemiology, Biostatistics, or Health Administration and Policy) or other SBH faculty members. The chair must be an SBH or HAP graduate faculty member. The advisor will serve as committee chairperson and subsequent chairperson of the dissertation committee. The student should form this committee before the end of their 4th semester. A program of study, including the proposed committee, must be completed and submitted to the graduate school. This form is located [at https://www.unr.edu/Documents/graduate-school/program-of-study.pdf.](https://powerforms.docusign.net/f4c5cda5-9551-4439-863f-c63295f484e4?env=na3-eu1&acct=00b1dddc-e55a-4962-9660-d691e16a2f23) Formal approval of all student advisory committees is made by the Graduate Dean.

## Comprehensive Exam / Admission to candidacy

**Comprehensive Exam - Written Qualifying Exam**

The first part of the comprehensive exam is taken after the student has completed the first year of required coursework (typically early mid-June). This written qualifying exam includes questions related to the content of required first year courses and will require synthesis across multiple areas. Students enroll in CHS 795: Comprehensive Exam for 1 credit and compete the exam over 3 days. Three possible grades may be awarded: pass; provisional pass (requiring additional work on the part of the student, as determined by the written qualifying exam committee); or fail. No rewrites are allowed. If a student fails, the exam they will be recommended for dismissal from the program. If students earn a provisional pass they will work with their advisor and the written qualifying exam committee to address any deficiencies identified through the exam process (e.g., complete another course).

**Comprehensive Exam - Dissertation Prospectus**

The second part of the comprehensive exam is the written and oral dissertation prospectus. Each student must develop a comprehensive dissertation prospectus that includes a summary and critical evaluation of existing literature, identification of research gaps, proposed research hypotheses or questions, and detailed methodology and analysis plans. The dissertation prospectus must be approved by the dissertation committee chair prior to submission to the dissertation committee. Committee members must have a minimum of two weeks to review the prospectus and communicate with the committee chair regarding potential areas needing further development.

Students must orally defend their prospectus to their full committee which will vote to accept or reject the prospectus or require revisions. If the committee votes to reject the dissertation prospectus two times, the student will be recommended for dismissal from the program.

If approved, committee members will sign off on the prospectus. Any substantial changes in a student’s dissertation prospectus (whether or not it involves a change to the IRB protocol) must be approved by the student’s dissertation committee in writing. Examples include a change in the study design, aims, or the population under study, dropping or adding of a question or hypothesis, or altering the sampling or analytic methodology. The committee may not approve a dissertation defense in which major changes to the approved prospectus occurred without disclosure to the committee.

**Admission to Candidacy**

After students have successfully completed the two components of the comprehensive exam (the written qualifying exam and the dissertation prospectus), a Doctoral Degree Admission to Candidacy / Comprehensive Examination Report must be submitted to the Graduate School. This form is located at [Admission to Candidacy](https://powerforms.docusign.net/4969051f-b1a2-4457-8fcf-087d5e7bff45?env=na3-eu1&acct=00b1dddc-e55a-4962-9660-d691e16a2f23).

# **Dissertation Requirements and graduation/hooding**

The dissertation consists of a minimum of three manuscripts of publishable quality with respect to peer-reviewed journal requirements. The specific requirements are to be established by the dissertation committee in accordance with Graduate School requirements.

The format typically follows the chapter outline below:

* 1. Comprehensive introduction to include the overarching theme(s), up-to-date literature review and research questions or hypotheses which tie the papers together.
  2. Methods chapter addressing the full scope of the methodology for the manuscripts, or the methods can be included separately as required for the 3 papers if unique to each paper and discussed in sufficient detail.
  3. The manuscripts
     1. Paper #1
     2. Paper #2
     3. Paper #3
  4. Conclusion to include a full discussion section that ties the findings from the individual papers together and outlines implications for future research.
  5. Appendices to include, as appropriate, such items as survey instruments, foundational tables, organizational charts, additional tables, and other items not appropriate for a journal article nor the body of the thesis document.

Additional Dissertation guidelines are available from UNR’s website[: Dissertation and Thesis Submission Requirements.](https://www.unr.edu/grad/student-resources/filing-guidelines)

To ensure correct dissertation submission, please review the [Dissertation Filing Guidelines](https://www.unr.edu/grad/student-resources/filing-guidelines) and the [Dissertation Title Form](https://www.unr.edu/grad/student-resources/filing-guidelines/title-form).

## Oral Defense of Dissertation

**Scheduling the oral defense**

All doctoral programs that require a dissertation are required to hold both a public and a private defense of the dissertation. The public defense, which precedes the private defense, must be announced in the University events calendar. The doctoral student or student’s committee chair/major advisor must submit details of the dissertation defense, including, student name, dissertation title, date/time, defense location and major advisor name/email address to the Graduate School via an [online submission form](https://nevada.formstack.com/forms/dissertation_defense) at least 10 business days prior to the holding of the defense.  The oral defense will also be publicized through the student’s department/program.

The candidate must provide a copy of the completed dissertation to each member of the committee at least ten days to two weeks before the examination so that the committee members have ample time to read the document and prepare questions.

**Components of the oral defense**

There are two parts to the oral defense, public and private. It is the expectation that all committee members participate physically or virtually. In the event that a member of the committee cannot participate in the defense, the committee chair must notify the Graduate School as soon as possible after the disclosure is made. If more than

one committee member cannot participate, the defense must be rescheduled.

In the public part of the oral defense, the student will give a presentation of their dissertation work to faculty members, students, alumni, and members of the public.

The private part of the oral defense generally takes place immediately after the public oral presentation. In this part of the oral defense, the student will meet privately with the advisory committee, which will conduct a period of questioning. An absentee committee member must submit any questions pertaining to the student’s dissertation directly to the committee chair before the scheduled defense.

At the end of the exam, the student is excused, and the committee members deliberate on whether the student has demonstrated sufficient command of the subject material to pass the examination, whether the student completed the research independently, and whether the dissertation was properly written and met all of the requirements established by the Graduate School. The decision may be made by consensus, secret ballot or other ways the committee deems appropriate. A student will pass the oral examination with four (4) or more affirmative votes. Negative votes must be accompanied by the rationale for the decision. The student will be informed immediately of the outcome. Written feedback will be provided to the student within one week specifying any changes in the dissertation that must be made before it can be formally approved, and the date by which those changes must be completed. The committee chair will be responsible for informing the student whether the revisions are accepted or rejected.

If the committee votes to fail a student, the committee chair will meet with the student immediately following the defense and send a written evaluation of the candidate’s performance to the major department and the student. In accordance with Graduate School policy, the student may be permitted one additional attempt to conduct a successful defense. Students who do not pass their oral defense a second time will be recommended for dismissal from the program.

Once the committee approves the dissertation and defense, students must submit a Notice of Completion form and Final Review Approval form.

* Notice of completion – completed form should be submitted after all requirements have been met.
  + Doctoral - [Notice of Completion](https://powerforms.docusign.net/542471c4-1c36-48c7-9bb2-03363394ea03?env=na3-eu1&acct=00b1dddc-e55a-4962-9660-d691e16a2f23)
* Final Review Approval – Obtain sign-off from advisory committee chair.
  + Doctoral - [Dissertation Final Review Approval Form](https://powerforms.docusign.net/cbeb89a3-d52f-4de5-9fcd-766e39eded8b?env=na3-eu1&acct=00b1dddc-e55a-4962-9660-d691e16a2f23)

## Graduation and Hooding

Students must purchase a [graduation](https://www.unr.edu/grad/student-resources/forms) application by the designated deadlines:

* May Graduation Deadline: March 1
* August Graduation Deadline: June 1
* December Graduation Deadline: October 1

The Graduate School will review each application and email the students within 3-8 weeks with the result of their graduation review. All candidates for graduation should communicate with their advisor to confirm expectations for the final semester. Important dates, deadlines, and milestones are located on UNR’s website: [Graduation and Deadlines](https://www.unr.edu/grad/student-resources/graduation-deadlines).

Doctoral students are accorded special recognition during spring or winter commencement exercises by participating in a Hooding Ceremony. To participate in the Hooding Ceremony, students must file an application for graduation, have successfully defended their dissertation, and filed the completed Notice of Completion with the Graduate School at least two weeks prior to the commencement exercises. Students who complete their degree during the summer session are eligible to attend either the fall or spring commencement exercises.

# **Academic and Professional Standards and Policies**

**Academic Standards**

The University Academic Standards Policy defines academic dishonesty, and mandates specific sanctions for violations. See the University Academic Standards policy: UAM 6,502. <https://www.unr.edu/administrative-manual/6000-6999-curricula-teaching-research/instruction-research-procedures/6502-academic-standards>

Sanctions for violations of university academic standards for academic dishonesty may include academic and/or disciplinary sanctions. Academic sanctions for both undergraduate and graduate students may include: filing a final grade of "F", reducing the student's final course grade one or two full grade points; giving a reduced grade or zero on the coursework; or requiring the student to retake or resubmit the coursework.

**Good Standing**

All graduate students must maintain a cumulative graduate GPA of 3.0. If their GPA drops below 3.0, they are either placed on probation or dismissed from the program. Undergraduate courses will not count towards graduate GPA.

To be counted toward the PhD degree, each graduate course must be completed with a grade of “C” or better. To remain in good standing in the program, students are required to maintain a 3.0 “B” grade point average in both the core and the specialization, individually.

**Probation and Dismissal**

According to the Nevada System of Higher Education (NSHE) Code, Title 2, Chapter 11, “*a student may be dismissed from a program for academic reasons which may include but are not limited to inadequate grades or failure to remain in academic good standing as defined by the program, a lack of professionalism or unethical conduct, or failure to comply with other specific program requirements. Failure to comport with professional and/or ethical standards applicable to the particular discipline or program may be grounds for dismissal from a program.*” The School of Public Health has developed a dismissal policy that includes dismissal for failure to maintain required grades or required grade point average, dismissal for lack of professionalism, unethical conduct, or failure to comply with other program requirements. Before beginning the program, all students must acknowledge that they have reviewed the [School of Public Health Dismissal Policy](https://www.unr.edu/public-health/students/dismissal-policy).

Students whose cumulative grade-point total is between 2.31 and 2.99 are placed on academic probation for one semester. Graduate students on probation are not eligible for graduate assistantships. If they fail to raise their cumulative GPA to 3.0 by the end of one semester, they are dismissed from their graduate program. Thesis, dissertation, S/U graded credits, and transfer credits have no impact on a student’s GPA.

If a student’s grade point average is 2.30 or lower, the student will be dismissed from graduate standing. A student dismissed from graduate standing because of grade-point deficiencies may enroll as a Graduate Special in undergraduate or graduate courses. To enroll in graduate-level courses, advance written approval must be obtained from the course instructor, the department/program concerned and the Graduate School. Enrolling in undergraduate courses will not raise the cumulative graduate GPA

Dismissal recommendations for reasons other than failure to maintain required grades or required grade point average require a written Notice of Dismissal from the Director of Graduate Studies to the student and the Graduate Dean, and the scheduling of a Review Conference, according to Chapter 11 of the Nevada System of Higher Education CODE. Students can appeal their dismissal from graduate standing by submitting a formal letter to the Dean of the Graduate School and to the Director of Graduate Studies. The letter must be submitted within 10 working days following notification of the dismissal (see the [School of Public Health Dismissal Policy](https://www.unr.edu/public-health/students/dismissal-policy) for more information).

**Doctoral Degree Timeline**

All course work must be completed withineight (8) years preceding the awarding of the degree. Credits transferred into doctoral degree from a completed master’s degree are exempt from this eight-year limit.

**Transfer Credits**

Doctoral students who have completed a master’s degree in an appropriate discipline from an accredited institution may, with the approval of their graduate director, transfer up to twenty-four (24) units toward a Ph.D. degree. The twenty-four (24) unit limit does not apply to students earning a master’s degree en route to a doctoral degree at the University of Nevada, Reno. Transfer credit is requested by using the Graduate Credit Transfer Evaluation Request form available on the Graduate School website ([Graduate Credit Transfer Evaluation Request](https://powerforms.docusign.net/914f761e-c583-4bb0-8bf2-3240fcc7cd54?env=na3-eu1&acct=00b1dddc-e55a-4962-9660-d691e16a2f23)) and must be signed by the student, advisor, and Director of Graduate Studies.

**Student Unit Loads**

A full-time graduate student may not register for more than sixteen (16) graduate units in any semester, or more than six (6) graduate units in any six-week summer session. Audited or undergraduate courses will not be counted toward the 6-credit minimum requirement. Graduate assistants may not register for more than twelve (12) graduate units per semester.

Students who register for nine (9) graduate units or more in a semester are considered full-time. For graduate assistants on a 20-hour (half-time) contract, six (6) graduate units or more constitute full-time. **To be considered full-time for financial aid purposes, all graduate students, including those on assistantships, must be enrolled in nine (9) graduate units; to be considered part-time for financial aid reporting purposes, graduate students must be enrolled in five (5) graduate units**. For those graduate students who are required to take Intensive English Language Center Bridge Courses, these courses can be considered part of full registration upon approval by the Dean of the Graduate School.

**Continuous Enrollment**

To maintain in “good standing” all graduate students are required to enroll in a minimum of three (3) graduate credits each fall and spring semester until they graduate. International students may be required to enroll in nine (9) graduate credits each fall and spring semester depending on the requirements of their visa. All students holding assistantships (whether teaching or research assistantships) are required to enroll in a minimum of six (6) graduate credits each fall and spring semester they hold the assistantship.

**Leave of Absence**

Students in good standing may request a leave of absence by completing a leave of absence form available on the Graduate School website ([Leave of Absence Form](https://powerforms.docusign.net/82e0bdd5-babf-4b64-b557-fe8fecd1e48e?env=na3&acct=00b1dddc-e55a-4962-9660-d691e16a2f23)) during which time they are not required to maintain continuous registration. Usually, a leave of absence is approved for one or two semesters. The leave of absence request may be extended by the student filing an additional leave of absence form. Students applying for a leave of absence should not have any “incomplete” grades which could be changed to “F” and have a detrimental impact on their cumulative GPA. Requests for leave of absences must be received by the Graduate School no later than the last day of enrollment for the semester the leave is to begin.

**Reinstatement**

When a student has been absent for one semester or more without an approved leave of absence, he or she may request reinstatement via the [Reinstatement Form](https://powerforms.docusign.net/d41b816e-5562-4eb3-a0f0-674892dbc59a?env=na3-eu1&acct=00b1dddc-e55a-4962-9660-d691e16a2f23). This form allows the program the option to recommend the student be re-admitted to their graduate program based on their previous admission OR require the student to re-apply for admission which would require students to submit a new application for admission and pay the application fee. The Notice of Reinstatement to Gradate Standing must be received by the Graduate School no later than the last day of enrollment for the semester the reinstatement is to begin.

**Managing Student Complaints in the School of Public Health**

1. The University of Nevada, Reno has clear policies either through the [Administrative Manual (UAM)](https://www.unr.edu/administrative-manual/3000-3999-students/3510-grade-appeal-policy-and-procedures) or other sources for policies and procedures for handling grade complaints (final grades) and those related to [Title IX (discrimination based on sex](https://www.unr.edu/equal-opportunity-title-ix/title-ix)). The following policies and procedures are designed to address complaints from students and from faculty not covered by these policies. Such complaints may involve grades, course management, faculty and/or student interactions, curriculum issues, and professionalism issues.
2. Complaints made by a student should follow these steps whenever possible:
   1. Always start with the instructor to see if the issue can be resolved at the class level. This is an important skill for students to learn as they progress through their studies and is highly encouraged as a first step. If the complaint is related to your advisor, it is best to start at this level.
   2. If the student feels uncomfortable bringing the issue to the instructor/advisor or if the issue remains unresolved, the complaint may be submitted to the SPH Associate Dean who will work with the Dean, appropriate Division Leads and/or Program Director to resolve the issue. A student’s name will not be disclosed during this process.
   3. If the complaint is not resolved at level b, it will then go to the SPH Dean for resolution/action.
      1. Important Notes: There is no wrong door for submitting complaints. Students can skip any of the steps described above. While it is best to work directly with the instructor first, certain complaints that deal with professionalism or other sensitive concerns may be best handled by the Associate Dean or Dean as a first step.
      2. Students may file a complaint using the [Complaint Form](https://www.unr.edu/public-health/students/student-complaint-form) on the School of Public Health website. These complaints will be forwarded directly to the SPH Associate Dean unless the student requests that the complaint be submitted directly to the SPH Dean. Complaints can be submitted with your contact information or anonymously. While anonymous complaints may be more comfortable, it can make resolution more difficult if additional information is needed.
      3. Students who choose to share their contact information will receive an individual response within one week for individual complaints. Students who submit a complaint anonymously will only receive acknowledgement that the complaint was received.
      4. The [Concierge service](https://www.unr.edu/provost/student-resources/academic-concierge) through the Provost’s office is also available for all students if that is more comfortable. Complaints submitted through the Concierge service will typically be forwarded to the SPH Associate Dean and Dean.

# **Graduate Assistantships**

Graduate teaching assistant (GTA) positions are dedicated to teaching and are available for Ph.D. students for 4 semesters. First-time GTAs are required to satisfy training requirements by enrolling in GRAD 701S (Preparing Future Faculty: College Teaching I) during their first semester as a GTA. Continuation of GTA funding is contingent upon satisfactory performance and good academic standing. Although GTA funding is not guaranteed beyond 4 semesters, other GA opportunities including graduate research assistant (GRA) positions are available and many students continue to receive funding support while in the program.

All graduate students holding a GA position are considered Nevada residents for tuition purposes. GA positions include a monthly stipend, health insurance, and a partial tuition waiver. To be eligible for a GA, the student must be admitted to a degree-granting program and be in good academic standing. The student must have an overall GPA of at least 3.0 and must be continuously enrolled in at least 6 graduate level credits (600-700) during Fall and Spring for the duration of the assistantship. Federal financial aid is based on FULL TIME enrollment (9 credits) of graduate-level courses (600-700 level). An enrollment of less than 9 credits of graduate-level courses (600-700 level) will proportionately reduce federal financial aid. State-funded GA positions may be held for a maximum of five (5) years for doctoral degree students.

General information about GA positions can be reviewed here: [Graduate Assistantships](http://www.unr.edu/grad/funding/graduate-assistantships) and the [Graduate Assistantship Handbook](https://www.unr.edu/grad/admissions/funding/assistantships/graduate-assistant-handbook).

# **Health insurance**

All domestic degree seeking graduate students, who are enrolled in six or more credits (regardless of the course level) in a semester, will be automatically enrolled and billed for the University sponsored health insurance for each term they are eligible (fall & spring/summer). If a student has other comparable coverage and would like to waive out of the student health insurance, it is the student’s responsibility to complete the University online waiver form prior to the deadline. If approved, a health insurance waiver is good for the current academic year only. A new waiver must be submitted each academic year. All international graduate students are required to carry student health insurance, and the cost will be automatically added to your student account. Any international graduate students with insurance questions must contact the Office of International Students and Scholars (OISS) directly.

General information about Graduate [Health Insurance](http://www.unr.edu/grad/health-insurance).

# **Graduate Student Association**

The Graduate Student Association (GSA) represents all graduate students and promotes the welfare and interests of the graduate students at the University of Nevada, Reno. The GSA works closely with appropriate university administrative offices, including the Graduate School and Student Services and reports to the President of the University. The GSA government functions through the Council of Representatives, Executive Council and established committees. Additional information is available at <http://www.unr.edu/gsa/>.

# **List of Forms and links**

An up-to-date list of forms and requirements can be found here: <https://www.unr.edu/grad/student-resources/forms>

* Declaration of Advisor /Committee Chair[: https://www.unr.edu/Documents/graduate-school/Declaration-of-Advisor.pdf](https://powerforms.docusign.net/de6efd52-ab95-4d44-8b56-a10041a83469?env=na3-eu1&acct=00b1dddc-e55a-4962-9660-d691e16a2f23) Completed form must be submitted to Graduate School by the end of the student’s second semester
* Program of Study - [http://www.unr.edu/Documents/graduate-school/program-of-study.pdf](https://powerforms.docusign.net/f4c5cda5-9551-4439-863f-c63295f484e4?env=na3-eu1&acct=00b1dddc-e55a-4962-9660-d691e16a2f23)
  + Completed form must be submitted to Graduate School by the end of the student’s fourth semester. The student will complete this form after successful completion of the comprehensive exam and the dissertation prospectus.
* Doctoral Dissertation Filing Guidelines - [https://www.unr.edu/grad/student-resources/filing-guidelines](https://www.unr.edu/grad/student-resources/filing-guidelines%20) Doctoral degree admission to candidacy - <https://www.unr.edu/main/pdfs/verified-accessible/colleges-schools/grad/progressions/doctoral-degree-admission-to-candidacy.pdf>
  + For doctoral students who completed all requirements except for the dissertation
* Dissertation Title Form - [https://www.unr.edu/grad/student-resources/filing-guidelines/title-form](https://www.unr.edu/grad/student-resources/filing-guidelines/title-form%20)
* Additional Dissertation guidelines: https://www.unr.edu/grad/student-resources/forms
* Graduation Application - <https://www.unr.edu/grad/graduation-and-deadlines>
  + Graduate School requires 3-8 weeks for review of application; please plan accordingly
* Final Review Approval – Obtain sign-off from advisory committee chair
  + Doctoral - [https://www.unr.edu/Documents/graduate-school/Dissertation-Final-Review-Approval-Form-2018.pdf](https://www.unr.edu/Documents/graduate-school/Dissertation-Final-Review-Approval-Form-2018.pdf%20)
* Notice of completion – completed form should be submitted after all requirements have been met.
  + Doctoral - <https://powerforms.docusign.net/542471c4-1c36-48c7-9bb2-03363394ea03?env=na3-eu1&acct=00b1dddc-e55a-4962-9660-d691e16a2f23>
* Leave of absence form: https://powerforms.docusign.net/82e0bdd5-babf-4b64-b557-fe8fecd1e48e?env=na3&acct=00b1dddc-e55a-4962-9660-d691e16a2f23
* Reinstatement form: https://powerforms.docusign.net/d41b816e-5562-4eb3-a0f0-674892dbc59a?env=na3-eu1&acct=00b1dddc-e55a-4962-9660-d691e16a2f23
* Ph.D. program information on the CHS website: <https://www.unr.edu/degrees/public-health/phd>
* MyNevada: <https://mynevada.unr.edu/>
* NetID and password set up: https://identity.unr.edu/
* WebCampus: <https://wcl.unr.edu/webapps/login/>
* Information on the WolfCard student ID: <http://www.unr.edu/wolfcard>
* Academic Calendar: <https://www.unr.edu/academic-central/academic-resources/academic-calendar>
* Graduate School Deadlines - <https://www.unr.edu/grad/graduation-and-deadlines>
* Graduate Credit Transfer Evaluation Request form: https://www.unr.edu/main/pdfs/verified-accessible/colleges-schools/grad/admissions/graduate-credit-transfer-evaluation-request-2019.pdf
* General information on graduate assistantships: <http://www.unr.edu/grad/funding/graduate-assistantships>
* Graduate Assistantship Handbook: https://www.unr.edu/grad/admissions/funding/assistantships/graduate-assistant-handbook
* Student health insurance information: <http://www.unr.edu/grad/health-insurance>
* UNR’s Concierge Service: https://www.unr.edu/provost/student-resources/academic-concierge
* Grade Appeals: <http://www.unr.edu/administrative-manual/3000-3999-students/3510-grade-appeal-policy-and-procedures>
* Graduate Student Association: <http://www.unr.edu/gsa/>