

# **Interdisciplinary Health Sciences Doctor of Philosophy Program**

## **STUDENT HANDBOOK**

**THE UNIVERSITY OF TEXAS AT EL PASO  
COLLEGE OF HEALTH SCIENCES**

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# INTERDISCIPLINARY HEALTH SCIENCES PH.D. STUDENT HANDBOOK

## WELCOME

On behalf of the faculty and staff of the College of Health Sciences, at The University of Texas at El Paso, we welcome you to the Interdisciplinary Health Sciences Ph.D. (IHS Ph.D.) Program.

Approved in July 2004 by the Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board, the Interdisciplinary Health Sciences PhD Program was initiated in response to a growing national shortage of professionals with a doctoral degree in health-related fields, particularly in the U.S.-Mexico border region. As a student in our IHS PhD Program, you have the potential to become a national leader in interdisciplinary health research, addressing issues in health and health disparities through a scholarly research major.

Our program embraces an interdisciplinary model of teaching and learning that promotes the development of holistic perspectives on health-related issues. The increasingly complex health issues that scientists are being asked to address are no longer defined by singular-discipline approaches. Solutions require the ability to adopt multiple viewpoints, to think in creative and innovative ways, and to recognize disciplinary and societal biases. Just as our U.S.-Mexico border residents regularly cross geographic boundaries, students in the IHS PhD program regularly cross intellectual boundaries on their paths to becoming health science leaders of the future.

**The program also embraces diversity** as a set of conscious practices that involve 1) awareness of the interdependence of humanity, cultures, and the natural environment, 2) mutual respect for qualities and experiences different from our own, 3) an understanding that spans ways of being and ways of knowing, and 4) creation of alliances across differences.

This handbook will help to guide you through your doctoral education. The information provided here is intended to supplement information provided on the IHS PhD Program web page, (<https://www.utep.edu/chs/ihs/>), in the UTEP Graduate Catalog (<http://catalog.utep.edu/grad/>), and on the IHS Ph.D. Program Blackboard website.

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The IHS Ph.D. Program leadership team is available to assist you in your timely progression through your studies. If there are any questions or concerns, please contact the program coordinator, Darlene Muguero, at [damuguero2@utep.edu](mailto:damuguero2@utep.edu) or 915-747-7256.

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On behalf of the IHS Ph.D. Advisory Committee, and program faculty and staff, I welcome you and wish you an exciting and productive interdisciplinary doctoral experience!

Sincerely,

Sudip Bajpeyi, Ph.D.  
Director, Interdisciplinary Health Sciences Ph.D. Program

## INTERDISCIPLINARY HEALTH SCIENCES DOCTORAL PROGRAM

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## PROGRAM ORIENTATION

### Our Vision

The University of Texas at El Paso Interdisciplinary Health Sciences (IHS) Ph.D. Program will provide students with the highest standards of doctoral level training to prepare them to assume key positions in academia, research, and clinical practice to address complex health disparities in the U.S.-Mexico border region and beyond.

### Our Mission

To prepare graduates from the IHS Ph.D. Program with the commitment, knowledge, and skills to address complex health issues facing individuals, families, and communities in the border region, across the country, and abroad, in an ethically and empirically grounded manner.

### Program Administration

- **IHS Ph.D. Program Director** — The Program Director provides leadership in relation to program issues, and facilitates communication between the IHS PhD Office, CHS students and faculty, the Advisory Committee, the CHS Dean, the Graduate School, and the University. The Program Director also guides the day-to-day function and operations of the program in conjunction with the Program Coordinator.
- **IHS Ph.D. Program Committee** — The PhD Program Committee oversees the curriculum, program evaluation, and student admission and progression. The committee is comprised of the Program Director and doctoral faculty representing the various disciplines in the CHS. One to two doctoral student representatives and designees of the CHS Dean serve as ex-officio members.
- **IHS Ph.D. Program Coordinator**- The Program Coordinator serves as the administrator for the program and provides support to the Program Director and Advisory Committee.
- **CHS Dean** — The CHS Dean has final responsibility for ensuring the quality and successful functioning of the program and for appointing the Program Director, Advisory Committee, and Program Coordinator.
- **Doctoral Dissertation Committee** — The Doctoral Dissertation Committee is composed of *at least three faculty members from the IHS Ph.D. Program Doctoral faculty*. A fourth external member of the committee must be from outside CHS. Given the interdisciplinary nature of the program and specialized knowledge needed to advance a student, a member from another College/School at UTEP, or other affiliated university may serve in this role. Committee members are expected to hold tenure or tenure-track appointments. One clinical faculty member may serve when their clinical expertise is directly relevant to the student's research. Any request to include more than one clinical faculty member must be submitted by the student and mentor to the PhD Program Director and Program Coordinator with a clear justification for consideration as an exception.

## Program Communication

You will be assigned a UTEP email address, which will become your main mode of communication with the program staff. You will be responsible for checking your UTEP email account for announcements by and private correspondence with program staff and dissertation committee. You will have access to your email account from any computer worldwide via the UTEP website (<http://webmail.utep.edu>).

Instructions for setting up your student account can be found at <https://newaccount.utep.edu/>. Problems with your email account should be reported to the HELP Desk (on campus: X4357; off campus: 747-5257).

The IHS Ph.D. Program's website (<http://utep.edu/chs/ihs>) lists the latest news and announcements about the program and other important information. Forms commonly used by IHS Ph.D. students are available in the program's Blackboard site and accessible to all students and participating faculty.

**This handbook is also available on the program website: <https://www.utep.edu/chs/ihs/>**

## Orientation

A student orientation is conducted prior to the start of the new semester. The agenda includes reviewing and answering questions about the program requirements as described in this Handbook, discussing expectations of doctoral students by the faculty and the program leadership, becoming familiar with the College of Health Sciences' and UTEP's physical facilities, and meeting other doctoral students and faculty. Additional orientation sessions may be scheduled as needed.

## Library Connection

The UTEP library has study rooms available for graduate students. They are small, but private, and can be locked. They need to be reserved ahead of time. Doctoral students in the dissertation-writing phase have priority over other students. Please check with the Health Sciences Librarian about this service and others that can be provided to doctoral students at the Library Reference Desk (915) 747-5643, or (915) 747-5638. The Health Sciences librarian is available for private consultation on bibliographic searches and other research-related activities, such as getting materials through interlibrary loans.

## Residency and Language Requirements

There is no full-time residency requirement for this program, although students must be continuously enrolled and spend a sufficient amount of time on campus to pursue their research and interact with the faculty and fellow students. Enrollment for part-time students is considered to be six SCH and at least nine SCH for full-time students in both the spring and fall semesters. There is no mandatory foreign or computer language requirement, but language proficiency may be requested by the student's Doctoral Academic Committee, if the student is pursuing research with a specific population, such as monolingual Spanish-speaking Latino migrants.

## Program Requirements

A minimum of sixty (60) semester-credit hours (SCH) are required to complete your doctoral degree; they are listed in Table 1 below and allocated as follows:

- 1) **Core courses** that are required of all students (27 SCH) – includes dissertation courses (9 SCH)
- 2) **Elective courses** (33 SCH)
  - a) In students' areas of specialization (15 SCH)
  - b) Elective interdisciplinary courses (18 SCH)

The course listings in Table 1 do not show any academic leveling or prerequisite coursework that may be required. Students' specific course of study may include leveling courses such as workshops or special training to prepare them for doctoral work. However, these courses or training opportunities will not count toward the 60 SCH required for a student's graduation. Examples of courses or trainings needed for completing the dissertation research may include learning how to access and mine large data sets, the use of a specific computer language such as "R", higher level statistical analysis, or learning specific laboratory techniques.

## Course Descriptions

Descriptions of courses offered by the IHS program can be found in the UTEP Graduate Catalog (<http://www.utep.edu/catalog/>) and are listed in **Appendix A**.

**Table 1: Course Requirements**

| Interdisciplinary Health Sciences PhD Core Courses – 27 total SCH                                                                                                                                                                                                                                             |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                               |
|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Must complete: CHSC 6302, CHSC 6303, CHSC 6304, CHSC 6305, CHSC 6307, plus <b>one</b> other course from the list below (18 SCH)                                                                                                                                                                               | Must complete <u>both</u> courses: CHSC 6398 and CHSC 6399 (9 SCH)                                                                                                                                                                                                                            |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>CHSC 6306 – Quantitative Methods in Health Sciences II*</li> <li>CHSC 6350 – Scientific and Grant Writing*</li> <li>CHSC 6396 – Advanced Research Methods*</li> </ul> <p>*Note these may not be offered every year</p>                                                 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>CHSC 6398 – Dissertation I (3 SCH)</li> <li>CHSC 6399 – Dissertation II (6 SCH)<br/>(6 SCH is the minimum, may be repeated as necessary)</li> </ul>                                                                                                    |
| Interdisciplinary Health Sciences PhD Elective Courses – 33 total SCH                                                                                                                                                                                                                                         |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                               |
| <i>Recommended courses – other courses may be substituted with Mentor and Program approval<br/>Any of the recommended electives may be repeated <u>one time</u> as long as the topic varies</i>                                                                                                               |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                               |
| Five Elective Courses in Students' Specialty – 15 SCH<br>( <b>Possible Courses</b> ; <u>other courses may be taken with Mentor/Program approval</u> )                                                                                                                                                         | Six Elective Interdisciplinary Courses – 18 SCH<br>( <b>Potential Courses</b> ; <u>other courses may be taken with Mentor/Program approval</u> )                                                                                                                                              |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>CHSC 6380 – Special Topics in the Health Professions (when offered)</li> <li>CHSC 6385 – Independent Study in the Health Sciences</li> <li>CHSC 6388 – Research Applications</li> <li>CHSC 6390 – Directed Study</li> <li>Mentor/program approved electives</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>CHSC 6380 – Special Topics in the Health Professions</li> <li>CHSC 6385 – Independent Study in the Health Sciences</li> <li>CHSC 6388 – Research Applications</li> <li>CHSC 6390– Directed Study</li> <li>Mentor/program approved electives</li> </ul> |

Individualized elective courses to support students' specialties and interdisciplinary coursework is to be selected by students and their mentors. Any graduate course offered in other UTEP departments and at the University of Texas Health Science Center - Houston School of Public Health, El Paso Regional Campus, are acceptable if they are approved by the IHS PhD Program Director and the student's Doctoral Dissertation Committee.

Among the elective courses, Research Applications and Independent Study courses involve activities preparatory to active data collection such as literature review and synthesis, such as Directed Study and Independent Study in the Health Sciences courses. Students are not required to take Directed Study (CHSC 6390) as part of their doctoral curriculum, but it is highly encouraged, as it may help with progressing their dissertation research. If students elect to take CHSC 6380, 6385, 6388, or 6390, it is highly suggested that students work under different faculty members to expand their experience and knowledge base.

### Transfer SCH

In accordance with Graduate School guidelines, students may request a transfer of graduate credit hours from other programs or universities to meet IHS PhD Program requirements. The transferred courses have to be approved by the IHS PhD Program Director, the student's Doctoral Advisor, and the Graduate School.

### Degree Plan

A preliminary degree plan will be drafted in consultation with the Program Coordinator and the Doctoral Advisor during the first semester of the IHS Ph.D. Program. The Program Coordinator will assist students with required courses, whereas the Doctoral Advisor will assist the student in identifying elective courses to fulfill the 27 elective SCH requirements. Any courses taken outside of CHS courses will require program and departmental approval. Requests for course substitutions or other changes must be initiated by the Doctoral Advisor to the Program Coordinator. The Program Coordinator will forward updated degree plans to the Graduate School for approval. A final degree plan must be on file with the Graduate School prior to graduation.

### Responsibilities of Students

Success as a doctoral student hinges upon a number of behaviors and expectations. Some are elaborated below; Student Advisement Responsibilities are listed in the Academic Advising section in page 12 of the Handbook.

#### Students' Programmatic Responsibilities

- Complete all coursework satisfactorily, with a minimum GPA of 3.0
- Complete Individualized Development Plan
  - Due at the end of every academic year and reviewed with the Doctoral Advisor, and then submitted to the Program Coordinator and the Graduate School
- Maintain scholarly productivity
  - Continuous writing for degree progression, manuscripts for peer-review, or funding applications
- Take the doctoral Qualifying Exam after at least 30 semester credit hours have been completed
  - Students cannot enroll in CHSC 6398 (Dissertation I) until the Qualifying Exam has been passed
- Successfully defend the dissertation proposal
  - When approved, the student will advance to candidacy and will be allowed to collect data and write their dissertation
- Successfully defend the dissertation; students are granted the degree with an unconditional approval

## Students' Research Responsibilities

Active involvement in research and professional development activities is a paramount objective and is required of all doctoral students. The degree will only be awarded for demonstrated ability to perform independent research to the Doctoral Dissertation Committee. The Doctoral Dissertation Committee is responsible for ensuring rigor worthy of awarding a Ph.D. However, **doctoral students are responsible for ensuring timely progress on their dissertation research and degree progression.**

While in the program, doctoral students are required to develop a research project for their dissertation, expanding upon the boundaries of interdisciplinary knowledge on a health-related issue. As part of this, students are also expected to complete thorough and critical reviews of relevant literature while developing an experimental research plan to answer their research question. Along the way, as part of their professional preparation, doctoral students should also seek to supervise masters and undergraduate students in their respective laboratories. Doctoral students should also understand the nuances of various data collection procedures, and managing laboratory equipment and supplies.

## Professional Orientation

The PhD is not a professional certificate; it indicates an individual's ability to become involved and engage in scholarly research and develop appropriate research methodologies to answer specific research questions. Doctoral students are expected to engage in research-related activities early in the program, including, but not limited to:

- Attending extra-curricular activities, such as colloquia, brown bags, seminars by faculty candidates, and proposal and dissertation defenses by other students;
- Attending workshops and summer training institutes to enhance research, grant-seeking and management, and teaching skills;
- Becoming proficient in the use of computer technology, such as the use of applications like Adobe Acrobat, word processing, spreadsheets, digital presentations, databases, social media, and e-mail;
- Becoming proficient in using appropriate analysis software;
- Giving presentations at national, regional, and local academic or professional health meetings on the research they are conducting;
- Serving as instructor of record or teaching assistant under the direct supervision of a faculty member, in an area of their expertise; and
- Writing and submitting manuscripts for publication in peer-reviewed journals prior to graduation.

We have high expectations for our students. We expect for you to be seen as colleagues and active collaborators by the IHS Ph.D. Program faculty and other faculty at UTEP.

## Expected Behaviors

### **Doctoral students should:**

- Take primary responsibility for learning about course and degree requirements, regulations, policies, and practices governing the IHS Ph.D. Program, and seek clarification from advisors when the precise meaning or application of a regulation or policy is unclear.
- Recognize the importance of seeking an early and informal resolution of any actual or potential problems related to their research or advisor-advisee relationships.
- If due to change in research interests, departure of advisor, or any other reason resulting in an amicable ending of the advisor/advisee relationship with their current advisor, students should notify the IHS Ph.D. Program Director in writing of their intent to change advisors and provide a written assent of the new advisor.
- Immediately notify the IHS Ph.D. Program Director if the advisor/advisee relationship is terminated abruptly for any reason. Students will have the responsibility of locating another advisor within a 2-week period of terminating the advisor/advisee relationship. The IHS Ph.D. Program Director should be provided a written assent of the agreement to take on the role of advisor from the new advisor.
- Become knowledgeable about available financial aid at UTEP and research and teaching assistantship positions among the IHS Ph.D. Program faculty at CHS or other departments. This may involve consulting each department's notes or guidelines for graduate student assistantships.
- Research the existence and requirements of pre-doctoral fellowships from foundations, universities, and governmental agencies.
- Be a self-starter and problem solver.
- Accept the ambiguity that may surround some classes and research topics.
- Work much harder and spend much more time on classes, assignments, and directed/independent research as compared to what was expected in undergraduate and master's degree programs.
- Learn as much individually as possible. Doctoral students are expected to have the ability to perform independently through research-related activities and self-learning, and to seek out collaborative research opportunities with fellow students and UTEP faculty.
- Be proactive. Meet and communicate regularly with advisors and committee members, since they are expecting that behavior from doctoral students. Do not wait for their prompting and set up regular meeting times.
- Take the responsibility of responding promptly (within a 24-hour time period) to all email, text messages, and phone communications from the IHS Ph.D. Program Director, Coordinator, Advisors and Doctoral Committee members.

### ***Consequences for not complying with expected responsibilities and behaviors:***

Failure of students to comply with any of the expected responsibilities or behaviors in the IHS Ph.D. Program will be reviewed by the Program Director and Program Coordinator, in conjunction with the Doctoral Advisor. If severe enough, behavior or omission of responsibilities may result in dismissal from the program.

## Responsibilities of the IHS Ph.D. Program Faculty

### **IHS Ph.D. Program doctoral faculty, including Doctoral Advisors, should:**

- Help doctoral students design a dissertation research program that will take advantage of their individual interests and intellectual strengths to develop students' research skills to facilitate the successful completion and defense of the doctoral dissertation in a timely manner.
- Develop in students, by example and precept, a dedication to high-quality teaching and research.
- Encourage students to be open about any issues they perceive in their working relationships with individual doctoral faculty members—including their relationship with their Doctoral Advisor— and to be open to making accommodations to deal with such issues.
- Annually, or as needed, without their prompting, provide students with an evaluation of their progress and performance in informative ways and design an action plan to remedy any challenges.
- Facilitate students' participation in professional meetings and assist them in the preparation and presentation or display of their work in public settings.
- Assist students in manuscript preparation for submission of their research to peer reviewed journals. This includes helping in editing articles for resubmission to the same or another journal, when needed. Students should have the primary responsibility for these articles and, consequently, should be the sole or primary author.
- Provide students with a realistic view of the opportunities in the current job market, and introduce students to training opportunities, research collaborations, and future employment by making use of the faculty member's professional contacts in their main field of research.
- Maintain at all times, a high level of professionalism including:
  - Recusing themselves from participating in decisions regarding students with whom they have a relationship that could represent a potential conflict of interest.
  - Refraining from impeding students' progress toward the degree or toward employment in order to benefit from students' proficiency as research assistants.
  - Publicly acknowledging students' contributions to the faculty's research by authorship in submitted papers, posters, podium presentations, and patents.

## ACADEMIC ADVISING

### General Information

A sound working relationship between doctoral students and their advisors is based on mutual respect and frequent and open communication. Scheduling regular and frequent meetings helps keep problems and issues manageable and facilitates progress in students' degree plans and research efforts. This is a joint effort involving students and members of the Doctoral Academic Committee. A minimum of a once-a-month, in-person meeting with the Doctoral Advisor is standard procedure. During registration periods, students should meet more with

their Doctoral Advisors to determine which elective courses would provide students with the most effective experience.

### Qualifications of the Doctoral Advisors

- Tenured, tenure-track, or clinical faculty who completed a research-based dissertation, have a record of active participation in research, and/or who have a sustained record of peer-reviewed publications aligned with the faculty's research program
- Member of the graduate faculty, approved by the Graduate School
- Willing to serve on doctoral students' supervisory and dissertation committees
- Confirmed in meeting the above qualifications by the IHS Ph.D. Program Advisory Committee, in consultation with the CHS Dean

### Role of Doctoral Advisors

Doctoral Advisors provide a vital link between students and the doctoral program. They play an important role in orienting students to the doctoral program requirements, policies, and expectations; providing appropriate guidance regarding course selection and sequence; supervising completion of the doctoral program curriculum; serving as a research mentor; and assisting students in planning an appropriate career trajectory.

#### ***Specifically, Doctoral Advisors will:***

1. Interpret to students the doctoral program requirements and policies with the assistance of the IHS Ph.D. Program Director and Coordinator
2. Assist students in identifying other members of the Doctoral Academic Committee
3. Assist students in developing goals for completing the IHS Ph.D. Program and future career planning
4. Assist students in proper course selection and sequencing
  - Be knowledgeable about the content and prerequisites of the IHS Ph.D. Program courses
  - Develop with students a tentative degree plan and a timeline for degree completion during the student's first semester and forward a copy of this plan to the IHS Ph.D. Program Coordinator
  - Help ensure that the specialty and interdisciplinary elective courses in the degree plan support students' future dissertation research plans
  - Review the degree plan with the student every semester to determine if modifications are required; any changes should be reported to the IHS Ph.D. Program Coordinator
5. Monitor students' academic progress through discussions with students and doctoral faculty members, and by reviewing course grades. At the end of each spring semester, Doctoral Advisors and students complete the Individualized Development Plan (available on the IHS PhD Blackboard site) and submit the form to the IHS Ph.D. Program Coordinator, for review by the Program Director and the IHS Ph.D. Advisory Committee.
6. Verify that all core courses have been completed prior to allowing students to sit for the oral Qualifying Exam
7. Discuss with students the specific expectations regarding content and timely completion of the Qualifying Exam and guide them regarding the timeline to complete the Qualifying Examination Approval Form.
  - Develop questions for the Qualifying Exam, in conjunction with other Doctoral Academic Committee members
  - Notify the IHS Ph.D. Program office of the date of the Qualifying Exam. The IHS PHD Program Director and/or Program Coordinator has the option to attend the exam for doctoral students
  - Conduct the oral portion of the Qualification Exam
  - In conjunction with the Doctoral Academic Committee, evaluate the responses to the Qualifying Exam questions and notify students of the exam results. Students who fail to pass the Qualifying Exam will be allowed to retake it after completing remedial work assigned by the Doctoral Academic Committee.

### **Doctoral Dissertation Chairs should:**

- Assist students in identifying a dissertation committee;
- Supervise the development of a dissertation topic that will increase the level of knowledge of a particular health problem, using an interdisciplinary framework;
- Discuss with students the format chosen for the dissertation: either a traditional dissertation with five or more chapters, or the submission for publication of three articles based on the chosen topic;
- Provide constant mentoring throughout the dissertation research process, from data collection to analysis and final write-up;
- Discuss with students the specific expectations regarding the written dissertation proposal and the proposal defense oral presentation, including the format for the presentation and time limits;
- In conjunction with the Dissertation Committee, evaluate the written dissertation proposal defense document, as well as the oral defense of the proposal;
- Complete the Proposal Defense form giving specific information about conditions raised by the dissertation committee members during the proposal defense, as well as providing a timeline when these conditions will be met;
- After the committee conditions are met, submit the signed proposal defense form signed by all members of the dissertation committee for signature by the IHS Ph.D. Program Director and the CHS Dean;
- Discuss with students the specific expectations regarding the written final dissertation format, including the format for the oral defense presentation and time limits;
- In conjunction with the Dissertation Committee, evaluate the written dissertation document, as well as the oral defense of the dissertation;
- Complete the Dissertation defense form, giving specific information about conditions raised by the dissertation committee members during the dissertation defense, as well as a timeline when these conditions will be met;
- Submitting the signed proposal defense form or the dissertation defense form by all members of the dissertation committee for signature by the IHS Ph.D. Program Director and the CHS Dean.

### **Changing Advisors**

A change in any of the members of the Doctoral Advisory Committee may be warranted if a student markedly changes research interests through the course of doctoral study. The student and/or the faculty advisor are encouraged to seek the advice of the IHS Ph.D. Program Director prior to initiating these procedures. If a change is necessary, the student and the advisor should agree upon a plan to transfer the student to a new advisor. A formal, written request indicating the desire to change advisors as well as the reason for the change should be submitted to the IHS Ph.D. Program Director. The IHS Ph.D. Program Director, in consultation with the Deans, gives final approval to any change.

### **Student Advisement Responsibilities**

Doctoral students bear substantial responsibility to assure that the advisement they receive occurs in a timely and appropriate manner. To this end, students are responsible during their first semester in the program to:

1. Conduct, at a minimum, monthly meetings with the Doctoral Advisor;
2. Communicate with the Doctoral Advisor regarding their progress, plans, goals and any problems that might affect their academic progress;

3. Keep other members of their Doctoral Academic Committee informed of any changes in plans and goals and any pertinent problems that might affect their academic progress;
4. Be aware of IHS Ph.D. Program policies and requirements and of any changes that may occur;
5. Follow the curriculum plan as agreed upon with their Doctoral Advisor. If problems occur during the class registration process necessitating changes to the curriculum plan, students should consult their Doctoral Advisor prior to any curriculum changes being made;
6. Report to their Doctoral Advisor any problems that might delay the completion of coursework, Qualifying Exam, or dissertation progress within the previously agreed-upon timeline;
7. Complete and route all approval documents pursuant to the completion of the doctoral degree; and
8. Participate with their Doctoral Advisor in the selection of members for the Dissertation Committee.

## RESEARCH and PROGRESSION

### Research and Dissertation

Students must be actively engaged in research throughout their time in the doctoral program. The required doctoral dissertation must describe an empirical study that is an original work of scholarship and which makes a unique contribution to the body of knowledge. The dissertation research must be on an applied or clinical health topic and may be descriptive (e.g., survey or qualitative research), mechanistic, or involving prevention or intervention trials. There are two acceptable dissertation models students can choose from: 1) three-study dissertation; and 2) traditional, single-project dissertation. Students must defend their dissertation proposal by the day prior to Dead Day of any given semester. Final dissertation defenses must be completed by two weeks prior to Dead Day to allow time for revisions to the dissertation document. Please refer to the academic calendar for respective dates. Additionally, students must defend the proposal and final dissertation in person on the UTEP campus, during regular operating hours. Students who fail the first defense attempt must also present publicly on subsequent attempts; students receiving a conditional pass do not have to present publicly on subsequent attempts. Exceptions to the in-person policy include offering a Zoom option for committee members who live outside the city or who are traveling at the time of the defense. Alternative methods require the approval of the program director and are considered only under exceptional circumstances.

**Three-Study Dissertation:** If a student and mentor decide to complete a three-study dissertation (TSD), the student must create a line of research that is linearly progressive or under the same scope of concept. Each study must be publishable on its own and must be ready to submit prior to graduation. The format for the TSD is similar to that of a traditional dissertation, where the studies are prefaced with a general introduction section, each of the studies is in a submission-ready form, and an overall discussion/conclusion section is included. One major benefit of the TSD is that students will have several submission-ready manuscripts. Additionally, students seeking faculty positions can utilize their dissertations to demonstrate their research agenda during the interview process. If a student has any manuscripts of their TSD published prior to submitting their dissertation to the Graduate School, students must adhere to journal-specific copyright laws.

**Traditional Dissertation:** A traditional dissertation identifies a larger problem or gap in the literature and has students conduct a large-scale study examining several variables. The traditional dissertation follows a format with a general introduction, literature review, methods section, results, and discussion/conclusion sections.

### Publication and Presentation Policy

Students are encouraged to submit a minimum of two articles for publication in peer-reviewed journals or reports, and at least one of the articles must report novel empirical results. At least one article must be submitted before the defense of the dissertation proposal. Appropriateness of the publication outlet, the quality of the manuscript submitted, and the adequacy of student contribution are to be validated by the student's Doctoral Advisor. Students should ensure their affiliation as noted on manuscripts is with the IHS PhD Program:

Interdisciplinary Health Sciences Doctoral Program, College of Health Sciences, The University of Texas at El Paso.

Because the program encourages interdisciplinary collaboration, co-authorships are permitted. Coauthors are permitted with the student submitting the article as either first author or second author. First authorship is always preferred, but each situation will be assessed according to existing circumstances. Credit for a paper with two student co-authors will be granted to both students, so long as the students are the first and second authors and the Author Notes reflect a statement attesting to equal contribution of the first two authors.

As another requirement for graduation, students must present some aspect of their research in at least one public doctoral student seminar.

### Milestones in the Research and Dissertation Process

Although progress on the research and dissertation process is not always easy to measure, there are nine milestones by which students can measure their progress during the doctoral program. These milestones apply to both full-time and part-time students, although part-time students will have a longer time frame. A matrix with the tentative dates for completing the each of the milestones and its progress is available in the IHS PhD Program Blackboard Hub.

#### 1. Preliminary Degree Plan Submission

- a. Preliminary degree plans should be submitted within your first semester in the program to the Program Coordinator and constructed in conjunction with the Doctoral Advisor.

#### 2. Identify a Research Topic and Research Question

- a. The research topic may be aligned with your Doctoral Advisor's area of research, or may span several areas.
- b. The research question should be literature-based and thus, hypothesis-driven.

#### 3. Formally Select a Doctoral Dissertation Committee

- a. The Doctoral Dissertation Committee should consist of four members: 3 members from CHS graduate faculty and 1 member from outside of CHS. Faculty that are not appointed as doctoral faculty can serve on Doctoral Dissertation Committees, but temporary appointment documentation must be requested and submitted to the Program Coordinator
- b. Submit names of committee members to IHS Program Coordinator

#### 4. Complete Qualifying Exam: Upon completing the core courses, students are eligible for the Qualifying Exam. Guidelines for the exam are provided in Appendix B.

#### 5. Register for CHSC 6398 – Dissertation I

- a. Write and defend dissertation proposal

#### 6. Register for CHSC 6399 – Dissertation II

- a. Complete dissertation project
- b. Defend Dissertation

#### 7. Apply for Graduation

#### 8. Graduate!!!!

## EMPLOYMENT

### Guidelines on the Employment of Graduate Associates (GAs)

The College of Health Sciences offers positions as Graduate Associates (GA) to a number of qualified IHS doctoral students to enhance their educational experience and to assist them educationally and financially in completing their degree programs. A central purpose of GA positions is to foster mentorship relationships between faculty supervisors and student GAs for their mutual benefit. These guidelines do not supersede established University employment practices.

### Terms of Employment

All GA positions must involve work that relates significantly to the student's academic program. Students must indicate their interest in applying for any open positions. Position announcements will be sent to incoming students (if not already funded) as they become available. Students selected for GA positions will be on a meritorious basis of the evaluation of application materials submitted by the doctoral student and his/her advisor. Each application will be evaluated and rated by a sub-committee comprised of members of the IHS Ph.D. Program's Advisory Committee. Students will be awarded GA positions depending on the rating by a majority vote of Advisory Committee members.

The goal of financial support is to facilitate timely degree completion. Internal support will be offered for four years, and once four consecutive or non-consecutive years of internal funding are completed, the student will no longer be eligible for internal funding. Mentors can continue funding students on external funds so long as the student is still progressing towards their degree. GA renewal will be contingent upon satisfactory annual evaluations made by the student's mentor via the Individualized Development Program which is due to the IHS Advisory Committee by May 1<sup>st</sup>. An unsatisfactory evaluation may result in a nonrenewal of funding from the College. To maintain GA positions, students must demonstrate consistent progress toward completion of their doctoral program. Students are encouraged to work with their Doctoral Academic Committee for financial support needed beyond this period, normally through an external grant that will support students through completion of their dissertation.

GA positions are ordinarily offered for nine months (the regular academic year). The academic goals of the students should be regarded as paramount during their employment and accommodations should be made for scheduled classes, final exams, etc.

GAs are appointed for 20 hours per week (50% time), making them eligible for non-resident tuition waivers and medical/insurance benefits. GA positions funded by the College of Health Sciences may involve teaching assistance or teaching for 5 to 10 hours per week in addition to research activities.

NOTE: If students in a CHS-funded GA position receive a grade of "C" in any graduate course, their situation will be referred to the PhD Advisory Committee and, barring extenuating circumstances, may result in a recommendation to terminate funding for the position.

### Responsibilities of the Student/Supervising Faculty Member/Department

An 11-or 12-month Graduate Assistant must be a full-time student during the long semesters, taking at least nine semester credit hours.

In most instances, GAs would be under the supervision of their advisor, but may be asked to assist another faculty member with course-related activities. Typically, the responsibilities of GAs will vary substantially from

week to week. Work guidelines may be very general or very specific, and responsibilities may be uneven and varied. In some instances, if the advisor does not have an active research project for which they need assistance, GAs may work temporarily for another faculty member who needs assistance. GAs should understand that the main purpose of their position is to enhance their educational experience broadly.

### Job Responsibilities

GAs are required to work closely with the faculty supervisor in carrying out any assigned duties while making good progress toward completion of their degree. These duties will include, but are not limited to, the following:

- Maintain high standards of academic integrity and honesty in labs, classrooms, offices, etc., and report violations of such standards to their faculty supervisor;
- Stay informed of departmental, college, and institutional regulations governing academic life and follow them consistently;
- Articulate the expected goals early in an assignment given by their faculty supervisor and work diligently to achieve them;
- Coordinate assigned work time and academic responsibilities. If there are potential conflicts, discuss them immediately with the faculty supervisor;
- Keep careful records of all work assignments so that their progress and challenges are fully documented. Include in the records the timeline to be followed to completion, documentation of decisions, verification of results, and ensure that no work is left unfinished when leaving the GRA position;
- Regularly discuss with the faculty supervisor his or her expectations about assignments— especially the timeframe when assignments should be completed; and
- Clarify with the faculty supervisor how the work will be assessed.

### Evaluation and Continuing Employment

Each semester, an evaluation form should be completed and signed by the supervising faculty member, and should be reviewed, discussed, and also signed by the student. A copy of the evaluation will be placed in the student's file in the IHS PHD Program office.

If poor performance is identified, it may result in the discontinuation of the appointment. In response to this, the student should be provided, in writing, a clear explanation of the reasons for the decision and given a minimum of two-week's notice and pay. In addition, the faculty advisor may recommend to the IHS PhD Program Director that the student should not be reappointed to a GA position. The GA will have an opportunity to appeal the decision to the faculty supervisor and, if no agreement is reached, to the IHS PhD Program Director, who will consult with the IHS PhD Advisory Committee before a final decision is made.

### Student Complaints

If GAs encounter work environments that are not acceptable to them, they should initially have a discussion with their supervising faculty member. To ensure an equitable discussion occurs, the IHS Ph.D. Program Director can be in attendance and serve as a moderator. If students do not feel comfortable speaking directly to their supervising faculty member, they can meet directly and one-on-one with the IHS Ph.D. Program Director to discuss the issue(s) at hand and potential solutions. If necessary, the Program Director may consult with the Dean of the College of Health Sciences and/or the Dean of the Graduate School to determine best possible actions for each specific scenario. Moreover, students will be protected from retaliation under UTS131 – [Protection from Retaliation for Reported Suspected Wrongdoing](#).

## Travel Policies

Prior approval for all business travel is required for absences from campus for periods of half a day or more during the normal working period, whether or not there is a cost to the University. For specific instructions on the processing of travel requests, see <https://www.utep.edu/travel/student/>. An approved travel authorization form with the signatures of the program director and dean of the College of Health Sciences is required for all student travel.

## PROGRAM, UNIVERSITY, AND COLLEGE POLICIES AND PROCEDURES

### Background Check and Drug Screening

Students who are awarded a Graduate Assistantship position will be required to submit to a background check prior to being appointed to their positions. The background check and drug screening will cover the student for five years.

## ACADEMIC POLICIES

### Academic Dishonesty

Students who commit an act of scholastic dishonesty are subject to discipline. Scholastic dishonesty includes, but is not limited to, cheating, plagiarism, collusion, the submission for credit of any work or materials that are attributable in whole or in part to another person, taking an examination for another person, and any act designed to give unfair advantage to a student or the attempt to commit such acts. Detailed explanation of the regulations can be found in the Handbook of Operating Procedures (HOP) ([www.utep.edu/hoop/](http://www.utep.edu/hoop/)) and in the Dean of Students' Office ([www.utep.edu/student-affairs/dean-of-students-office/](http://www.utep.edu/student-affairs/dean-of-students-office/)).

The following link provides explanation to the university policy regarding scholastic dishonesty:  
[www.utep.edu/student-affairs/osccr/student-conduct/academic-integrity.html](http://www.utep.edu/student-affairs/osccr/student-conduct/academic-integrity.html)

***Plagiarism is a very serious academic offense.*** If you are unsure of what constitutes plagiarism, you are responsible for discussing this topic with your advisor and with the Director of the IHS PhD Program. At the doctoral level, ignorance regarding plagiarism is not accepted as a valid excuse for misconduct. Consistent with university policy regarding plagiarism, without exception, the IHS PhD Program refers all cases of plagiarism for investigation to the UTEP Office of Student Conduct.

You are strongly advised to submit all of your written work, including papers written for your classes, drafts of proposals, and theses and dissertations, to an online plagiarism checker before submitting your written work to faculty. There are many online sites available for plagiarism check. The one used by Blackboard at UTEP is Safe Assign.

Faculty are responsible for identifying and reporting possible cases of plagiarism that occur in the writing of papers and examinations for courses. When a faculty member discovers evidence of coursework-related plagiarism, the faculty member will notify the IHS PHD Program Director and submit the required information and documents to the Office of Student Conduct ([www.utep.edu/student-affairs/osccr/](http://www.utep.edu/student-affairs/osccr/)) for investigation. The Office of Student Conduct will then contact the suspected student and begin investigation proceedings. Once the case has been turned over to the Office of Student Conduct, the investigation is handled entirely by the

Office of Student Conduct and the Dean of Students. To guarantee objectivity, IHS Doctoral Program faculty are not involved in the investigation.

**All completed dissertations will be checked for plagiarism *before the Dissertation Defense is scheduled*. The candidate is required to submit the document to the Graduate School's Safe Assign site. If the checking reveals text matches with previously published materials, this will constitute "suspected plagiarism," and the case will be turned over to the UTEP Office of Student Conduct for investigation. The outcome of the investigation will determine the consequences to the student's academic standing.**

### Academic Integrity

UTEP faculty and students must strive to achieve excellence based on the quality of their work. In the classroom and in all other academic activities, faculty and students are expected to uphold the highest standards of academic integrity. Any form of dishonesty is an affront to the pursuit of knowledge and jeopardizes the quality of the degree awarded to all UTEP graduates. It is therefore imperative that the members of the academic community understand the regulations pertaining to academic integrity and that all members of the College of Health Sciences' faculty insist on adherence to these standards.

### Academic Probation and Dismissal

A student admitted into a graduate program whose cumulative grade point average in the program drops below 3.0 will be placed on academic probation and must return his/her grade point average to at least 3.0 by the completion of the next nine semester hours of work. Failure to achieve a 3.0 GPA during the probationary period will result in the student's dismissal from the Graduate School. A student who has been dismissed may be readmitted for further graduate study in the same or in a different program only upon the recommendation of the relevant graduate studies committee and the approval of the Dean of the Graduate School.

### Academic Standing

Students admitted into graduate programs must fulfill all admissions conditions within the time required and must maintain a 3.0 or better average in all graduate courses during the doctoral program.

### Audit Registration

Courses may be audited under the following provisions:

1. No grades will be provided, no credit will be awarded, and no records will be maintained for audited courses. The extent of class participation is at the discretion of the instructor. Credit by examination for audited courses will not be permitted unless tuition and all appropriate fees are paid.
2. The following courses are not available for audit: clinical, laboratory, studio activity, individual instruction, private lessons or courses specified in a student's degree plan.
3. Audit registration must be filed after classes have begun and *prior to the twelfth day of class during the fall and spring semesters, and by the sixth day of class during the summer session*.

Students should report to the Records Office to obtain an Audit Registration Form. This form must then be signed by the instructor of record and the IHS Ph.D. Program Director and taken to the cashier window at the Academic Services Building for payment. The audit registration form stamped "paid" will be kept by the cashier.

The audit registration form will be filed with the Records Office. A copy of the audit form, stamped "paid," will be forwarded to the instructor.

4. Audit fees will be charged to defray the expense of administering the audit and are non-refundable (fees are subject to change). The fees are \$10 per course for students concurrently enrolled at UTEP for other courses and \$30 per course for students not concurrently enrolled at UTEP for other courses. There is no charge for persons over 65 years of age. Fees may change each year at the discretion of the UTEP Enrollment Services Office.

### Class Attendance

IHS Ph.D. Program students are expected to attend all classes and laboratory sessions. It is the responsibility of the student to inform each instructor of extended absences. When in the judgment of the instructor a student has been absent to such a degree as to impair his or her status relative to credit for the course, the instructor may drop the student from the class with a grade of "W" or "F".

### Coursework

Course Load — Graduate students who enroll for at least nine hours during long semesters or for at least three hours during a summer session are considered full-time graduate students. Additional hours may be required for financial aid assistance; please check with the UTEP Financial Aid Office. All other graduate students are considered part-time.

The maximum course load for a graduate student is 15 semester hours during a long semester, or nine semester hours in the summer. Course loads in excess of these limits require the special consent of the Director of the IHS Ph.D. Program and the Dean of the Graduate School and will be permitted only under exceptional circumstances.

Course Drops — It is the student's responsibility to officially drop any course that he/she no longer wishes to attend. Failure to do so may result in a grade of "F" on the student's academic record. Students dropping all classes are withdrawing and should consult the paragraphs in the UTEP Graduate Catalog on "Withdrawal from the University." Barring extenuating circumstances, this will result in a recommendation to the Graduate School for dismissal from the IHS Ph.D. Program.

### Incomplete or In Progress Work

Assignment of the grade "I" (incomplete) is made only in exceptional circumstances and requires the instructor to identify the work to be completed and the time span (in no case longer than one calendar year) allowable for the work's completion. In no case may repetition of the course be assigned as work to be completed. If the work has not been satisfactorily completed at the end of the specified time, the "I" will be changed to an "F." Students will not be cleared for graduation until all incompletes have been eliminated from their record.

The grade of "P" (in progress) is limited to specific courses in which re-enrollment is required. This includes all dissertation courses (6398- 6399), graduate internships, and a few specified graduate courses. In appropriate courses, a standard grade may be assigned instead of a "P" to a student enrolled in graduate internship courses.

### Program of Study

During the final semester of graduate study, each student must submit for approval to the IHS Ph.D. Program Coordinator and the Graduate School an "Application for Graduation," which is an electronic form available on the Graduate School website.

The Application for Graduation form must be signed electronically by the IHS Ph.D. Program Director and the student's dissertation chair. The Graduate School will verify that all coursework required for the degree has

been completed. Applications from students with any incomplete grades or an overall grade point average below a 3.0 average in their record cannot be approved.

### Course Registration

Each student in the IHS Ph.D. Program has an advising hold each semester, which is removed by the IHS Ph.D. Program Coordinator. There are also departmental holds for CHSC courses to ensure IHS doctoral students have enrollment spaces in CHSC courses. Departmental holds are removed by the IHS Ph.D. Program Coordinator with the approval of the student's advisor via email.

Although every effort is made to advise students academically, final responsibility for registration rests with the student. Students may attend only those classes for which they are enrolled.

Students must be enrolled during any term in which they utilize any University facilities, equipment, and resources, including research work, consultation with faculty, or required examination.

A student will not be enrolled in a course and will not receive a grade for it unless the proper fees are paid by the deadlines published in the Class Schedule or unless arrangements have been made for deferral of payment. After registration, class enrollments can be verified with the Office of the Registrar. University policy and dates governing registration and changes in registration are printed in the Class Schedule, which is available prior to each semester or summer session.

### Student-Initiated Registration Changes

The student should refer to the academic calendar in the semester class schedule to identify the period during which adds, drops, withdrawals, and pass/fail registration may be accomplished. All student changes in registration must follow the procedures outlined in the Class Schedule. All student-initiated changes in registration require payment of an Add/Drop Fee.

### Time Limits and Catalog Changes

All requirements for a doctoral degree must be completed within one eight-year period, including any transfer work or work completed prior to admission to the program. Work over eight years old is lost and can be reinstated only by special permission of the Dean of the Graduate School, upon the recommendation of the IHS Ph.D. Advisory Committee.

General and specific requirements for degrees in the Graduate School may be altered in successive catalogs. Provided the requisite course continues to be offered, the student is bound only by the course requirements of the catalog in force at the time of admission or re-admission within an eight-year limit, unless, with the approval of the Dean of the Graduate School, a student elects to be bound by the course requirements of a subsequent catalog. This regulation applies to course requirements only.

### Sexual Harassment

The University of Texas at El Paso is committed to maintaining an employment and academic environment that is free from sexual harassment and inappropriate conduct of a sexual nature. Sexual misconduct and sexual harassment are unprofessional behaviors. In addition, sexual harassment is a form of sex discrimination and is illegal in employment. The University will take prompt disciplinary action against individuals who are found to have engaged in sexual misconduct and/or sexual harassment against employees and/or students. Students may visit the Equal Opportunity/Affirmative Action Office website at this [link](#), or contact via email: [eoaa@utep.edu](mailto:eoaa@utep.edu)

## Appendices

## Appendix A: Course Names and Descriptions

| Course Name                                                                    | Description                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                      |
|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| CHSC 6302 – Legal and Ethical Issues in Health Sciences                        | This course is a study of legal and ethical principles and theory, with emphasis on how they apply to the provision of health services and pursuit of health research in culturally-diverse settings.                                                            |
| CHSC 6303 – Theories in Health Sciences I                                      | This course will explore various theoretical underpinnings of health sciences-related topics, with a focus on health disparities.                                                                                                                                |
| CHSC 6304 – Theories in Health Sciences II                                     | This course will explore various theoretical underpinnings of health sciences-related topics, with a focus on health disparities.                                                                                                                                |
| CHSC 6305 – Quantitative Methods in Health Sciences I                          | This applied statistics course is designed to meet the needs of beginning doctoral-level research professionals in the health sciences.                                                                                                                          |
| CHSC 6306 – Quantitative Methods in Health Sciences II                         | This is the second in a sequence of applied statistics courses that were designed to meet the needs of beginning doctoral-level research professionals in the health sciences.                                                                                   |
| CHSC 6307 – Introduction to Interdisciplinary Research for the Health Sciences | This course introduces IHS PhD students to the complexities of interdisciplinary team science                                                                                                                                                                    |
|                                                                                |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                  |
| CHSC 6350 – Scientific and Grant Writing                                       | This course will address two skills associated with success in academia: productive scientific writing and successfully obtaining research funding through grant writing.                                                                                        |
| CHSC 6380 – Special Topics in Health Professions                               | Course content may change. Possible topics include current topics integrating basic and clinical health science; organization and finance of health care systems; prevention and intervention research.                                                          |
| CHSC 6385 – Independent Study in Health Sciences                               | This course requires intensive study on a health science topic with faculty supervision. Course content and requirements will be determined by the instructor, but a comprehensive review paper suitable for publication is typical                              |
| CHSC 6388 – Research Applications                                              | This course requires supervised research on topics in applied and clinical health sciences in designated laboratories.                                                                                                                                           |
| CHSC 6390 – Directed Study                                                     | This course focuses on intensive study on a health science topic.                                                                                                                                                                                                |
| CHSC 6396 – Advanced Research Methods                                          | This course focuses on the principles and application of human health-related research methods. Topics include research problem identification, study planning, data collection, statistical analysis, interpretation of findings, and dissemination of results. |
| CHSC 6398                                                                      | Dissertation I                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                   |
| CHSC 6399                                                                      | Dissertation II                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                  |

## Appendix B: Qualifying Exam Guidelines

### Overview

A doctoral student is eligible to take the qualifying examination after completing 24 semester credit hours in the program (including core courses outside of dissertation) and receiving an endorsement of readiness from the Doctoral Advisor (faculty mentor).

The student must pass both the written and oral parts of the qualifying examination in order to move forward with preparing for dissertation research. The student must be registered during the semester the qualifying exam is taken, including the summer semester.

The student's Doctoral Academic Committee will prepare and administer the qualifying examination. The qualifying examination should:

- Assess the student's mastery of basic content in her/his interdisciplinary program of study;
- Discover any weaknesses in the student's knowledge that need to be remedied by additional course work or other instruction;
- Determine the student's fitness to continue work toward the doctorate degree.

### Format

The specific format for the qualifying examination will be agreed upon by the student and the Doctoral Academic Committee members within the following guidelines:

1. The examination will be in two parts (written and oral) and will include questions in the main program areas, formulated and evaluated by the Doctoral Academic Committee:
  - \* Theory and research methodologies (includes statistics)
  - \* Diversity, ethics and legal issues
  - \* Individualized program (i.e., research focus)
  - \* Professional preparation
2. A maximum of two weeks will be allotted for the written part of the examination to be completed. Written responses to questions in each program area—one to four questions per area—with a maximum of 40 double-spaced pages, using a 12- point font.
3. A maximum of two hours will be allotted for the oral part of the examination, which will consist of verbal responses to follow-up questions by the Doctoral Academic Committee members, and based on the student responses to the written part of the examination.

### Evaluation

Following completion of both parts of the qualifying examination, the Doctoral Academic Committee will deliberate the student's preparedness for moving forward with the dissertation proposal.

The Program Director or her/his designee may attend the oral part of the examination and the deliberation as an ex officio member.