1. INTRODUCTION

The health care system is becoming increasingly concerned about access to health care, the quality and cost of health care, inequities in the delivery of health care, the role and function of different professions in the delivery of health services, and ultimately, measures of societal health and well-being. These issues are the focus of health services research, an applied field that provides and interprets data to those who provide care, craft policy, and direct the spending of the multi-billion dollars spent on health care each year in our society.

The PhD in Health Services Research is an interdisciplinary program that includes course work in health economics, organizational structures and processes, epidemiology, biostatistics, health policy, health behavior, and social factors related to the delivery and utilization of health services. This interdisciplinary program in Health Services Research is built on the fourteen Health Services Research Core Competencies developed through AHRQ.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Health Services Research Core Competencies</th>
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<td>1. Breadth of HSR theoretical &amp; conceptual knowledge</td>
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<td>2. In-depth disciplinary knowledge &amp; skill</td>
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<td>3. Application of HSR foundational knowledge to health policy problems</td>
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<td>4. Pose innovative HSR questions</td>
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<td>5. Interventional &amp; observational study designs</td>
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<td>6. Primary data collection methods</td>
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<td>7. Secondary data acquisition methods</td>
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From: Agency for Healthcare Research and Quality at [http://www.ahrq.gov/fund/training/hsrcomp.htm](http://www.ahrq.gov/fund/training/hsrcomp.htm)
Accessed 12/18/07.
Graduates of the program are prepared to engage in interdisciplinary research utilizing quantitative and qualitative methods to support innovations in, and to evaluate the results of, health care delivery and health policy.

The program is highly individualized with students completing a series of core courses and elective courses and projects that support an individual area of research, culminating in a dissertation that constitutes a significant contribution to health services knowledge. This program emphasizes the dissemination of research by publishing in peer reviewed, indexed journals, and obtaining extramural funding through grantsmanship.

This handbook provides an overview of the goals and objectives of the Health Services Research program and address program-specific details regarding financial support, academic advising, the curriculum, and graduation requirements. Other pertinent information on many topics of essential to your success in the program not covered in this handbook (e.g., key dates, forms, etc) can be found on the Graduate School's website http://www.uncc.edu/gradmiss/index.asp

2. DOCTORAL PROGRAM MISSION STATEMENT AND OBJECTIVES

The PhD program in Health Services Research at the University of North Carolina at Charlotte is committed to providing students an interdisciplinary skill set to conduct and to excel in research that improves both the practice and delivery of health and human services in the community, the region, and the nation.

Our vision coincides with that of the Institute of Medicine that recommended that training programs "benefit their students by providing broad educational opportunities that make them more versatile, flexible, and attractive to corporate and governmental as well as academic employers" (Field, Tranquada, & Feasley and the Institute of Medicine, 1995).

The objectives of the PhD in Health Services Research program include:

1. To prepare students with the analytic and critical thinking skills to conduct applied research on healthcare costs, health status and health outcomes, and healthcare service utilization in individuals and populations;
2. To prepare graduates to conduct interdisciplinary planning and evaluation outcome studies using a variety of quantitative and qualitative measurement techniques;
3. To prepare independent research scientists and scholars with excellent communication and methodological skills to advance knowledge of health care delivery systems; and,

4. To prepare future colleagues to engage in culturally competent and ethically sound health services research in a variety of settings that are internationally influenced.

3. FINANCIAL SUPPORT

The University of North Carolina at Charlotte administers both need-based and merit-based student financial aid. About 78% of the $74 million administered by the University’s Student Financial Aid Office is based on financial need, with the remainder based on achievement, skills, and abilities. Although some forms of aid have service or repayment requirements, the most common form of aid, gift aid, carries no repayment or service requirement, and typically consists of grants and scholarships.

*Tuition and fees* - Tuition and fees at UNC Charlotte are established annually by the North Carolina General Assembly and by the University Board of Governors. Exact tuition/fee costs for each semester can be found at this website: [www.finance.uncc.edu/Tuition and Fees.htm](http://www.finance.uncc.edu/Tuition and Fees.htm)

Applying for Financial Aid

Like most other colleges and universities, UNC Charlotte uses the Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA) as its financial aid application. No other form is necessary. The *paper* version of the FAFSA is available - from the UNC Charlotte Financial Aid Office. To complete an online version of the FAFSA, please access the student financial aid website at [http://www.uncc.edu/finaid/index.htm](http://www.uncc.edu/finaid/index.htm). To ensure that your financial aid is processed before the end of the term, all verification documentation must be received 14 days prior to the end of the academic term of enrollment. Please also see the Graduate Catalog for more information on support for graduate students.

University Scholarships

Scholarships are available based on both academic merit and financial need. *All students who complete the financial aid application process by April 1 are considered for these awards. No additional application is needed.*
All applications are ranked using a combination of grades and financial need. About 100 scholarships are awarded in this process.

**Grants for Graduate Study**

Two graduate grant programs are administered by the Graduate School of UNC Charlotte. One is a program of non-resident fee waivers for out-of-state graduate students; the second is a tuition assistance grant for North Carolina residents. Ask the Program Director for additional information regarding the grants program.

**Graduate Assistantships**

The College of Health and Human Services strives to assist full-time doctoral students in obtaining 20 hour/week Graduate Assistantships (GA) for three years, which may take the form of a research or teaching assistantship. Although the college assists full-time doctoral students by garnering GA positions, there is a limited supply of these positions. It is expected that in the second or third year of full time doctoral study, the student should start to submit grant applications (e.g., to NIH, AHRQ) to obtain support for their dissertation (including their own effort) in their doctoral program. Note that the candidacy examination involves the preparation of your dissertation proposal in the form of a grant application, so there will be support and supervision for this process.

**US Veterans Benefits**

US Veterans should contact the University's Veterans Service Office for information on the types of financial assistance available.

**Student Financial Aid Office**

The Student Financial Aid Office is located at 122 Reese Building. Office hours are from 8:00 am to 5:00 pm ET, Monday through Friday.

**Contact Information:**

*Student Financial Aid Office*
*University of North Carolina at Charlotte*
*9201 University City Boulevard*
*122 Reese Building*
*Charlotte, NC 28223-0001*
*Website: [http://www.uncc.edu/finaid/index.htm](http://www.uncc.edu/finaid/index.htm)*
4. ACADEMIC ADVISEMENT

Upon initial acceptance into the PhD program in Health Services Research, the doctoral student will be advised by the Program Director unless other arrangements are made. During this first year of full-time study or two years of part-time study, the student is expected to begin to narrow their focus to an area of proposed research. The student will select a Dissertation Committee Chair and once the Dissertation Committee Chair is selected, the Dissertation Chair becomes the faculty advisor for the student for the remainder of the program. The Dissertation Chair will advise the student in their area of specialization, guiding the student in recommended courses that will augment the focus of their doctoral dissertation.

5. CURRICULUM AND PLAN OF STUDY

The PhD in Health Services Research consists of 64 total credit hours including four major areas:
1.) Interdisciplinary/HSR Theoretical Courses (15 credits);
2.) Methods and Methodological Issues (22 credits);
3.) Area Emphasis (9 credits); and
4.) Dissertation (18 credits). As defined in the Graduate Catalog, a course load totaling nine credit hours is considered full-time (a course load of more than 12 credit hours is not recommended); a course load of less than nine hours is considered part-time. An additional component of the plan of study is the examination to advance to doctoral candidacy. The candidacy examination occurs after the completion of the core curriculum (15 credits of interdisciplinary theoretical courses, and 20 credits of methods and methodological issues courses, which includes all but the last two seminars in this curriculum area). Required courses in the curriculum include:

**Interdisciplinary Theoretical Courses (15 credits)**
- HSRD 8001: Introduction to Health Services Research (3)
- HSRD 80041 PPOL 8667: Economics of Health and Healthcare (3)
- HSRD 8002: Healthcare Systems and Delivery (3)
- PPOL 8663/HSRD 8005: Health Policy (3)
- HSRD 80031 PPOL 8665: Analytic Epidemiology (3)
Methods & Methodological Issues (22 credits)
HSRD 8101: Design of Health Services Research (3)
HSRD 8102: Advanced Design of Health Services Research (3)
HSRD 8103: Large Data Sets and Health Services Research (3)
HSRD 8104: Program Evaluation, Outcomes and Quality (3)
STAT 8110/HSRD 8110: Applied Biostatistics: Regression (3)
STAT 8111/HSRD 8111: Applied Biostatistics: Multivariate (3)
HSRD 8881: Seminar in Research Ethics (1)
HSRD 8882: Seminar in Health Disparities (1)
HSRD 8883: Seminar in Grant Proposal Writing (1)
HSRD 8884: Seminar in Research Implementation and Dissemination (3)

Area Emphasis (9 credits)

Students may select one of the following areas to provide depth in a chosen area of special interest and emphasis, or define an area of emphasis not listed here with the approval of the Program Director, Dissertation Committee Chair/ faculty advisor, and other faculty as needed (ask the Program Director for a list of potential courses to take to fulfill each of the areas):
- Aging/long-term care
- Health policy
- Health disparities
- Health promotion
- Health care organization/administration
- Mental health
- Research methods

Candidacy Examination

The student takes the candidacy examination after the completion of 35 credits in the core curriculum (15 credits of interdisciplinary theoretical courses, and 20 credits of methods and methodological issues courses, which include all but the last two seminars in the curriculum area). This is typically at the end of the 2nd year for full time students. The candidacy examination consists of the preparation and oral defense of three substantive papers each focusing on a competency area within health services research and will demonstrate the student’s mastery of their individual research areas.

Students will select a committee of 4 faculty (and the Graduate School will assign a 5th) who will continue to serve as the student’s committee for the dissertation proposal and dissertation defense. The three substantive papers are as follows;
- Review of the literature of research area including relevant theories relating the research area to the goals of health services research
- Methological paper
- Ethical and policy considerations of conducting health services research in the student’s topical area

The papers will follow a format that is publishable. They will be 12-15 pages in length and follow APA format.

**Oral Defense**
Following submission of the candidacy exam to the committee two weeks before the scheduled defense date, the student will defend the exam orally. The student should prepare to introduce their area of research and its relationship to the papers. While the oral examination will emphasize questions relevant to the papers, questions on material from course work completed by the student may be asked.

**Retake of the Candidacy Examination**
The student who fails to complete the Candidacy Examination successfully may be given the opportunity to revise components and repeat the oral defense of the proposal at the discretion of the Dissertation Committee. A second failure of the Candidacy Examination results in dismissal from the PhD program.

**Dissertation**
**Dissertation Proposal**
The student will write the dissertation proposal using the grant format for the R03 from NIH. If the topic is related to the research of the Chair of the Dissertation Committee, the topic must represent a new line of investigation not being explored by the chair. In writing the grant dissertation proposal, the student will follow the National Institutes of Health Research Grant (PHS 398) Guidelines [http://grants1.nih.gov/grants/forms.htm](http://grants1.nih.gov/grants/forms.htm) except that the following are NOT required:

- The student will not be required to provide information on NIH forms.
- The proposal will not include preliminary data, biographical sketches, letters of collaboration, or budgets.

The proposal will include the following standard NIH sections:
- A. Specific Aims
- B. Background and Significance
- C. Research Design and Methods
- D. Human Subjects
- E. Literature Cited
Oral Defense

Following submission of the full proposal to the student's Dissertation Committee, the student will be expected to defend the proposal orally. The oral defense will usually occur 2 weeks following full proposal submission. The student should prepare a PowerPoint presentation approximately 20 minutes in length summarizing the research proposal. This oral defense will be specific to the research significance, design, analysis, and human subjects issues of the proposal.

a) **Time Line for Advancement to Candidacy** (suggested to be completed by the end of the 4th long semester of study for full-time students, or 8th long semester of study for part-time students): Select the advisor for the dissertation, who will be the Chair of the Dissertation Committee. The Chair of the Dissertation Committee must be a member of the program faculty (consult with Program Director for an up-to-date list).

b) Select Dissertation Committee. The committee is composed of 5 members: four selected by the student and another member appointed by the Graduate School. The majority of the committee members selected by the student must be HSR program faculty that reflect the interdisciplinary focus of the program and have expertise in aspects of the proposed plan of study. The student submits the form "Appointment of Doctoral Committee" (see forms link on the Graduate School website) to request approval of the Dissertation Committee from the dissertation committee chair, committee members, HSR Program Director, and Dean of the Graduate School. The Student and his/her committee will then meet to set a timeline for the candidacy exam so that it occurs around the completion of the 4th long semester for full-time students (or 8th for part-time students). In addition, a student is required to meet with his/her dissertation chair at least once a semester after the establishment of the committee.

c) Submit approved program of study to the Dean of the Graduate School and file petition to sit for the Candidacy Examination by submitting the "Application for Qualifying Examination for Doctoral Candidates" (see forms link on the Graduate School website).

d) Select the topic of the Candidacy Examination.

e) Write and orally defend the candidacy examination. Be prepared to discuss all aspects of the grant proposal at the oral defense and anticipate questions relevant to the core curriculum, including topics covered in
Interdisciplinary Theoretical Courses and Methods and Methodological Issues Courses.

f) Following successful completion of the Candidacy Examination, submit the "Qualifying Examination Report for Doctoral Candidates" form (see forms link on the Graduate School website; it is the second section in the document entitled "Application for Qualifying Examination for Doctoral Candidates").

g) Schedule a topic approval meeting with the Dissertation Committee.

h) Submit 2-3 page description of the grant dissertation proposal topic to the Dissertation Committee at least 2 weeks prior to topic approval meeting.

i) Following topic approval, submit "Graduate School Petition for Topic Approval" (see forms website) and write the full research proposal using National Institutes of Health Research Grant (PHS 398) Guidelines http://grantsl.nih.gov/grants/forms.htm

j) Complete the dissertation proposal within 1 month of the date of topic approval. Provide copies of the proposal to Dissertation Committee members 2 weeks prior to the scheduled oral defense date.

**Dissertation (18 credits)**

HSRD 8801: Dissertation Research (1-18)

Completion of the dissertation is the final component of the doctoral degree. A doctoral dissertation must demonstrate the candidate's ability to conceive, design, conduct, and interpret independent, original, and creative research, and must make a unique contribution to knowledge in the field of health services research. Under the direct supervision of the Dissertation Committee Chairs, students are encouraged to consult regularly with their Dissertation Committee members during the planning, conducting, and writing of the dissertation. Dissertation defense is a public defense. Notice will go to the campus community of the location and time.

Following the approval of the dissertation topic and advancement to doctoral candidacy, students are required to maintain continuous enrollment in HSRD 8801 for dissertation study until work is completed. Continuous enrollment begins in the semester after the dissertation topic is approved.
6. EVALUATION

A student must maintain a cumulative average of 3.0 in all course work taken in the program. The seminars will be graded on a Pass/Unsatisfactory basis and therefore will not be included in the cumulative average. An accumulation of two C grades will result in termination of the student's enrollment in the doctoral program. Students will be allowed to repeat the Candidacy Exam, proposal defense, dissertation defense only once. A second failure of the candidacy examination, the dissertation proposal defense, or the final dissertation defense will result in dismissal from the program. If a student makes a grade of U or NC on any course, enrollment will be terminated. A doctoral student whose enrollment has been terminated due to inadequate grades is ineligible to register in any semester or summer session. Please also see the section of the Graduate Catalog on Academic Regulations.

7. TIME LIMITS

All work listed on the student's Application to Candidacy form offered for the PhD in Health Services Research, including any transferred credit, must be completed within a eight year period beginning with the first doctoral course in which the student is registered.

The student must be admitted to candidacy within 6 years of admission to the program and complete all requirements within 6 years of admission to candidacy to the PhD degree.

8. GRADUATION

During the semester before the PhD candidate expects to receive the degree, the candidate will review his/her academic record and progress on the dissertation with the chair of his/her dissertation committee. If the chair of the dissertation committee agrees that all work on the dissertation, including the defense, is likely to be successfully completed by the end of the following semester, the candidate will complete the Application for Degree form and send it to the Graduate School. The candidate will then be billed by Student Accounts for the Application for Degree fee. Graduation announcements may be ordered through the campus bookstore. Caps, gowns, and hoods may be either rented or purchased through the bookstore. Deadlines for submissions are:

Deadlines for the Application for Degree, Application for Admission to Candidacy, and submission of the dissertation to the Graduate School are available through the Graduate School website and are published in the academic calendar.
Students must conform to these dates in order to graduate.

9. RESIDENCY REQUIREMENTS

The student must satisfy the UNC Charlotte residency requirement for the program by completing 21 credit hours. Residency is considered to be continuous if the student is enrolled in one or more courses in successive semesters until 21 hours are earned.

10. STUDENT CONDUCT

Students in the Health Services Research PhD program are bound by the same rules and regulations regarding student conduct as any other students in the university. The University of North Carolina at Charlotte has a well-articulated set of policies and procedures pertaining to the academic and professional conduct of graduate students. These policies and procedures may be found on the General Counsel's website: www.legal.uncc.edu/policies with an overview found in the Graduate Student Handbook. Policies governing student behavior in general may be found at: www.legal.uncc.edu/policies/studpol.html

All students are required to read and abide by the Code of Student Academic Integrity. Violations of the Code of Student Academic Integrity, including plagiarism, will result in disciplinary action as provided in the Code. Definitions and examples of plagiarism are set forth in the Code. The Code is available from the Dean of Students Office or online at: www.legal.uncc.edu/policies/ps-105.html

All students are required to abide by the UNC Charlotte Sexual Harassment Policy www.legal.uncc.edu/policies/ps-61.html and the policy on Responsible Use of University Computing and Electronic Communication Resources www.legal.uncc.edu/policies/ps-66.html Sexual harassment, as defined in the UNC Charlotte Sexual Harassment Policy, is prohibited, even when carried out through computers or other electronic communications systems, including course-based chat rooms or message boards.

11. OTHER RESOURCES AVAILABLE TO STUDENTS

College Resources
All students will be given mailboxes in the College (currently, inside the doors to the Dean's office area on the left). Full-time doctoral students with graduate assistantships will be assigned office space typically equipped with a computer, phone, and printer access.
University Resources
There are a myriad of resources available to students enrolled in the doctoral program in the College of Health & Human Services. These include: the Counseling Center, Disability Services, the Writing Center, to name a few. All can be found on the University's web page at: www.uncc.edu/constituents/current-students

12. STUDENT ORGANIZATIONS

You are encouraged to consider student membership in relevant professional organizations. For example, AcademyHealth www.academvhealth.org is the main professional organization for health services researchers. You can join as an individual student member, or form a student chapter. You will be encouraged to attend and present papers at its convention. As the health services research program is multidisciplinary, you also may pursue student membership in your discipline-specific organization.

Doctoral Student Organization (TBD)
The Doctoral Student Organization (DSO) is yet to be established. However, it will be developed following university guidelines for establishing student organizations. For more information, please contact the Assistant Dean for Graduate Student Affairs at 704-687-3375.

Some possible functions for the DSO include: meeting regularly to discuss issues of concern to doctoral students, planning orientation activities for new students and providing representation to the Graduate and Professional Student Government (GPSG).

Graduate and Professional Student Government (GPSG)
The purpose of the Graduate and Professional Student Government (GPSG), according to the by-laws, is to serve as an appropriate voice on campus for graduate students, to meet the various needs of graduate students, and to establish a liaison between graduate faculty, graduate students, and the University. Every academic department should have a representative with whom you should talk often to address your issues, whatever they might be. Remember that GPSG is here to serve as an advocate for YOU, and it will be as strong and effective as the passion and participation of its members; thus, your active participation will ensure that your issues are heard and addressed.

Non-traditional Student Organization
The Non-traditional Student Organization (NTSO) is a student government and OASES-funded support group for adult students. For more information
and membership forms, contact the Office of Adult Students and Evening Services (OASES) in Barnard 106, 704-687-4222 or NTSO@email.uncc.edu

**Student Government Association**

The Student Government Association (SGA) is operated by students for students. Campus-wide issues are debated in the Legislature on campus.

The executive power of SGA is vested in the Student Body President and Student Body Vice President, their staffs, the Student University Advocates, the Student Defense Chief, the Elections and Publicity Chair and a number of committees to which the President appoints students each year. This body has the responsibility of enacting law as necessary to promote the general welfare of the student body. The Student Judiciary of SGA is composed of elected Hearing Panel Members, the University Advocate’s Office, and the Student Defense Office and their assistants.

They have jurisdiction over cases involving violations of the Code of Student Responsibility, the Student Body Constitution, and various student statutes. To participate in SGA, students can run for election or apply for appointment. SGA is located in the Student Government complex in Cone University Center, 704-687-4606