PennState
College of Health and
Human Development

Health Policy and Administration

M.S. PROGRAM
POLICY HANDBOOK

2022-2023

Department of Health Policy and Administration

604 Ford Building
The Pennsylvania State University
University Park, PA 16802
(814) 863-9971

hhd.psu.edu/hpa/graduate/master-science-ms-health-policy-and-administration

TABLE OF CONTENTS

PURPOSE OF THIS HANDBOOK

This Program and Policy Handbook contains the rules, regulations, policies, and procedures of the M.S. program as established by the HPA department faculty and the Graduate School at Penn State. Each student should familiarize him or herself with the materials contained herein and work with a faculty advisor to make certain that a selected Plan of Study complies with the pertinent requirements. The most current handbook is posted on the HPA web site (**www.hhd.psu.edu/hpa**). Students are responsible for being aware of current policies.

In instances of discrepancy between this handbook and *The Graduate School Degree Programs Bulletin*, *The Graduate School Degree Programs Bulletin* takes precedence. By request, this publication is available in alternative media.

STATEMENT OF NONDISCRIMINATION

The Pennsylvania State University is committed to the policy that all persons shall have equal access to programs, facilities, admission, and employment without regard to personal characteristics not related to ability, performance, or qualifications as determined by University policy or by state or federal authorities. It is the policy of the University to maintain an academic and work environment free of discrimination, including harassment. The Pennsylvania State University prohibits discrimination and harassment against any person because of age, ancestry, color, disability or handicap, national origin, race, religious creed, sex, sexual orientation, or veteran status. Discrimination or harassment against faculty, staff, or students will not be tolerated at The Pennsylvania State University. Direct all inquiries regarding the nondiscrimination policy to the Affirmative Action Director, The Pennsylvania State University, 328 Boucke Building, University Park, PA 16802-5901; Tel (814) 865-4700/V, (814) 863-1150/TTY.
U.Ed. HHD 07-07.

GOVERNANCE

All responsibility for the academic conduct, standards, and requirements of the Master of Science program rests with the HPA department faculty in accordance with university policy.

Professor-in-Charge: The Professor-in-Charge (PIC) of the M.S. Program is responsible for all administrative affairs of the M.S. Program, including the administration of academic conduct, standards, and requirements. In addition, the PIC is responsible for recommending admissions and financial support, assigning advisors to incoming students, advising the M.S. Committee and faculty on the interpretation of policies and requirements, and performing other administrative duties as delegated by the department head. The current PIC for the HPA Master of Science Program is David Vanness, Ph.D.

M.S. Committee: The M.S. Committee consists of several HPA graduate faculty members and a student representative. The committee is supported by administrative staff within the HPA Department. The M.S. Committee advises the PIC with regard to all issues related to the M.S. Program (e.g., admissions, curriculum, and academic conduct) and is the main decision-making body for the M.S. Program.

Staff Support: Ashlee Foreman, Graduate Programs Coordinator

FACULTY

Yubraj Acharya, Ph.D. (University of Michigan), Assistant Professor of Health Policy and Administration. Dr. Acharya's research interests include program evaluation, health disparities, global health policy, and health economics.

Christopher Hollenbeak, Ph.D. (Washington University, St. Louis), Professor of Health Policy and Administration and Department Head. Dr. Hollenbeak's research interests focus on health economics especially in relation to surgical issues, and he is also interested in development and use of Bayesian statistical methods.

Charleen Hsuan, Ph.D. (University of California, Los Angeles), Assistant Professor of Health Policy and Administration. Dr. Hsuan's research interests include macro-organizational behavior and understanding how organizations respond to regulations and laws in ways that exacerbate or alleviate access to health care.

John Moran, Ph.D. (Penn State University), Associate Professor of Health Policy and Administration. Dr. Moran's research interests include the economic impact of cancer, health insurance, and other topics in health economics.

Selena Ortiz, Ph.D. (University of California, Los Angeles), Associate Professor of Health Policy and Administration. Dr. Ortiz's research examines the determinants of population health policy formation, including problem recognition, the formulation of policy proposals, and politics.

Jeannette Rogowski, Ph.D. (Massachusetts Institute of Technology), Professor of Health Policy and Administration. Dr. Rogowski's research interests are in health economics, health policy, and health disparities.

Dennis Scanlon, Ph.D. (University of Michigan), Professor of Health Policy and Administration and Director of Center for Health Care and Policy Research. Dr. Scanlon's research interests relate to consumer information and health care markets, health insurance and HMO plan performance and measurement of quality.

Mark Sciegaj, Ph.D. (Brandeis University), Professor of Health Policy and Administration and Professor-in-Charge of the Undergraduate Program. Dr. Sciegaj's research interests include issues of consumer-directed care in community long-term care services and support, workforce development, policy implementation, program evaluation, and multi-cultural issues in health and aging.

Joel Segel, Ph.D. (University of Michigan), Associate Professor of Health Policy and Administration. Dr. Segel's research interests include cancer, health economics, patient decision making and consumer behavior, and quality of care and outcomes.

Dennis Shea, Ph.D. (Rutgers University), Professor of Health Policy and Administration; Associate Dean for Undergraduate Studies and Outreach, College of Health and Human Development. Dr. Shea's research focuses on health policy for aging populations, financing for mental health, long-term care, prescription drug coverage, and socioeconomic disparities in health care access for the elderly.

Yunfeng Shi, Ph.D. (Carnegie Mellon University), Associate Professor of Health Policy and Administration. Dr. Shi's research interests include consumer engagement and behavior, quality measurement and reporting, health care organizations, and health information technology.

David Vanness, Ph.D. (University of Wisconsin, Madison), Professor of Health Policy and Administration and Professor-in-Charge of the MS/PhD Programs. Dr. Vanness' research focuses on developing and applying

methods for evaluating the comparative outcomes, costs and cost-effectiveness of health care interventions. He is also interested in the process of how patients, physicians, payers and policymakers make decisions about treatment use and coverage in the presence of uncertainty. Dr. Vanness' research makes use of Bayesian, machine learning and simulation-based methods.

Jessica Williams, Ph.D. (University of California, Los Angeles), Associate Professor of Health Policy and Administration. Dr. Williams' research is at the intersection of occupational health and population health. She is interested in how organizational policies in workplaces and communities can alter the social determinants of health.

M.S. CURRICULUM

Once admitted into the program, each M.S. student must satisfy requirements established by the Graduate School and those specified by the HPA Department. The following sections briefly describe both sets of requirements:

M.S. students are responsible for knowing and meeting the requirements of the Graduate School and of the HPA program as described in the following documents: (1) The Pennsylvania State University Graduate Degree Programs Bulletin; (2) the M.S. Program and Policy Handbook; and (3) the printed policies, notices and announcements emanating from the HPA Department. Be alert to requirements and relevant deadlines in the graduate program. The Graduate School issues a calendar of deadline dates each semester, which is available at www.gradsch.psu.edu/calendar. Students are also encouraged to watch bulletin boards and notices distributed through student mailboxes, e-mail, and the HPA departmental web site: www.hhd.psu.edu/hpa.

GRADUATE SCHOOL REQUIREMENTS

Requirements established by the Graduate School are published in The Pennsylvania State University *Graduate Degree Programs Bulletin* under the degree type. Each student is admitted by the Graduate School to work toward a specific degree. Only the Dean of the Graduate School may approve any change in the sought-after degree. General requirements of the Master of Science (M.S.) degree are described in the following paragraphs:

A minimum of 39 credits is required for completion of the degree. The general requirements are based upon:

1. Maintenance of at least a 3.00 grade point average.
2. Demonstrated competence in the English language, including reading, writing, listening and speaking. This includes demonstrated competence in professional communication skills.
3. The writing of a satisfactory thesis, which is a supervised research and scholarship activity that makes an original, empirical contribution to the field.

HPA M.S. PROGRAM REQUIREMENTS

The M.S. curriculum in HPA includes a minimum of 41 credits of study in four substantive areas: 1) a core set of courses in health services organization, delivery, finance, and policy; 2) courses in health services research methods and statistics; 3) courses in professional development; and 4) courses and a master's thesis in a specialty track or graduate minor approved by the thesis advisor. At least 17 credits of the program must be completed in the HPA departmental course offerings at the 400 and 500 level. At least 18 credits of the degree must be in 500- and 600-level courses. A 6-credit master's thesis must be completed. Students who wish to complete the dual title M.S. in Demography and Health Policy and Administration must take the 14 credits required for that program under additional courses and requirements.

CORE REQUIREMENTS

The HPA M.S. program core curriculum is designed for all HPA M.S. students. The core is broken into three segments, a health care policy and organization segment, a health services research methods segment, and a professional development segment. The total credits for the core, including all three segments, is 26. This consists of 12 credits in the health care policy and organization segment, 12 credits in the health services research methods segment, and 2 credits of HPA 590 (departmental research colloquium).

Health Care Policy and Organization Segment (12 credits)

HPA 520: *Introduction to Health Services Organization and Delivery* (3 credits): This course provides an overview of health care in the United States. Topics covered include defining what is meant by health systems; health care need, utilization and health status; differences among medical care, health services delivery and public health; and the structure of health care in the United States, including personnel and types of provider organizations (e.g., hospitals, ambulatory practices, long-term care facilities).

HPA 521: *Research Seminar on Health Services Organization and Delivery* (3): The goal of this course is to expose research degree students to the literature to build a strong foundation for advanced research courses and the thesis. The course focuses on reading published research on health services organization and delivery. It is normally to be taken in the same semester as HPA 520, and topics may be covered in parallel. The articles studied include many of the health services research classics. The course emphasizes how health service research methods are applied in published research. Classes include a mix of lectures, mock research design exercises, and student presentations on research readings. Concurrent or Pre-requisite: HPA 520.

HPA 510: *Introduction to Health Services Financing and Policy* (3): This course provides an overview of health services financing and policy in the United States. Topics covered include the different arrangements for financing and paying for health care in the United States, including the Medicare and Medicaid programs and commercial insurance; the problem of the uninsured; current issues in health payments and reimbursement; and other public finance issues related to health care. The course examines financing and policy issues, including classic and recurring debates as well as contemporary policy issues.

HPA 511: *Research Seminar on Health Services Financing and Policy* (3): The goal of this course is to expose research degree students to the literature to build a strong foundation for advanced research courses and the thesis. The course focuses on reading published research on health services financing and policy. It is normally to be taken in the same semester as HPA 510, and topics may be covered in parallel. The articles studied include many of the health services research classics. The course emphasizes how health service research methods are applied in published research. Classes include a mix of lectures, mock research design exercises, and student presentations on research readings. Concurrent or Prerequisite: HPA 510.

Health Services Research Methods Segment (12 credits)

HPA 518: *Basic Analytic Methods for Health Services Research* (3 credits): This course provides an introduction to basic methods for undertaking research pertaining to health services organizations and systems. In addition to basic methods, the course also provides "the current state of the art" in health services research. Students will gain an understanding of research design, statistics, and methodology while developing critical thinking and analytical skills to examine the health services research literature.

HPA 561: *Introduction to Research Design in Health Services Research* (3): This course is an introduction to research design and methods in health services research. Topics include the scientific method, motivation for health services research questions, frameworks and hypotheses, types of validity,

sample design, and randomized, quasi-experimental, and observational research designs. Students write a research proposal.

HPA 564: *Research Methods in Health Services Research* (3): The focus of this course is the basic linear regression model, which serves as the main building block and point of departure for more advanced econometric methods. Both the theoretical underpinnings and practical aspects of regression models will be discussed. Prerequisite: HPA 518.

HPA 528: *Health Data Analysis for Research* (3): This course trains students in data base management (data cleaning, types of missing data, file construction, confidentiality procedures, and documentation); alternative ways of treating missing data; and the features (sample design, components, contents, and special design features) of some of the main secondary data sets used in health services research (e.g., HRS, MCBS, MEPS, Medicare claims data); merging data and extracting analysis files. The course also provides students with some hands-on experience analyzing one of the main secondary data sets using major software packages.

Professional Development Segment (2 credits)

HPA 590: *Colloquium* (1 per semester, fall and spring of first year): Introduction to the field of health services research.

Additional Courses and Requirements (9-14 credits selected in consultation and approved by the thesis advisor, 6 credits in thesis research [HPA 600]).

OTHER PROGRAM REQUIREMENTS

HPA PROGRAM REQUIREMENTS

Mentors and Advisors

Mentoring is core to the learning experience at the graduate research degree level. Faculty mentors ensure that the student becomes knowledgeable in the field of health services, learns to think critically, is challenged intellectually, and aspires to create new knowledge. Moreover, the mentor helps the student develop personal skills needed for successful professional practice. The mentoring relationship recognizes that graduate training is a time of socialization to the norms, values, and behaviors of the profession and discipline. The relationship is also different for each student, varying according to age, gender, culture, and experience. Mentoring is also an opportunity for growth for the mentor.

Advisors are normally appointed in early summer before the students' arrival on campus. Each student will be notified of the faculty member who will act as his or her advisor and how to contact that person. Each student is encouraged to contact his or her new advisor early to begin planning the first semester program and to otherwise facilitate transition into the M.S. program. Advising assignments are, in some sense, an official recognition of an intended or existing mentoring relationship. Ideally, the initial advisor will be the person whom the student will appoint as mentor and thesis chair. However, this may not always be the case, and early in a student's graduate career, he or she should select a research mentor. The main responsibility of the initial advisor is to assist the student in choosing courses and other experiences that will form the foundation for the master's thesis. The student should interact with the advisor on a regular basis.

Responsibilities of Advisor and Student

Students bear primary responsibility for developing and planning their own programs of study. The main role of the advisor is to consult with the student. The advisor assists the student in this regard and also makes recommendations to the HPA M.S. Committee as necessary.

The advisor has the following specific responsibilities:

1. To review with each incoming student prior graduate work to determine which, if any, HPA program requirements and/or prerequisites may already have been fulfilled. The advisor will make recommendations to the HPA M.S. Committee to approve relevant prior work as fulfilling program requirements.
2. To provide advice and consultation on the details of each semester's schedule of classes.
3. To consult in the development of the Plan of Study.
4. To advise on the choice of faculty to form the student's dissertation committee.
5. To solicit informal and formal evaluations of student performance in courses and in scholarly activities from faculty both in and outside the HPA Department, for the purpose of ongoing student development.
6. To participate in the master's student's reviews, as requested by the program committee.

The student's responsibilities are:

1. To be an active participant in the advising and mentoring relationship.
2. To ensure that the program of study meets his or her needs.
3. To keep track of requirements and deadlines.
4. To be knowledgeable of Graduate School policies and procedures.
5. To take advantage of the opportunities offered by the University.
6. To take ultimate charge of his or her program and research development.
7. To inform advisors and mentors of problems and successes.
8. To communicate in an open and regular fashion with advisors.

Plan of Study

The Plan of Study (see Appendix C) is the primary mechanism through which master's students, their advisors, their thesis committees, and the program committee assures that courses and other developmental activities necessary to fulfill M.S. program requirements are met. The Plan of Study also serves as a mechanism to help assure that the student's educational objectives are met in a timely manner. The Plan of Study consists of two items, a Plan of Study and a Statement of Career Goals (see Appendix D).

Development of Plan of Study

Students, in consultation with their advisors, should develop an initial Plan of Study by the end of their first semester of course work. The Plan of Study is formally submitted to the M.S. program at the end of the first year of study as part of the annual review. While approval of the Plan of Study does not take place until the annual review is completed after the second semester, the initial Plan of Study provides the student with a long-range plan early in his or her academic program.

The advisor and other HPA faculty members are available to assist the student in developing educational and related objectives. They are also available to direct students to academic and financial resources to help achieve those objectives. Development of the Plan of Study requires that the student undertake a significant effort to explore the resources available throughout the university.

The format of the Plan of Study should include the following elements:

1. Educational, career, and professional goals
2. Plan and timetable to fulfill program requirements

Educational, career, and professional objectives should be expressed more broadly than simply a series of courses designed to meet the program requirements. They should, for example, include plans to develop specific research skills and an indication of desired career goals and specific professional positions sought. The dates for completing program requirements should indicate a timetable by semester and include all coursework as well as other educational activities. The timetable should continue through the dissertation defense.

Before Submitting an Initial or Revised Plan of Study to The Program Committee, Students Must Consult With Advisors Or Thesis Chairs And Obtain Signature(s) On The Plan Of Study.

The Plan of Study is first presented to the M.S. program committee as part of the annual review at the end of the first year of study. That committee makes recommendations on the plan, which are included in the annual review. The initial Plan of Study will be placed in the student's file with recommendations of the M.S. Committee resulting from the annual review.

Once a master's thesis committee is established, the student's masters committee gives approval of the plan. The student must update the Plan of Study at least annually with the master's thesis committee and thesis advisor, and the student must submit a revised Plan of Study each year as part of the required M.S. student annual review.

Steps necessary to develop the Plan of Study:

1. Develop a list of educational, career, research, and professional objectives.
2. Consult with the advisor and other HPA and affiliated faculty to learn of and consider resources available to help meet those objectives.
3. Explore educational resources available within Penn State.
4. Complete the development of the initial Plan of Study by the end of first semester, in consultation with the faculty advisor.
5. Revise and update the Plan of Study and present it to the M.S. Committee as part of the annual review at the end of first year.
6. Review and make changes to the Plan of Study based on the M.S Committee's recommendations.
7. Revise and update the Plan of Study before the end of the first year and present it to the master's thesis committee for feedback.
8. Review and make changes to the Plan of Study based on the committee's recommendations.
9. Regularly review and amend the Plan of Study, at least on an annual basis, seeking the advice and approval of the thesis committee and informing the M.S. Committee of any changes.
10. Submit an updated Plan of Study for the required annual review.

RESEARCH AND THE THESIS

Each HPA M.S. student must demonstrate the ability to conduct independent research and show competence in scholarly exposition through preparation of a thesis on a topic related to health policy and administration. The thesis should (1) represent a significant effort at conducting independent research, (2) be prepared in a scholarly manner, (3) reveal an ability on the part of the student to do independent research of high quality, and (4) indicate skill in the application of appropriate research methods.

By no later than the beginning of the third semester in the program, the student, in conjunction with the professor-in-charge of the M.S. program, should request the appointment of a Thesis Committee. The purpose of this committee is to provide the student with the faculty expertise necessary to carry out a well-conceived program of coursework and research.

In addition to providing advice, the Thesis Committee has three primary functions:

1. To review and approve changes in the Plan of Study;
2. To assist in planning the thesis research; and
3. To evaluate the thesis.

Membership of the M.S. Thesis Committee

Students select their own Thesis Committee members subject to university and departmental guidelines. The Graduate School requires that the committee include at least two members of the graduate faculty. The committee chair must be a Graduate School faculty member in the HPA Department and the second member of the committee can be on the graduate faculty in either the HPA Department or an outside department. If the student has elected a minor, the outside member represents the student's minor area of study. In addition, the department head's signature and title must appear on the signature page of the finished thesis. After both of the thesis committee members sign the thesis, the student must submit the thesis to the department head for review and signature.

The faculty member who has served as the student's advisor in the first year need not be selected as a member of the student's Thesis Committee. The M.S. Thesis Committee does not have to be registered with the Graduate School. The M.S. Committee approves Thesis Committee members. If it becomes necessary to change the membership of the Thesis Committee, then the student should prepare a written request, including the rationale for the change.

Guidelines for Writing a Thesis Proposal

The main purpose of the proposal is to demonstrate that the student has fully developed a realistic plan for a research project that will satisfy the thesis requirement in the time allotted. The proposal will describe the research question and the methods to be used in answering the question. The proposal will also include a tentative timeline for completing the expected tasks.

The proposal should include the following elements (the order of presentation is flexible):

1. **Literature Review**
   Concise and critical review of the relevant literature.
2. **Statement of Research Questions and/or Hypotheses**
   List the specific question(s) that will be answered by this research project. Demonstrate that the questions, both in their content and operationalization, are consistent with accepted theories and existing empirical evidence relating to individual, organizational, or system behavior.
3. **Data and Analytic Methods**
   Identify the data to be used in the research project and assess their strengths and weaknesses for answering the proposed questions. Describe and justify the research design and statistical methods that will be used.
4. **Expected Results and Implications for Health Policy and Administration**
   Explain how and why this research project will make an original contribution to the field.
5. **Human Subjects Protection**
   Describe the anticipated level of review and the timetable for obtaining necessary approvals from Penn State's Office of Research Protections.

6.   **List of Research Tasks and Timeline**
        Describe the main tasks to be undertaken in executing the project and provide tentative beginning
        and end dates for each task.

The final master's thesis will contain all the elements listed above and sections detailing results, conclusions, and policy implications.

Style and Format of the Thesis

The Graduate School's Thesis Office sets general specifications for the thesis format. Students must comply with all Graduate School requirements for theses, including deadline dates for graduation. The *Thesis Information Bulletin* is available at 114 Kern Graduate Center. The editor in the Thesis Office is available to answer questions about style and format. Students are encouraged to use the Thesis Office's informal spot-checking procedure early in the writing phase to determine if their format is acceptable.

The HPA Department does not prescribe a particular style to be followed. The *American Psychological Association Manual* or the *Chicago Manual of Style* is recommended. Using a previously accepted thesis as a model is not recommended.

Thesis Submission

The Graduate School publishes a schedule of deadlines for each semester indicating dates when the thesis binding fee must be paid to the Bursar, the "intent to graduate" must be activated, the thesis must be defended at the final oral examination, and the thesis must be submitted to the Graduate School Thesis Office for editorial review. There are no exceptions to these Graduate School deadlines. Visit **www.gradsch.psu.edu/current/thesis.html** for further information.

Following a successful oral defense of the thesis, the student should have two copies of the thesis signatory page signed by each member of his or her committee. In addition, the thesis requires the approval and signature of the HPA department head. A copy of the approved thesis and copies of the signatory page should be given to the department head at least a week prior to the deadline for thesis submission to the Graduate School. The department head's signature certifies the program's approval of the thesis. One of the original signature pages is submitted to the Graduate School's Thesis Office; the other is placed in the student's departmental file.

Human Subjects Protection

University policy requires that all research involving human subjects, including the use of secondary and primary data, be reviewed by the university to assure protection of the rights of human subjects. Information and materials to be submitted for human subject's review is available through the Office of Research Protections (ORP) in the Kern Building or online at: **www.research.psu.edu/orp.**

In addition, students proposing to conduct research involving human subjects must take and pass the web-based training programs on human subjects and HIPPA offered through the University's Office for Research Protections: **www.research.psu.edu/irb/step1.**

Graduate Program in Scholarship and Research Integrity

All students entering any master's or doctoral program in the College of Health and Human Development (CHHD) are required to undertake training in Scholarship and Research Integrity (SARI).

There are two options for fulfilling this requirement. The first, currently in use by HPA, is the completion of a single 11-week course, taken in the spring semester of the student's first year of study, known as RISE

(Research Integrity and Scholarly Ethics). HPA students are automatically enrolled in this course by program staff and successful completion of the course fully satisfies the SARI requirement.

The second option is to complete the traditional SARI program, which is described below.

The SARI program consists of three complementary components: 1) a university component consisting of an online program offered through the Office of Research Protections (ORP), 2) a CHHD component consisting of a series of interactive sessions aimed at the timely exploration of universal issues related to the responsible conduct of research, and 3) a departmental component consisting of approved content in discipline-specific research ethics and integrity. Consistent with University guidelines, all students will complete a minimum of ten (10) hours of SARI training, one-half (5 hours) of which must include the online university component taken in the first year of graduate study. The remaining five hours may be customized and distributed within the college-wide or departmental offerings as determined by each student in consultation with his or her advisor. Doctoral students must meet the entire ten-hour minimum requirement prior to being admitted to doctoral candidacy while master's students must fulfill the requirement in order to graduate.

University Component

The SARI Resource Portal (**http://www.research.psu.edu/training/sari/**) offered by the Office of Research Protections provides access to the required online training program specifically designed for Penn State by the Collaborative Institutional Training Initiative (CITI: **www.citiprogram.org**). Information, teaching tools, and links to other resources to support SARI program activities are also provided. HPA students are required to take the CITI Responsible Conduct of Research (RCR) course for the Social and Behavioral Sciences.

Health and Human Development Component

CHHD will offer three, 100-minute RCR workshops per academic year. Workshops will be open to all CHHD graduate students and will be announced college-wide approximately one month prior to the scheduled date. Attendance will be recorded using college forms specifically designed for SARI documentation. The form will specify the workshop attended, the total hours and dates of delivery and the signatures of student and course instructor to verify delivery and attendance.

The college component of the SARI program will focus on more universal issues related to ethical scholarship and the responsible pursuit of research irrespective of discipline. A non-comprehensive list of potential topics is provided below:

- Acquisition, Management, Sharing, and Ownership of Data
- Publication Practices and Responsible Authorship
- Conflict of Interest and Commitment
- Research Misconduct
- Peer Review
- Mentor/Trainee Responsibilities
- Collaborative Science
- Human Subjects Protections
- Animal Welfare

Departmental Component

The departmentally delivered component of the CHHD SARI program is intended to provide RCR instruction aimed at specific academic disciplines and/or domains of research. This component takes advantage of course content and program requirements already in existence in some HHD graduate programs. To qualify for SARI credit hours, a course must explicitly include RCR material in its content as reflected by the course syllabus. The number of hours devoted to RCR instruction must also be explicitly stated. Students wishing to use SARI approved course content to satisfy their SARI requirement will at the time of instruction procure, complete, and return a brief college form from the departmental graduate administrator. The form, the same as that used for college-wide workshops, will specify the course in question, the total hours and dates of RCR content delivery and the signatures of student and course instructor to verify delivery and attendance.

The professors in charge of graduate education in each academic unit are responsible for proper documentation, oversight and system compliance. Records documenting student participation will be maintained by departmental graduate education administrative assistants. Beginning fall 2009, each student record/progress checklist will include the ten-hour SARI requirement. Records of online participation will be made available to departmental administrators by the ORP. Signed forms for verifying attendance at college-wide workshops will be distributed to the departmental homes of those students attending to be entered into student records. SARI hours from approved departmental coursework will be documented internally using the same form.

GRADUATE SCHOOL REQUIREMENTS

Transfer Credit

Many incoming HPA master's students have prior graduate degrees or have taken graduate-level coursework from Penn State or elsewhere. In order to avoid repetition in coursework but still ensure that each student receives adequate preparation, the department has established the following policies.

A maximum of 10 credits of high-quality graduate work at an accredited institution may be applied toward the requirements for the master's degree. The program committee will only consider granting allowances for courses completed within five years of the date of acceptance into graduate study. Only prior graduate courses in which the student earned a B or better will be considered. Course content must be documented with a syllabus or other similarly descriptive material. Because the Graduate School does not establish minimum credit requirements for the M.S degree, students need not formally transfer credits for courses taken in other graduate programs. In most cases, students will be expected to substitute more advanced courses rather than reduce the total credit load required for the master's degree.

The procedure for requesting an allowance for prior graduate study is:

1. Early in the first semester of study, if not before, the student should discuss with his or her advisor whether any prior academic work is comparable in content and rigor to specific courses or subject area requirements. At this time, the student must provide the advisor with a course syllabus or similar descriptive material for any academic work for which allowance is sought.
2. Once comparable academic work has been identified, the student and the advisor should jointly draft a memo to the Professor-in-Charge of the M.S program requesting the allowance. This memo should identify the M.S. program requirement(s) for which the allowance is sought and justify the request with supporting documentation, such as transcripts and course syllabi. Both student and advisor should sign this memo.

The HPA M.S. Committee reviews all requests for allowances and documents its decisions via a memo to the student and the advisor. A copy of the memo is placed in the student's departmental file and appropriate notation is made on the student's Plan of Study. All decisions by the M.S. Committee are final.

English Language Competence

The Graduate School requires all masters' graduates to demonstrate competence in the English language. The HPA Department expects every M.S. student to achieve a level of competence in reading, writing, and speaking the English language sufficient to be an effective communicator with English-speaking students, health administrators, and health services researchers.

Effective communication implies the ability to synthesize and convey information in a clear and understandable manner that demonstrates proper English usage; correct grammar, spelling, and punctuation; and a command of English vocabulary used in general and professional communications.

The department assesses English competency at several points in each M.S. student's career. The HPA M.S. Committee has primary responsibility for undertaking the assessment and for making recommendations for remediation.

Specific recommendations for remediation may be made at any stage of the assessment process. In cases where a student is identified as deficient in English, the department will require that the student take and pass with a grade of B or better appropriate remedial course(s). Official notification that English competency has been achieved will be given to the Graduate School upon successful completion of the annual review.

Requirement for Residence

The Graduate School requires that students spend at least two consecutive semesters as registered full-time students engaged in academic work at the University Park Campus. For purposes of this requirement, students may include the semester during which the annual review is undertaken, as long as the registration is full-time. The Graduate School considers full-time registration to include a minimum of 9 credits or maximum of 12 credits with half-time assistantship; a minimum of 9 credits or maximum of 14 credits with quarter-time assistantship; and 9 credits per semester for students holding fellowships or traineeships.

GRADUATE ASSISTANTSHIPS AND FINANCIAL ASSISTANCE

Graduate students in HPA have five options for financial assistance: (1) the HPA Department; (2) faculty with grant monies for research assistants; (3) the Fellowships Office; (4) the Office of Student Aid; and (5) external agencies. The process for aid consideration is decentralized; it is necessary to file applications with each office.

The deadlines for submitting applications vary with each area. Early application for financial aid is recommended as early applicants are the most likely to receive favorable consideration. It is often necessary to apply by early February for the succeeding year. It is best to apply for all sources of aid simultaneously rather than one after the other, which might lead to missed deadlines if the first choice is unsuccessful.

Assistantships

Graduate assistantships are of two types: (1) those funded by the college and administered by the HPA Department for teaching and research assistants and (2) those funded through research or training grants directed by individual faculty. The Department Head makes funding and work assignment decisions on recommendations made by the M.S. Committee and the faculty member responsible for administering the grant funding. Because assistantships are limited, providing funding to every qualified student is not always possible.

Graduate assistants are assigned to individual faculty and perform roles in classroom instruction, research or other work. Graduate assistantships serve two interrelated functions. (1) They give students training and experience in diverse academic pursuits. As such, they represent an apprenticeship in the student's graduate program. (2) They assist the department in meeting its educational and professional obligations. Graduate assistantships are not honorary fellowships, and students are expected to meet their work obligations with a sense of responsibility and to view them as an integral part of their graduate education.

Graduate assistantships are only available to full-time degree students. They are normally half-time, although quarter-time assistantships may be available. Half-time assistantships pay a stipend plus full resident tuition. An average of 20 hours of work per week is expected. Although the period of instruction each semester is 15 weeks, graduate assistants are appointed for 18 weeks of activities each semester.

A student holding a half-time assistantship must schedule between 9 and 12 credits of academic work each semester during the fall and spring. The credit load limit may be increased or decreased for a specific semester by permission of the student's assistantship supervisor, the student's advisor, and the Dean of the Graduate School. Permission is given provided the total work load is properly balanced in each semester and the average credit load over an academic year is in conformity with the guidelines stated above.

A graduate assistant may only accept concurrent employment outside the university if the Professor-in-Charge of the M.S. program and the HPA Department Head grant permission. Concurrent employment normally may not be held within the University. A student may receive a concurrent fellowship supplement.

Student performance in teaching and research assistantship duties is evaluated each semester by the faculty member to whom the student is assigned. This review entails a written description of the student's activities and an appraisal of the quality and productivity of the student's work as a graduate assistant. Performance evaluations are used in decisions to renew funding and in evaluations of the student's overall development. Performance evaluations are discussed with the student and are filed in his or her departmental file.

Faculty Senate Guidelines for TA Preparation

Legislation passed by the University Faculty Senate requires the following for students performing duties as a teaching assistant (TA) as part of the graduate assistantship:

1. All TAs must be provided with the instructional goals and objectives for the course and, if teaching in any capacity, directions to attain teaching goals and objectives.
2. TAs must be offered preparation in generic teaching strategies (e.g., how to question, how to respond to student comments, how to incorporate different types of explanations into lesson plans, how to construct and grade exams).
3. Departments must provide TAs with information on appropriate teaching methods, activities, exercises, and/or grading policies and techniques for the course to which the TA has been assigned.
4. Departments must provide all TAs with faculty supervision and/or mentorship.
5. All TAs must receive some type of formative instructional evaluation (i.e., evaluation that provides feedback about instructional effectiveness for the purpose of improving the TA's teaching).
6. Departments must direct international teaching assistants (ITAs) who score below 250 on the AEOCPT - American English Oral Communicative Proficiency Test to take the state requirement courses for certification and to follow the guidelines for teaching responsibilities that correspond with the course. Courses are offered by the Department of Applied Linguistics. Further details about this test can be found online at **http://aplng.la.psu.edu/programs/about-the-aeocpt/about-the-american-english-oral-communicative-test-aeocpt**.

The department expects faculty supervisors to provide TAs with the necessary preparation and feedback for instructional improvement. Graduate assistants are also strongly encouraged to take advantage of the programs

offered by the Schreyer Institute for Teaching Excellence at **www.schreyerinstitute.psu.edu/** and the opportunity to earn a teaching certificate through the Graduate School.

International students who have received an offer to be a graduate assistant must take and pass the AEOCPT to be able to perform their duties. Information about the test is available online at **http://aplng.la.psu.edu/programs/about-the-aeocpt/about-the-american-english-oral-communicative-test-aeocpt**. Students can register to take the test at the same website. Students who do not achieve a passing score on the AEOCPT must take additional coursework in English. Information on required coursework is also available at the above website.

Forms

For incoming graduate students, the department includes several forms with the assistantship offer that must be completed and returned to the HPA financial assistant in order to receive payment on the first payroll date at the end of August. The forms are:

1. Offer Letter
2. Terms of Offer Agreement
3. I-9, Immigration and Naturalization Form
4. PSU Employment Application
5. W-4, Tax Withholding Form
6. Salary Deposit Request Form
7. University Intellectual Property Agreement Form
8. Worker's Compensation Employee Notification
9. Affirmative Action Application Data Card

These forms do not need to be re-filed for returning students, except for a new assistantship contract. A new W-4 form should be completed if a student changes his/her name or address or wishes to change withholding rates.

Funding from External Agencies

An excellent sign of one's ability to succeed in a master's program is the ability to secure funding for research. A number of government agencies, such as the National Institutes of Health and the National Science Foundation, provide support for dissertation research. Private foundations also provide such support.

Students are strongly encouraged to consult with their thesis committee regarding opportunities for research funding. Preparation of an application for external funding can be an important part of a student's development.

Tuition Assistance Program (Summer Session Only)

Students may apply for tuition assistance, so they can continue graduate studies during the summer. Tuition assistance is also provided to graduate students appointed as graduate lecturers during the summer and for some students who have had assistantships for two consecutive semesters.

Students wishing to apply for this program can complete the on-line STAP application by visiting **https://secure.gradsch.psu.edu/cosign/stap**.

Health Insurance

Health insurance is not mandatory for U.S. graduate assistants and fellows. However, all GAs and fellows are eligible for participation in the Graduate Fellow Health Insurance Plan. Penn State requires medical insurance

for international students and their accompanying dependents (spouses and/or children). If international students would like to elect alternate coverage, they must present proof of that coverage.

All GAs and fellows are automatically enrolled in the Penn State Graduate Assistant Graduate Fellow Plan but can elect to decline this coverage by completing a form within the first 20 days of the beginning of the semester. The University will not supplement, nor will a payroll deduction be made, for insurance policies other than the Penn State Graduate Assistant Graduate Fellow Plan.

For students enrolled in the Penn State Graduate Assistant Graduate Fellow Plan, the remaining 20 percent of the premium is deducted from the student's assistantship stipend, half in the fall semester and half in the spring semester. The coverage continues at no additional cost during the summer for students on graduate assistantships or fellowships in the spring (or fall and spring) semester(s).

Students who do not qualify for the Penn State Graduate Assistant Graduate Fellow Health Insurance Plan may purchase alternative coverage through the Graduate Student Association, the Student Insurance Office, or through any carrier of their choosing.

To talk with someone at the Student Insurance Office (SIO), students should either stop by and see a representative at 302 Student Health Center or call (814) 865-7467. Information is also available at the website: **https://studentaffairs.psu.edu/health-wellness/health-insurance.**

It is important to note that when graduate students are compensated as wage payroll (or) fixed term II employees, rather than as graduate assistants, their eligibility for premium support ends.

Pay Dates

Graduate assistants are paid on the last working day of each month. For students holding full academic year appointments, there are ten pay dates. The first check is issued at the end of August and the last check is issued at the end of May. Paychecks are directly deposited into an individual's bank account. Forms to initiate direct deposit are available from the graduate secretary.

Tax Status of Financial Assistance

Income from graduate assistantships is considered taxable income. Some sources of financial assistance are taxable and some are not. Current information is available from the Graduate Student Association by calling (814) 865-4211.

REGISTRATION

Students are encouraged to preregister for each semester's courses. This saves time and trouble and provides leverage for gaining entrance into courses that may be overenrolled. Preregistration enhances faculty planning by providing valuable information regarding expected class size and other matters.

Each semester, the registrar publishes a *Schedule of Courses* for the following semester. This is available online at **https://www.registrar.psu.edu/soc/index.cfm**. The schedule describes the procedures and deadlines to be followed to preregister or register for the upcoming semester.

Continuity of Registration

The Graduate School requires that graduate students maintain continuous registration, except for the summer session. Even after completion of coursework, students must maintain continuous registration in the program by registering for HPA 600/601 or HPA 610/611 for both the fall and spring semesters.

Any break in the continuity of registration, except for summer sessions, requires the completion of a "Resume Study" form with The Graduate School. In effect, this is an application for readmission. Each student should make sure that his or her committee and the Professor-in-Charge of the HPA M.S. Program know of the student's intentions on these matters because readmission is not guaranteed and will depend on each student's progress in the program to date. Normally, the M.S. Committee consults the student's thesis committee for a recommendation on readmission based on adequate progress on the thesis. Additionally, the M.S. Committee requires that students continue to register up to and including the semester of graduation.

REVIEWS AND EVALUATIONS

CONTENT AND CONDUCT OF THE M.S. REVIEW

The M.S. Committee conducts the M.S. review. The review is not open to the public. The purpose of the review is to ensure that the student is progressing satisfactorily toward completion of the degree requirements at the end of his or her first year in the program.

The review consists of the following elements:

1. Review of the Plan of Study. The committee may make recommendations regarding changes in the Plan of Study.
2. Review of Performance in Coursework. This includes a review of transcripts and may include a review of graded papers and other work completed in class
3. Evaluation of the Student's Assistantship Performance, if applicable.
4. Assessment of Competence in reading, writing, listening, and speaking the English language.
5. Potential for successfully completing the M.S. Program requirements, including coursework and thesis.

The committee may consult with the student and/or the advisor in conducting its review.

The professor-in-charge of the M.S. program notifies the student of the outcome promptly after completion of the review, typically before June 15.

ANNUAL REVIEW

All HPA M.S. students undergo a review of their progress on an annual basis. The Penn State Graduate School requires this review. Students who have passed the M.S. review are also subject to an "Annual Progress Review."

Both reviews require that students complete forms (see attachments in appendix) that elaborate a Plan of Study, grades in completed coursework, research plans (as discussed with a chosen advisor), etc. These materials are to be submitted to the graduate program staff assistant by May 1 and are then reviewed by the M.S. Committee. The committee provides students with a letter indicating the outcome of the review, usually within 45 days of the submission of materials. The committee uses the review process to judge a student's progress and, in most cases, will notify the student of satisfactory performance or possibly a few suggestions on which to focus.

However, the committee can also use the reviews as the basis for termination from the M.S. program or a probationary period, if necessary. In all cases, the M.S. Committee makes decisions through a majority vote, with written notification to the student. The student will have the recourse of appeal as specified by the Graduate School's policies.

A:

Independent Study (596) and Thesis Research (600/610) Agreement
Department of Health Policy and Administration

SECTION I

This form must be submitted to the Graduate Program's Staff Assistant for each semester (and each course) that a student enrolls in HPA 596, HPA 600, or HPA 610. All such forms **must be received before or within the first two weeks of the semester.** After that deadline, students will not be permitted to enroll for independent study/research without permission of the Professor-in-Charge of the graduate program.

Name (please print)		
Last	**First**	**Middle**

Date Filed	**Student Number**

Signature of Professor in Charge (if filed after second week of semester)

Course	**Course Number**

Semester	**Number of Credits**

Grading method (place an "X" in the appropriate blank):

Does the student expect to receive an "R" _____ or a letter grade _____ at the end of the semester?

Hours: The number of credits should be commensurate with the work required. University policy recommends a minimum of 40 hours of in- and out-of-class work per credit during a 15-week semester. Thus, a three-credit independent study is expected to require eight hours per week.	**Approval:** The actual project is based on negotiation by the student and the instructor (see next page). The instructor and student must sign this form after the completion of both pages.
Instructor's Signature: _____ Date	**Student's Signature:** _____ Date

Independent Study (596) and Thesis Research (600/610) Agreement
Department of Health Policy and Administration

This short form must be completed to identify the work to be completed for independent study or thesis research credit. The student and instructor should jointly discuss and agree upon these requirements and expectations and then describe them below.

Briefly describe the independent study or thesis research:

Student-faculty meetings (provide information below):	
Number of meetings (per week/month/semester)	**Length of meetings** (30 minutes/60 minutes/90 minutes)

List or describe any readings or texts that will be required. If the readings are to be identified by the student as part of the course, describe the process for identifying and selecting the readings:

Briefly explain the grading policy for the course. Describe the criteria and standards (including the schedule outlined below) that will be used to grade the student and, if appropriate, the relative weights of each criterion.

Schedule (please list major milestones and dates below):

1.

2.

3.

4.

5.

B:

Graduate Student Annual Progress Evaluation
Department of Health Policy and Administration

Student's Name: _____

Advisor: _____ Degree Program: _____

INSTRUCTIONS: All Ph.D. and M.S. students should complete their required sections of this form and ensure that appropriate personnel complete and sign all other sections. Ph.D. students should complete **Section B** of the form, while M.S. students should complete **Section C**. Once completed, students must deliver this document and all completed attachments to 604 Ford Building, c/o graduate staff assistant. **DUE DATE FOR ALL DOCUMENTS IS MARCH 31**.

Section A: Evaluation of student's progress (advisor completes this section)

	Unsatisfactory	Satisfactory	Superior	Inadequate Opportunity to Observe	Not Applicable
Performance in Courses					
Thesis Research					
Performance in Assistantship					

1. Has the student made adequate progress in the past year? ☐ **Yes**   ☐ **No**

   If your answer is "No," please explain why and suggest a course of action.

2. Have you read over the student's Statement of Research and Career Goals? ☐ **Yes**   ☐ **No**

3. Describe any key areas where the student should focus his or her attention over the coming year.

Section B: Questions for Ph.D. Student

✔ Have you passed candidacy review? ☐ **Yes** ☐ **No**	If yes, please list completion date _____
✔ Have you selected an official Ph.D. Committee? ☐ **Yes** ☐ **No**	

If you have selected a Ph.D. Committee, please list the members' names below:

✔ Have you passed the comprehensive exam? ☐ **Yes** ☐ **No**	If yes, please list completion date _____

✔ Would you like to remain with your current academic advisor for the next academic year? ☐ **Yes** ☐ **No**

✔ If no, please indicate whom you would prefer to serve as your academic advisor _____

✔ Have you and your advisor discussed external thesis funding? ☐ **Yes** ☐ **No**

If so, what funding plans have you made?

Section C: Questions for M.S. Student

✔ Have you identified a thesis advisor? ☐ **Yes** ☐ **No**	If yes, please list his or her name below: _____
✔ Have you identified a second thesis reader? ☐ **Yes** ☐ **No**	If yes, please list his or her name below: _____

Section D: Attachments

Student should complete and attach the following documents:

1. Graduate Degree Plan of Study (form attached);
2. Unofficial copy of PSU Transcript (available through eLion or the University's Registrar's Office);
3. Assistantship Performance Evaluations (available from graduate staff assistant);
4. Statement of Research and Career Goals (form attached); and
5. Professional CV, including a list of all publications and presentations (including those accepted for publication or presentation).

I understand my evaluation and have read and discussed its content with my advisor.

_____
Student's Signature   Date

I have reviewed the Graduate Student Annual Progress Evaluation and discussed the contents with the student.

_____
Advisor's Signature   Date

*********This page to be completed by the M.S. /Ph.D. Committee**********

1. The M.S. /Ph.D. Committee reviewed the student's progress evaluation form on _____ (insert date) and made the following conclusions:

2. The M.S. /Ph.D. Committee provided the following feedback to the student (please include the date the feedback was given and the manner in which it was provided):

_____
M.S. /Ph.D. Committee Professor-in-Charge's Signature   Date

C:

Graduate Degree Plan of Study
Department of Health Policy and Administration

Name of Student: _____ Advisor: _____

INSTRUCTIONS: Indicate semester (e.g., FA '07) when the student plans to take courses that he or she has not yet completed. Indicate semester and grade for courses completed. For transfer credits note "TC" in the semester column and provide further information in the appropriate section (student may attach additional documentation). Students must update this form each spring until all courses are completed.

CORE REQUIREMENTS (Health Care Policy and Organization Segment: 12 credits)   **Semester**   **Grade**

- HPA 520 Introduction to Health Services Organizations and Delivery   _____ _____
- HPA 521 Research Seminar on Health Services Organization and Delivery   _____ _____
- HPA 510 Introduction to Health Services Financing and Policy   _____ _____
- HPA 511 Research Seminar on Health Service Financing and Policy   _____ _____

CORE REQUIREMENTS (Health Services Research Methods Segment: 12 credits)   **Semester**   **Grade**

- HPA 518 Foundations of Research Methods in Health Services Research   _____ _____
- HPA 561 Introduction to Research Design in Health Services Research   _____ _____
- HPA 564 Research Methods in Health Services Research   _____ _____
- HPA 528 Health Data Analysis for Research   _____ _____

CORE REQUIREMENTS (Professional Development Segment: 2 credits)   **Semester**   **Grade**

- HPA 590 Colloquium   _____ _____
- HPA 590 Colloquium   _____ _____

Additional Course Requirements (9-14 credits selected in consultation with advisor and thesis committee. Indicate course number and title.)

_____   _____ _____

_____   _____ _____

_____   _____ _____

_____   _____ _____

_____   _____ _____

_____   _____ _____

_____   _____ _____

ADDITIONAL COURSEWORK: The student should indicate here any additional coursework he or she expects to complete during his or her graduate education. This might include plans to complete the Graduate School Teaching Certificate, the Teaching with Technology Certificate, additional courses recommended by the advisor or thesis committee, methods workshops at research conferences, etc.

Course Name	Semester	Grade
_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____

TRANSFER CREDITS: Indicate University, course number, title, semester and grade. Supporting documentation (transcripts, approval of allowance) should be present in the student's file.

University	Course Number and Title	Semester	Grade
_____	_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____	_____

Student's Signature: _____ Date: _____

Advisor's Signature: _____ Date: _____

Statement of Research and Career Goals
Department of Health Policy and Administration

Name of Student: _____ Degree Program: _____

INSTRUCTIONS:

1. Describe in detail (maximum of three pages, single-spaced) your research and thesis plans, including the following elements:
    *   Timeline for Completion of Research;
    *   Research Advisor and Committee Members (if committee is appointed);
    *   Policy/Practice Relevance of Research Project;
    *   Plans to Apply for External Funding Available to Graduate Students (e.g., AHRQ Dissertation Awards, Juran Fellowship, etc.); and
    *   Targeted Outlets (e.g., academic journals) for Disseminating Research Findings.

2. Briefly describe (maximum of one page, single-spaced) your career goals, including the type of position you are planning to seek after graduation and the area of research you plan to emphasize.

3. Attach all pages to this form.

I have completed my Statement of Research and Career Goals and shared the information with my advisor.

_____
Student's Signature   Date