WRITING YOUR CE, Thesis, or Dissertation PROPOSAL

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UTSPH Office of Academic Affairs and Student Services
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Written CE, Thesis, or Dissertation

- Culmination of academic degree

- Opportunity for independent research

- Safe, positive, guided experience
  - Faculty
  - Staff
  - UTHealth IRB (CPHS)
STUDENT RESEARCH
Office of Academic Affairs and Student Services

- Student Services
  - 713-500-9032
  - RAS 2nd floor / East

- Rebecca Novak
  Student Research Coordinator
  713-500-9055
  Rebecca.Novak@uth.tmc.edu

- Brooke Burns
  Administrative Coordinator
  713-500-9072
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- Sylvia Salas, MPH
  Assistant Dean of Academic Affairs and Student Services
  713-500-9070
  Sylvia.Salas@uth.tmc.edu
Proposal Development

• PREPARE – Resources
• PLAN – Timeline
• WRITE – What does a proposal look like?
• Review Process – Submitting your proposal for IRB and SPH approvals
PREPARE

✓ Basic writing skills
✓ Scientific writing skills
✓ Electronic and library resources
✓ Generate and catalog your ideas
  ✓ Read and attend lectures/seminars outside of class requirements!
  ✓ Ideas for a CE project during practicum
RESOURCES

- SPH Writing Support Services
  - SPHWritingHub@uth.tmc.edu
  - SPH Library - RAS E-125
  - 713-500-9121

- Full text of theses and dissertations – ProQuest
  - SPH Library > Databases A-Z > UTSPH Theses & Dissertations
  - http://libguides.sph.uth.tmc.edu/content.php?pid=357371&sid=2922844

- Examples of proposals – in office or by email
  - Rebecca.Novak@uth.tmc.edu
  - 713-500-9055
  - RAS E-229
RESOURCES

- CE, Thesis, and Dissertation Guides
  https://sph.uth.edu/research/student-research/
WCE/Thesis/Dissertation COMMITTEE

• Committee
  – Committee is formed by the student!
  – Forms: Current students>Student Forms>Degree program
    • PhD/DrPH: Doctoral Dissertation Committee Forms
    • MPH: MPH/MS Thesis Supervisor Appointment; Optional Member Appointment
    • MS: MPH/MS Thesis Supervisor Appointment; MS Committee Appointment

• Timing

• Committee Roles
  – Student is a full member of his/her committee
  – Faculty roles
    • Thesis/Dissertation Supervisor
    • Academic Advisor/Chair
    • Additional members
PLAN

• Meeting schedules

• Proposal expectations
  – Length, content, reference/bibliography style

• Writing schedule

• Proposal feedback and revisions
Timeline

• Create a timeline for your project
  – CE/Thesis/Dissertation Guides - Example timeline
    https://sph.uth.edu/research/student-research/

• Allow enough time for review and approval

  ✔ SPH Review
    – Check proposal submission deadlines

  ✔ UT CPHS (IRB)
    – Approximately 2 weeks for Exempt status
    – Approximately 3 weeks for Expedited review
    – Approximately 4 weeks for Subcommittee review
THE PROPOSAL

• Background
• Public Health Significance
• Specific Aims/Objectives
• Methods
• References/Bibliography

Optional Sections

 Preliminary data
 Mock-up of results

W R I T E

Background
Public Health Significance
Aims/Objectives
Methods

[Links]
BACKGROUND/INTRODUCTION

• Review relevant literature

• State problem/need/gap in literature or practice

• Argue importance (Rationale)
PUBLIC HEALTH SIGNIFICANCE

• Of your project
SPECIFIC AIMS

• Specific Aims
• Research Question(s)
• Objectives
• Hypotheses
METHODS

• **All** proposals require methods

• **All** aims require methods
METHODS

• Provide details required for someone else to replicate your study
  – What you will do and how you will do it?
    • Focus on methods, not software

• Clearly distinguish between what has been done already, and what will be done for your project
  – Use past and future tense appropriately
  – Identify your project in context of overall study (if secondary analysis)

• Contract with committee
OPTIONAL: PRELIMINARY DATA

- Projects that are largely complete or that have been completed prior to writing your proposal, including work that has been submitted for publication or previously published, **cannot be used as your WCE/thesis/dissertation.**
OPTIONAL: PRELIMINARY DATA

• If you have done work in preparation for writing your proposal, for example as part of your practicum or as a graduate research assistant, you should include a summary of the work that has already been done, in past tense.
OPTIONAL: RESULTS SECTION

• If you include this section in the proposal, it should provide an outline of how your results will be presented
  – Mock-ups of tables and/or figures that will be used to present your data.
LENGTH

FORMAT
Proposal Review Process

• UTSPH Process
  – Set up committee first (all degree programs)
  – Doctoral Proposal Defense – Proposal defense completed (doctoral students only) https://sph.uth.edu/current-students/student-forms/
  – Committee approves written proposal (all degree programs)
  – Written proposal review/approval – SPH and IRB (all degree programs)

• Enroll for ≥ 3 credits
  – Continuous Enrollment Policy https://sph.uth.edu/academics/academic-affairs/#tab-3
Proposal Review Process

- **Deadlines**
  [https://sph.uth.edu/research/student-research/important-dates-for-the-thesisdissertation/](https://sph.uth.edu/research/student-research/important-dates-for-the-thesisdissertation/)

- Proposals may be submitted at *any time* during *any semester* in which you are enrolled

- Proposal forms and submission instructions:
  [https://sph.uth.edu/research/student-research/](https://sph.uth.edu/research/student-research/)
  - Printed copy + signed forms = SPH submission
  - Electronic copy + scanned forms = UT IRB submission (iRIS)
    » Can be submitted in iRIS (online) and to SPH (printed copy) at the same time
Institutional Review Board (IRB)

- UTHealth IRB = UT Committee for the Protection of Human Subjects (CPHS)
  - [http://www.uthouston.edu/cphs/](http://www.uthouston.edu/cphs/)

- iRIS – online application system for CPHS approval
  - [https://iris.uth.tmc.edu/](https://iris.uth.tmc.edu/)

- No submission deadline for initial review

- UTHealth username/password + UTHealth email
  - iRIS Helpdesk (technical support) 713-500-7960
  - CPHS (IRB questions) 713-500-7943
  - UT-HSC Helpdesk (password) 713-500-4848
Institutional Review Board (IRB)

• Human subjects research
  – If in doubt, check!

• MUST have UT CPHS approval (not just outside IRB approval)
  – Outside IRB approvals may be required in addition

• CPHS Approval (2 options):
  – Student submits application as PI of the thesis
  – Student is added to UT faculty’s active protocol
Does My Project Need IRB Review?

- UT CPHS reviews all SPH projects involving human participants and/or use of human-derived data/samples, including:
  - **Primary data collection** - Interviews, surveys, interventions, observational studies
  - **Existing data, de-identified** - Exempt status
  - **Existing data, with identifiers** - Expedited review/approval
    - Names, addresses, social security numbers, etc.
    - PHI (Protected Health Information) – HIPAA
  - **Publicly available data** – Exempt status (you must submit an application to receive Exempt status in iRIS)

- UT CPHS does not need to review:
  - **Systematic review of literature** (use of published literature)
  - **Simulated data only**
SPH PROPOSAL DEADLINES

• **Spring 2017**
  – Submission: December 9th
  – Approval: February 3rd

• **Summer 2017**
  – Submission: April 28th
  – Approval: June 9th

Proposals are due no later than the *last class day* of the semester prior to your intended graduation date!
Common Pitfalls

• **Insufficient methods**
  – All proposals must have detailed methods - including systematic reviews of literature, policy analysis, and practice-based CEs!

• **Insufficient information about data sources or interaction with humans**
  – Detailed information is needed by the IRB for their review!
  – See full list of subheadings in the Guides

• **What has been done/what remains to be done is not clear**
  – Projects using secondary analysis of data must be differentiated from the larger overall study or original study providing data!
Doctoral Dissertation Awards

• 5 dissertation proposals awarded each year
  – Fall and Spring call for applications
    • Spring 2017: Tuesday, February 21st, 2017

• ≤ $2000 / research related expenditures

• Requirements
  – Passed preliminary/qualifying exam
  – Approved proposal