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
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- **Brooke Burns**
  Administrative Coordinator
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- **Sylvia Salas, MPH**
  Assistant Dean of Academic Affairs and Student Services
  713-500-9070
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Proposal Development

- PREPARE – Resources
- PLAN – Timeline
- WRITE – What does a typical 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 (all degree programs)
  – 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
Background

Public Health Significance

Aims/Objectives

Methods
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 preliminary 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.
OPTIONAL: STRENGTHS & LIMITATIONS

• These sections should include a thorough assessment of the strengths and/or weaknesses of specific aspects of your project, showing more clearly what can be expected from your results, and potentially pointing the way for further research.
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

• 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/
  
  – 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

• Deadlines
  
  https://sph.uth.edu/research/student-research/important-dates-for-the-thesisdissertation/
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

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

• **Fall 2017**
  – Submission: August 11th
  – Approval: Early Fall 2017 (TBA)
(Fall graduation)

Proposals must be submitted to SPH Office of Academic Affairs and Student Services 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
    • Fall 2017: TBA

• ≤ $2000 / research related expenditures

• Requirements
  – Passed preliminary/qualifying exam
  – Approved proposal