DOCTORAL DEGREES

Admissions

The admissions requirements for the doctoral degree programs described below are in addition to the University admissions requirements (http://llucatalog.llu.edu/about-university/admission-policies-information/#admissionrequirements) and program requirements. The minimum eligibility requirements for admission to a doctoral degree program include the following:

• An M.P.H. degree or master’s degree in a related field from a regionally accredited institution, with a G.P.A. of 3.5 or above. Applicants with a master’s degree in another field may indicate their relevant training, research and/or practice experience, or educational background comparable to the M.P.H or the M.S. degrees. Dr.P.H. degree applicants who are admitted without an M.P.H. degree will be required to take the public health core (PCOR) course sequence for 15 units prior to registering for the doctoral-level core public health courses to satisfy M.P.H. degree core competencies.

• Satisfactory performance on GRE or equivalent is required; scores must have been attained within the past five years. Although there is no minimum GRE score requirement, 40th percentile or higher in each of the three sections of the GRE (verbal, quantitative, and writing) is considered competitive.

• Religious affiliation is not a requirement; but students are expected to adhere to on-campus requirements of modest dress, abstinence from alcohol and smoking, and attendance at weekly chapel, as applicable.

Applicants must satisfy the program-specific admission requirements, including but not limited to prerequisite courses and years of experience. Admissions decisions are based on a review of applicant’s transcripts, written statement, research interest, concept paper, letters of recommendation, GRE scores or equivalent, and interview. Satisfying minimum requirements does not guarantee admission.

Dr.P.H. degree

The Doctor of Public Health (Dr.P.H.) degree is designed to provide comprehensive academic and research and advanced practice training in the field of public health. Students may enroll on a full- or part-time basis; however, they must advance to candidacy within five years of entering the program, and complete the program within seven years. Majors are available in:

• Health Education – on campus and technology mediated
• Health Policy and Leadership
• Preventive Care

The doctoral programs offer training for careers in which advanced analytical and conceptual capabilities are required (e.g., teaching, research, practice, consultation, and top-level administration). Students’ research and dissertations are key components in the development of critical thinking related to public health and their major fields.

A minimum of two years is generally required to complete course work if full time; however, the number of units required depends on the specific major chosen. Time to completion of dissertation is variable. Program plans are described under individual majors.

Students whose academic backgrounds include substantial graduate study in public health and/or the major field may be granted advanced standing. The number of units of course work required to complete the program may be reduced accordingly but is not to be fewer than 60 units plus dissertation units at Loma Linda University.

Learner outcomes

Upon completion of the Doctor of Public Health degree program, students will be able to:

• Apply ethical principles to the field of public health.
• Demonstrate a commitment to lifelong learning to support the pursuit of truth.
• Demonstrate a core set of research skills.
• Use data and theory to identify public health problems.
• Formulate appropriate research questions.
• Choose appropriate research designs.
• Develop data-collection instruments.
• Collect, enter, and manage data.
• Analyze and interpret data.
• Communicate, both orally and in written form, results to the scientific and lay communities.
• Write program and grant proposals and compete for external funding.

Comprehensive and qualifying examinations

Students are required to demonstrate ability and readiness to proceed with doctoral study and research by successfully passing appropriate comprehensive and/or qualifying examinations. The specific format and timing are dependent on the major field of study. Organization of the material, professional presentation, and reference to authorities in the field and the literature are expected.

Dr.P.H. degree corequisites

Students must have an MPH from an accredited institution, complete 15 units from the public health core (PCOR), or complete graduate-level coursework in the five Public Health disciplinary areas (epidemiology, biostatistics, behavioral sciences/health education, environmental health, health administration/policy).

Advancement to candidacy

Advancement to candidacy is granted by the associate dean for academic affairs. As part of advancement to candidacy, a dissertation guidance committee is formally appointed, provided students have:

• Shown evidence of superior scholarship and ability.
• Fulfilled all course requirements.
• Satisfactorily passed the appropriate examinations.
• Received approval of the individual’s dissertation committee for the research and dissertation proposal.

Research and dissertation

The dissertation is a scholarly statement of the results of original research. It should advance knowledge in the major field. It must be an independent investigation and include analysis and interpretation of data and discussion of findings. It should be skillfully written and of such scholarship and scientific value as to demonstrate a mastery of research methodology. Students are encouraged to use the publishable paper format (required in some majors) rather than the traditional form. The dissertation is defended orally before the doctoral research committee and presented publicly before invited faculty, peers, and the academic
and health community. Additional information is detailed in the school’s Doctoral Handbook.

**Teaching and research assistantships**
All doctoral students are required to serve as a teaching assistant for a minimum of one quarter. Additional information is detailed in the school's Doctoral Handbook.

A limited number of funded research assistantships are also available. Students on assistantships make a time commitment for experience and may need to limit their academic load in order to participate in these activities.

**Postdoctoral fellowships**
One-year fellowships may be available in various programs. They are tailored to the applicant’s interest (in accordance with training opportunities), expressed needs, and funding. Details can be obtained from the dean.

**Ph.D. degree**
The Doctor of Philosophy (Ph.D.) degree is designed to provide comprehensive research and academic training. Students may enroll on a full- or part-time basis; however, they must advance to candidacy within five years of entering the program. The Ph.D. degree in epidemiology is currently offered. The Ph.D. degree offers training for top-level jobs in research and academia. The program is specifically targeted to doctoral-level health professionals who want to move into a research and academic career. However, those with a master’s degree in a relevant field and with documented research experience are also eligible for this program. Students’ research and dissertation are key components in the development of critical thinking.

Course work is generally completed in two years, if full time. Time to completion of dissertation is variable. The specific program plans are described under the epidemiology department.

Students whose academic backgrounds include substantial graduate study in a cognate field may be granted advanced standing. The number of units of course work required to complete the program may be reduced accordingly but is not to be fewer than 60 units plus dissertation units at Loma Linda University.

**Learner outcomes**
Upon completion of the Doctor of Philosophy degree in epidemiology, students will be able to:

- Identify areas requiring biomedical or epidemiologic research and design, and conduct appropriate study to address the question(s).
- Write grant proposals to obtain funding for research.
- Select and execute appropriate and valid analyses of data using available statistical software.
- Write, interpret, and publish results of conducted research; and communicate orally.
- Develop and teach classes at the graduate level within their area of expertise.

**Comprehensive and qualifying examinations**
Students are required to demonstrate ability and readiness to proceed with doctoral study and research by successfully passing the comprehensive examination. The examination includes writing a grant proposal on a specific topic, conducting independent statistical analyses on a provided dataset, oral examination, and oral presentation of the grant proposal. Organization of the material, professional presentation, and reference to authorities in the field and the literature are expected.

**Advancement to candidacy**
Advancement to candidacy is granted by the associate dean for academic affairs upon recommendation by the doctoral subcommittee. As part of advancement to candidacy, a dissertation guidance committee is formally appointed. Students have:

- Shown evidence of superior scholarship and ability.
- Fulfilled all course requirements.
- Satisfactorily passed the appropriate examinations.
- Received approval of the dissertation committee for the research and dissertation proposal.

**Research and dissertation**
The dissertation is a scholarly statement of the results of original research. It should advance knowledge in the major field. It must be an independent investigation and include analysis and interpretation of data and discussion of findings. It should be skillfully written and of such scholarship and scientific value as to demonstrate a mastery of research methodology. Students are required to use the publishable paper format rather than the traditional form. Before their dissertation defense, students must have published one paper and submitted two more papers and responded to reviewers’ comments on both. The dissertation is defended orally before the doctoral research committee and presented publicly before invited faculty, peers, and the academic and health community. Additional information is detailed in the Faculty of Graduate Studies’ Dissertation and Thesis Format Guide and in the SPH Doctoral Handbook.

**Teaching and research assistantships**
All doctoral students are required to serve as a teaching assistant for a minimum of one quarter. Additional information is detailed in the school's Doctoral Handbook.

A limited number of funded research assistantships are also available. Students on assistantships make a time commitment for experience and may need to limit their academic load in order to participate in these activities.

**Postdoctoral fellowships**
One-year fellowships may be available. They are tailored to the applicant’s interest (in accordance with training opportunities), expressed needs, and funding. Details can be obtained from the dean.

**Programs**

- Epidemiology — Ph.D. (http://llucatalog.llu.edu/public-health/epidemiology/phd)
- Health Education — Dr.P.H. (http://llucatalog.llu.edu/public-health/health-education-drph)
- Health Policy and Leadership — Dr.P.H. (http://llucatalog.llu.edu/public-health/health-policy-leadership-drph)
- Nutrition — Ph.D. (http://llucatalog.llu.edu/public-health/nutrition-phd)
- Preventive Care — Dr.P.H. (http://llucatalog.llu.edu/public-health/preventative-care-drph)