

# PhD in Translational Health Sciences (THS) Doctoral Handbook

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School of Medicine  
& Health Sciences

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THE GEORGE WASHINGTON UNIVERSITY

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# PhD in Translational Health Science (THS)

THE GEORGE WASHINGTON UNIVERSITY (GW)  
SCHOOL OF MEDICINE AND HEALTH SCIENCES (SMHS)  
CLINICAL RESEARCH AND LEADERSHIP (CRL)

Washington, D.C.

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2021-2022 Academic Year – Edited July 2021

This text acts as a handbook for PhD in Translational Health Sciences (THS) program within the Department of Clinical Research and Leadership (CRL) in the School of Medicine and Health Sciences. The **THS Program reserves the right to make changes to any and all aspects of the Program Handbook.** Students will be notified via their Program Advisor of any substantial changes to the policies and procedures as needed.

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THE GEORGE WASHINGTON UNIVERSITY  
HEALTH SCIENCES

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**WELCOME**

Welcome to the PhD program in Translational Health Sciences (PhD in THS) at The George Washington University (GW)! This program represents a transformational journey that will train you to reason and interact with others as a translational health scientist. You bring many assets to this program, and your faculty, colleagues, advisors, mentors, and a host of other stakeholders are excited to guide and accompany you on this journey. Success in the program is due in no small part to your ability to learn from others, reflect on your own assumptions, and make changes to promote personal growth

The PhD in THS is a unique, interdisciplinary program that will teach you to analyze, synthesize, and contribute to the science of translational health sciences. The program will encourage you to integrate knowledge from three scientific disciplines – collaboration science, implementation science, and translational research – and will welcome you into a scholarly community dedicated to advancing the knowledge base of translational health sciences. As such, the program values the diversity and integration of perspectives that different students bring.

Learning at the advanced graduate level requires a program that enables students to pursue topics of interest and ideas in depth. The didactic phase of the program begins with a period of intensive study with required courses, but also provides individualized learning opportunities that will help you achieve your study goals. Your plan of study is followed by an exciting time of conducting your own doctoral level translational health science research. As a doctoral candidate you will plan and execute a dissertation with the support of your dissertation chair and committee, and report on the results of that original research in your dissertation defense.

We are excited to have you join our community of scholars in translational health science!

Warmly,

Samar Nasser PhD, MPH, PA-C  
Trudy Mallinson, PhD, OTR/L

## **PURPOSE OF THE HANDBOOK**

This handbook is for students enrolled in the PhD program in Translational Health Sciences (THS) at GW. It outlines the policies and regulations of the program relating to graduate students. These policies and regulations are an addendum to those outlined in the current University [Bulletin](#), current School of Medicine and Health Sciences (SMHS) [Bulletin](#), the University [Code of Student Conduct](#), and the University [Code of Academic Integrity](#).

The program reserves the right to revise the policies and procedures outlined in this handbook as needed to facilitate the goals and mission of the program. The most updated version of the handbook will be posted in the [Student Resources](#) link on the program website. Students are expected to remain current on all policies and procedures affiliated with their program of study. This handbook does not constitute a contractual obligation on the part of GW or SMHS. Please contact the Program Administrator with any questions you may have concerning the information in this handbook.

## **INTRODUCTION**

The PhD in THS program is housed in the Department of Clinical Research and Leadership within the GW SMHS. The Health Sciences [mission](#) is to drive innovation and quality in health and health care delivery through education, scholarship, and service. Our vision is to be a leader in transforming health and health care delivery – locally, nationally, and globally. We value diversity and inclusion, collaboration, and innovation. Our [Strategic Plan 2020-2023](#) identifies four focus areas to champion innovation and facilitate continuous improvement in health and health care delivery:

- Investing in People
- Living Our Social Mission
- Influencing Health Professions Education, Health Care Policy, and Practice
- Catalyzing Innovation and Entrepreneurism

The mission of the GW SMHS is to improve the health of our local, national, and global communities by:

- **Educating** a diverse workforce of tomorrow’s leaders in medicine, science, and health sciences.
- **Healing** through innovative and compassionate care.
- **Advancing** biomedical, translational, and health services delivery research with an emphasis on multidisciplinary collaboration.
- **Promoting** a culture of excellence through inclusion, service, and advocacy.

As a globally recognized academic medical center, GW embraces the challenge of eliminating health disparities and transforming health care to enrich and improve the lives of those we serve.

### **About the Department of Clinical Research and Leadership (CRL)**

CRL offers programs for professionals who are interested in obtaining a quality education, working with experienced, dedicated, and knowledgeable faculty and practitioners, and contributing to the development of new knowledge and practice within their chosen field. Our bachelor's, master's, certificate, and doctoral programs approach education and leadership development cultivate students' skills in critical thinking and research while guiding important insights into their chosen field of study. We embrace the fundamental concepts of adult learning and encourage collaboration, experiential learning, creative thinking, and self-direction.

### **About the PHD in Translational Health Sciences (PhD in THS) Program**

### Program of Study

The PhD in THS is a blended, low-residency program, meaning the program of study combines two formats: online and in-person learning activities. These formats are highly integrated, and each is essential to achieving student learning goals. In a low-residency program, a purposeful approach is used to blend technology, media, human interactions, and conventional instruction methods, which are 1) chosen for their pedagogical value and 2) integrated seamlessly so that all components of the curriculum are essential to form a cohesive learning experience. This mix of face-to-face and online learning strategies is designed to encourage students to continuously reflect, apply, and interact with others in a process of self-regulated learning.

The program of study is structured so that students interact online with course materials, instructors, and each other during the majority of the semester. The in-person aspect takes place during two residency weekends per semester (Fall, Spring, and Summer).

### Residency Weekends

Residency weekends occur twice each semester during each of the first six semesters of the program. Students are **required** to attend each of the residency weekends. **Students will not be excused from required residency weekends and are expected to be present for the entire residency period (noon Friday through noon Sunday).** If unable to attend the residency weekend either partially or fully, students must inform the Program Director as soon as possible. Please note that this notification may not release you from the obligation of attending and your absence will result in a reduction in participation grades. Unless the residency weekend is canceled or altered by the Program Director, students may not attend the residency weekends virtually. All physical absences from each residency weekend will result in a reduction of the participation grade of all required (not elective) courses for which the student is enrolled in the respective semester.

Unless a special event is arranged, all weekend activities will be held in [Exploration Hall on the GW Virginia Science and Technology Campus \(VSTC\) in Ashburn, Virginia](#) or in the [GW Arlington Graduate Education Center](#) in Arlington, Virginia (depending upon RW needs and space requirements). These weekends are scheduled to occur from Friday noon through Sunday noon during *approximately* the fifth and tenth week of each semester. Dates for all six semesters are posted on the [Student Resources](#) page of the program website for each cohort upon matriculation. Arranging transportation, lodging, and meals are the student's responsibility. Upon request, the program can provide a list of recommended accommodations and restaurants.

### Who to contact if you have questions:

- Program Administrator & Academic Advisor ([PhDTHS@gwu.edu](mailto:PhDTHS@gwu.edu))
  - Course registration, enrollment status (e.g., continuous enrollment, leave of absence, half-time/full-time certification), textbooks, Blackboard access, residency weekends, and other questions related to the student experience.
- Program Director (Samar Nasser - [SNasser@gwu.edu](mailto:SNasser@gwu.edu)):
  - Program curriculum, residency weekends, elective coursework
- Director of Research (Trudy Mallinson – [trudy@gwu.edu](mailto:trudy@gwu.edu)):
  - Dissertation research, IRB

### Advising and Mentoring

The advising and mentoring system developed for the PhD in THS program is an important component of student success. As adult learners, it is each student's responsibility to fully engage in the advising and mentoring system by taking initiative, maintaining good communication, and completing work in a timely fashion.



The PhD in THS program distinguishes between the roles of academic advising and research mentoring. The academic advisor is a faculty member who provides coaching and guidance throughout the pre-candidacy phase. The student works with the faculty advisor to form a network of formal and informal research mentors. Research mentors may provide short-term consultation, or research immersions and mentoring as a dissertation chair or committee member.

### **Academic Faculty Advisor**

The faculty academic advisor will be assigned by the program immediately prior to orientation. Faculty advisors are responsible to:

1. Monitor student progress in the program and student-specific learning needs
2. Support students in developing and updating an individualized development plan
3. Direct student to available educational and research resources
4. Advise the student in the selection of electives
5. Assist the student in identifying potential dissertation chair and committee members

The academic advisor may also (but is not required to) serve as a member of the dissertation committee or the dissertation chair, as long as other eligibility requirements are met.

After a student has begun the program, a change in advisor will be considered on a case-by-case basis in consultation with the Program Director.

### **Research Mentors**

Research mentors work with students on research projects of mutual interest which relate to, and prepare the student for, their doctoral research. Students should carefully consider who they engage as research mentors as these individuals will generally go on to become dissertation chairs or committee members. Engaging with research mentors through independent studies is an effective way to develop a relationship with the mentor and to learn necessary skills and knowledge in preparation for conducting the dissertation research. Students are strongly encouraged to assemble a multidisciplinary research mentoring team. Students and mentors should share enthusiasm for the projects on which they collaborate. Identification of mentors should begin early in the program and before the student's dissertation ideas are formed since research mentors should guide the student in this process. The Academic Advisor, the Program Director, and Director of Doctoral Research will assist the student in identifying research mentors.

## **PHASES OF THE PROGRAM: PRE-CANDIDACY, CANDIDACY, AND GRADUATION**

The PhD in THS program is organized as two phases, pre-candidacy and candidacy (See Listed Below). Successful completion of both phases is required for graduation.

1. *Pre-candidacy* – includes successfully completing coursework, comprehensive examinations, and defense of the dissertation proposal.
2. *Candidacy* – includes successfully completing the proposed research, passing the oral dissertation defense, and the approval of the written dissertation.
3. *Graduation* – includes submitting a written dissertation in the approved format to the program, depositing it at Himmelfarb Library, closing or revising study IRB status, and applying for graduation

### **PRE-CANDIDACY PHASE**

This phase includes: i) successfully completing coursework, ii) passing comprehensive examinations, iii) selection of the dissertation committee, and iv) development and defense of the dissertation proposal.

**Coursework**Course Sequence

Year	Semester	Course #	Credits	Title
Year 1	Fall	THS 8101	3	Foundations of Translational Health Science
Year 1	Fall	THS 8103	3	Principles of Collaborative and Team Science
Year 1	Fall	THS 8105	3	Translational Health Science in Complex Systems
Year 1	Spring	THS 8107	3	Program Theory and Health Innovations
Year 1	Spring	THS 8121	3	Advanced Study Design for Translational Research
Year 1	Spring	THS 8202	3	Knowledge Translation in Complex Health Systems
Year 1	Summer	THS 8123	3	Qualitative Methods in Translational Health Sci.
Year 1	Summer	THS 8125	3	Adv. Statistical Methods for Clinical & Translational Research
Year 2	Fall	THS 8109	3	Implementation Sci. and Innovation Leadership
Year 2	Fall	THS 8221	3	Mixed Methods in Translational Health Science
Year 2	Fall	Elective	3	
Year 2	Spring	THS 8203	3	Bioethical Implications of Health Research
Year 2	Spring	THS 8206	3	Translating Lit. for Interdisciplinary Scholarship
Year 2	Spring	Elective	3	
Comprehensive Exam				
Year 2	Summer	THS 8961	3	Proposal Defense Preparation
Year 3	Fall	THS 8996	3	Dissertation Seminar I
Year 3	Spring	THS 8997	3	Dissertation Seminar II
Year 3	Summer	THS 8998	3	Dissertation Seminar III
TOTAL CREDIT HOURS			54	

Course Descriptions**Year 1, Fall Semester***THS 8101: Foundations in Translational Health Science*

The course examines the emerging field of Translational Health Sciences, which integrates knowledge across three conceptual domains (translational research, implementation and dissemination science, and collaboration and team science) within the context of current health legislation.

*THS 8103: Principles of Collaboration and Team Science*

Health, technology, social, and environmental problems impacting our world necessitates cross- disciplinary engagement and a high level of collaboration. The course examines foundational and practical principles and explores their impact on collaborative and team science engagements.

*THS 8105: Translational Health Science in Complex Systems*

This course engages learners in an analysis of health systems as complex adaptive systems, elucidating barriers and facilitators to/opportunities for change and innovation within complex health systems. Identification of diverse stakeholders and system interdependencies aims to ensure adoption of translational initiatives.

**Year 1, Spring Semester***THS 8107: Program Theory and Health Innovations*

A translational approach to practice requires health and educational innovations that are evidence-based, have a theoretical foundation, and are based on strategies to support fidelity. The purpose of this course is to introduce program theory as the basis for designing health and educational innovations that can be tested using scientific methods, replicated in practice, and inform policy.

*THS 8121: Advanced Study Design for Translational Research*

This course provides an in-depth consideration of current issues and techniques in quantitative research methods and study designs. It is intended to provide a focused understanding of designs used in translational health research, particularly quantitative approaches. The course includes a particular emphasis on measurement (health outcomes, survey and instrument design) and methods to support decision-making in health, health care, and health policy.

*THS 8202: Knowledge Translation in Complex Health Systems*

This course introduces theories, frameworks and models of knowledge translation to facilitate knowledge use and change in complex health systems. Focus is placed on analyzing when knowledge is ready for translation, barriers and facilitators to knowledge use, and strategies for translating knowledge for specific stakeholders and contexts.

**Year 1, Summer Semester***THS 8123: Qualitative Methods in Translational Health Science*

The course examines qualitative methods and designs applicable to translational health science research problems. Students explore qualitative epistemology, methods, data collection, and data analysis.

*THS 8125: Advanced Statistical Methods for Clinical and Translational Research*

This course covers advanced data management and analytic techniques required for testing hypotheses in translational health research. The course includes a particular emphasis on multivariate analysis and modeling to support decision-making in health, health care, and health policy.

**Year 2, Fall Semester***THS 8109: Implementation Science and Innovation Leadership*

This course introduces implementation science as the study of processes affecting systematic uptake of evidence into routine health care, and related outcomes of quality, cost, and effectiveness. Students study a range of influences on professional and organizational behavior essential to implementing change initiatives aligned with the needs of diverse stakeholders, with special emphasis on the role of leadership in systemic change.

*THS 8221: Mixed Methods in Translational Health Science*

This course introduces mixed methods as a legitimate design tradition, with a unique set of procedures for data collection, analysis, and strategies to assure rigor and accuracy. Learners will design a mixed methods study to address a translational research question.

*Elective – Selected with academic advisor approval.*

**Year 2, Spring Semester***THS 8203: Bioethical Implications of Health Research*

The purpose of this course is to emphasize the critical roles of ethics theories and bioethics principles in the

planning, conduct, and dissemination of scientific studies. Topics covered will include scientific and academic integrity, protection of human participants in research, conflicts of interest and commitment, ownership of data and intellectual property, whistleblowing and dispute resolution, and privacy and confidentiality.

*THS 8206: Translating Literature for Interdisciplinary Scholarship*

In this course, students apply theories, frameworks and models of knowledge translation, team science, implementation science, and complexity science to analyze and synthesize scholarship from multiple disciplines for an interdisciplinary group of stakeholders. Focus is on the development of an evidence-based knowledge translation portfolio and corresponding translational products to support translation across the life cycle of a research project.

*Elective – Selected with academic advisor approval.*

*Comprehensive Exam between Semesters 5 and 6*

**Year 2, Summer Semester**

*THS 8961: Proposal Defense Preparation*

This course guides PhD students through the process of preparing and defending a dissertation research proposal by providing a framework for individual student work with their committee members. At the same time, students draw on each other as a community of scholars for support in developing and effectively communicating their research ideas, using the mentoring process, and giving/receiving feedback. This course is designed to explore and exploit the resources necessary so that a doctoral student may create a grounded and workable plan that will lead to a successful defense of the proposal.

**Year 3, Fall Semester**

Proposal Defense

*THS 8996: Dissertation Seminar I*

**Year 3, Spring Semester**

*THS 8997: Dissertation Seminar II*

**Year 3, Summer Semester**

*THS 8898: Dissertation Seminar III*

**As Needed**

**Year 4, Fall Semester**

Continuous Enrollment

**Year 4, Spring Semester**

Continuous Enrollment

**Year 4, Summer Semester**

Continuous Enrollment

**Year 5 and beyond**

THS 8992: Directed Study

### *Electives and Independent Studies*

The purpose of electives and independent study options is to enable the student to be best prepared to complete their dissertation research. Electives should be selected to help students acquire skills and knowledge specific to their study question. Independent studies provide the opportunity for students to work closely with faculty with whom they anticipate working as their dissertation chair or committee members. The plan of study for an independent study must be formally detailed on the independent study form and submitted to the program director.

#### *Electives*

Note about elective options, where to obtain info, when to start planning electives.

#### *Independent Study*

Applied activities play a critical role in the education of professionals as they explore and translate their formal education to research, teaching, program development, and leadership in the field. An independent study is an optimal way to receive graduate credit for a mentored project or fraction thereof. Students seeking this option are encouraged to discuss an independent study with their advisor and instructor/faculty member who can assist the student in realizing their individual goals and apply their growing knowledge in the field of translational health sciences. After working with your advisor to identify the faculty you are going to complete the Independent Study (IS) with, you will collaborate with your IS faculty to complete the proposal.

Students opting for this opportunity must present a proposal for review to the director of the program, provide evidence of instructor commitment, and produce deliverables similar to that of three graduate credits within the Department of Clinical Research and Leadership.

### **Comprehensive Examination**

#### *Overview of the comprehensive exams*

The comprehensive examination assesses the doctoral student's ability to integrate material from the first five semesters of coursework. An incomplete grade in any required course or elective makes a student ineligible to take the comprehensive examination; the only exception is if a student is in the process of completing an Independent Study as an elective and has received appropriate program director approval to proceed with their comps.

The comprehensive examination is administered between Semesters 5 and 6. It is composed of four (4) questions randomly selected from a larger pool of possible questions. One of the four questions will be a research methodology question.

The comprehensive examination is accessible during a defined 10-day period of time, which is communicated to students well in advance of the examination. Although there is a 10-day window of availability, the student has a **maximum of 7 days** to complete the four-question exam. Once the examination is started, access will close in exactly 7 days and the student can no longer access the examination. The questions are released one at a time through Blackboard. Access to each subsequent question is contingent upon submission of the answer to the previous question. Once a question is accessed, a response must be submitted within 24 hours. Responses to each question (limited to 1400-1500 words; not including references) should follow criteria for written communications outlined in latest edition of The Publication Manual of the American Psychological Association.

The comprehensive examinations will be graded on a Pass/No Pass basis. Grades will be released to students after Week 5 of Semester 6. A student earns an overall "Pass" for the comprehensive exam if at least three of the four exam questions are answered satisfactorily. **All students are required to pass the research methodology question.** A student who does not pass the examination is allowed one opportunity to retake the examination (see rubric below for clarification).

Comprehensive Exam Outcomes and Remediation Options

Total # of Questions Passed	Integrative Questions	Research Methodology	Outcome	Remediation
4 Questions Passed	3	1	Pass	None Required
3 Questions Passed	2	1	Pass	None Required
3 Questions Passed	3	0	No Pass	Retake Methodology Question Only
2 Questions Passed	1	1	No Pass	Retake 2 Integrative Questions
2 Questions Passed	2	0	No Pass	Retake Methodology Question Only
1 Question Passed	0	1	No Pass	Retake 2 Integrative Questions
1 Question Passed	1	0	No Pass	Retake 1 Integrative & 1
Methodology				
0 Question Passed	0	0	No Pass	Retake 3 Integrative & 1
Methodology				

Retake of the Comprehensive Examination

A student who does not earn a “Pass” for the comprehensive examination is permitted to retake the examination one time per the remediation criteria in the outline above.

Following a “No Pass,” the student will be assigned to a faculty member to discuss the process for identifying deficiencies in the student’s responses and preparing for the retake examination. The student should continue all coursework while preparing for the comprehensive retake examination.

The retake examination will follow a similar format as the initial comprehensive exam. In order to pass the retake examination, the student must cumulatively pass at least three of the four comprehensive examination questions (inclusive of successfully passed questions during the first attempt). Retake questions will be based on the original topic list, but students will be assigned **different** questions from those randomly assigned during the initial examination.

The retake examination will be administered during a specified 10-day window during Semester 6. The questions will be released one at a time in a similar fashion to the first examination window. The student is allotted 24 hours to complete each question and has a **maximum of one week; (7) days** to submit the responses once the exam is opened. The comprehensive examination, including the retake, must be completed by the end of Semester 6.

Failure of the Comprehensive Examination

If a student earns a “No Pass” on the retake comprehensive examination, he/she cannot progress further in the program. The student will be recommended for dismissal from the doctoral program.

If a student plagiarizes any part of the exam, the student will automatically receive a grade of “No Pass” and will not be permitted to retake the examination.

**Selecting the dissertation committee**

The process of developing the dissertation proposal begins with the formal selection of the chair, followed by selection of the committee members. The earliest at which a student may declare their chair is the end of the first year. All students should have declared their chair by the end of year 2. Once approval of the chair is obtained, students work with the chair to select and approve their committee members. Students should plan to have their committee approved by the end of year 2, if not sooner. After working with the chair and committee to develop the dissertation proposal, the student must submit a written proposal to the committee and also pass an oral defense of the proposal. On successful completion of the oral defense, the student becomes a doctoral candidate (See breakdown below).

Overview of Process for Identifying Dissertation CommitteeYear One (Fall – Semester 1, Spring – Semester 2, Summer – Semester- 3)

Advisor Meetings

- Identify mentors (Completed During Year One)
- Discuss potential chairs (Completed During Year One)
- Narrow research topic (Completed During Year One)

#### Year Two (Fall – Semester 4, Spring - Semester 5, Summer – Semester 6)

##### Confirming the Chair

- Obtain verbal agreement from chair (Completed during Semester 4 or 5)
- Submit form to Director of Doctoral Research requesting confirmation of chair (Completed during Semester 4 or 5)
- Obtain signed approval (Completed during Semester 4 or 5)
- Latest to declare chair (Completed by Semester 6)
- Earliest to defend proposal (Completed by Semester 6)

##### Confirming Committee Members

- Discuss potential members with chair – must be approved (Completed During Year Two)
- Obtain verbal agreement from members (Completed During Year Two)
- Submit form requesting Director of Doctoral Research confirm members (Completed During Year Two)
- Obtain signed approval (Completed During Year Two)

#### Selecting the Dissertation Chair, Dissertation Committee Members, and Dissertation Readers

The program is based on a model of mentorship and encourages students to identify potential faculty with whom they plan to collaborate on their research project when they are applying to the program. Students are encouraged to declare their chair as soon as possible, usually by the end of year 1. Students are encouraged to take electives with their chair and potential committee members in semesters 4 and 5.

With the assistance of their advisor and the Director of Doctoral Research, students will initiate the process of designating their dissertation chair. Students should declare their dissertation chair by the end of year one and no later than the end of year 2. The academic advisor may transition to serve as the committee chair or the student may select another faculty member for the role. When the dissertation chair has been identified and has agreed to serve in this capacity, the student informs the Director of Doctoral Research using the form entitled *Proposed Dissertation Member Approval* who reviews the CV and provides confirmation of the appointment of the dissertation chair to the student's committee. The form can be found on the [Student Resources](#) page of the program.

As soon as feasible following identification of the dissertation chair, the dissertation committee should be established. The dissertation committee consists of the dissertation chair and two to four committee members. It is recommended that one member of the committee (but not the chair) be from outside GW.

Committee members provide specific expertise and guidance regarding content, conceptual approach, study design methodologies, and analytic approaches. Students must consult with their dissertation committee chair in selecting committee members.

To establish the dissertation committee, the dissertation chair formally invites committee members via email. Once agreements have been secured, the student routes a *Proposed Dissertation Member Approval* form. The Director of Doctoral Research provides review of the CV and final approval for each member of the committee.

Prior to the dissertation defense, the student and dissertation chair collaborate to invite two dissertation readers to participate in the defense. These two additional examiners are selected on the basis of their interest and expertise in the area of the candidate's research and their ability to contribute to a high-quality examination process; they may serve to provide additional stakeholder voices to the examination. In general, readers will be from outside of the School of Medicine and Health Sciences and preferably outside of GW. Readers will generally

hold a doctoral degree but exceptions to this may be requested when appropriate for the dissertation topic. Readers participate in the doctoral dissertation defense and provide comments on the written dissertation to the candidate; readers do not vote on the acceptability of the written dissertation or the oral defense.

To invite readers to the dissertation defense, the dissertation chair should formally invite readers to participate in that role. Once agreements have been secured, the candidate routes the *Proposed Dissertation Member Approval* form. The Director of Doctoral Research provides review of the CV/resumé and provides final approval for each member of the readers.

### Roles of the Dissertation Chair, Committee Members, and Readers

The role of the dissertation chair is to oversee and guide:

- Securing agreement of all committee members and readers.
- Preparation of the dissertation proposal, including specifying of the research problem, the literature review, writing the translational study questions, selecting appropriate study design(s) and research methodology.
- Development of the research proposal structure and content.
- Preparation of the student for the proposal defense.
- Timely completion of the dissertation research.
- Preparation, content, and quality of the written dissertation.
- Preparation of the student for the dissertation defense process.
- Dissemination of the dissertation research.

The role of the dissertation committee member is to provide expertise to guide:

- Preparation of the dissertation proposal, including specifying of the research problem, the literature review, writing the translational study questions, selecting appropriate study design(s) and research methodology.
- Development of the research proposal structure and content.
- Preparation of the student for the proposal defense.
- Timely completion of the dissertation research.
- Preparation, content, and quality of the written dissertation.
- Preparation of the student for the dissertation defense process.
- Dissemination of the dissertation research.

The role of reader is to:

- Provide feedback on the quality, merit, and likely impact of the dissertation research on stakeholder groups.
- Provide perspective of those not directly involved in the conduct of the research.

### **Qualifications for the Dissertation Chair and Committee Members**

- Hold an earned doctorate (e.g., PhD, MD, JD, DPT, OTD, DrPH, DSc, EdD, etc.).
- Expertise that aligns with the student's topic area.
- Experience serving as a member of at least one dissertation committee or be mentored by a GW faculty member with experience as a dissertation chair/committee member (in the absence of prior experience).
- Maintain an active research agenda as characterized by evidence of recent (i.e., within the past year) empirically based, peer-reviewed grant submissions, publications, and presentations.

### **Additional Qualification for the Dissertation Committee Chair**

- Hold a GW regular (non-visiting), full-time or part-time faculty appointment (research faculty



appointments are acceptable).

- Emeritus and departing faculty may continue to serve as the dissertation chair, assuming the student has successfully defended their proposal.

#### **Qualifications for Dissertation Readers**

- Readers may be chosen based on their expertise or their valued input to the problem of the dissertation.
- Readers need not be a university professor if a more suitable professional is beneficial as part of the dissertation defense.
- Readers do not need to have an earned doctorate; an exception stating the rationale for selecting this person to act as reader is requested from the Director of Doctoral Research.
- Readers must have the professional background and experience relevant to effectively judge the quality of the candidate's research.

#### **Conflict of Interest**

- The Dissertation Chair, Committee Members, and Readers must assert that they do not have a relationship with the candidate that poses a potential conflict of interest.
- The *Proposed Dissertation Member Approval* form, the defense approval form, and the dissertation approval forms all require members to assert that they do not have conflict of interest, such as being a family member or close personal friend.
- Questions about whether a relationship poses a conflict of interest should be directed to the Director of Doctoral Research.

#### **Change in Dissertation Committee**

Once the dissertation committee is approved, the committee must be kept at its full complement throughout the dissertation process. In the event of a vacancy on the committee, an appropriate replacement must be made prior to any subsequent committee decisions.

To replace a dissertation committee member, the chair should formally invite the new committee member. Once an agreement to serve has been secured, the student routes the *Request for Change in Dissertation Member* form. The Director of Doctoral Research reviews the form and member's CV and provides final approval for the change. The form can be found on the [Student Resources](#) page of the program.

The decision to request a change in the dissertation chair should be carefully considered. Students should consult with the Director of Doctoral Research as soon as they consider changing chairs. The decision to change the chair should include consideration of the impact on the entire committee and possible delays to program completion. Although a change in the dissertation chair is sometimes unavoidable, it is best to try and resolve conflicts with the current chair first. If the decision is made to change the dissertation chair, the candidate routes the *Request for Change in Dissertation Chair* form. The form can be found on the [Student Resources](#) page of the program.

#### **Development and Defense of Dissertation Research Proposal**

The proposal serves at least three purposes:

- It allows the student to demonstrate that they understand the complexity and translational nature of the problem to be addressed and that they have a full and complete grasp of the related literature.
- It allows the student to demonstrate that they can design a relatively complex series of studies to address the primary aims of the study with sufficient detail that the committee is confident in the student's ability to then enact the research plan.
- It ensures the student, committee chair, and committee members agree about the framework of the proposed dissertation and roughly what the student will need to complete in order to be ultimately ready for dissertation defense.

The proposal should be prepared according to a recognized scholarly format. The format of the dissertation is ultimately at the discretion of the Dissertation Chair. Guidelines for the format of the Doctoral Dissertation in Translational Health Sciences (“the Guidelines”) are available on the program [website](#). The chair will usually provide additional guidelines for the proposal leading up to and as a result of the proposal defense. Oral defense is an important component of the process. The student should be able to demonstrate that they can clearly articulate the rationale for their study.

### Overview of the Dissertation Proposal Process

1. The student prepares Chapters 1 through 3 as the primary focus for committee review. Refer to the Guidelines for specific directions in preparing these Chapters.
2. The student works with their Dissertation Chair and committee members throughout the development of Chapters 1 to 3.
3. The Dissertation Chair determines when Chapters 1 through 3 of the proposal are ready for circulation to the committee for review. In general, students should provide the chapters to the committee members 3-5 weeks ahead of the proposal defense in order to allow sufficient time for review.
4. After each committee member reviews Chapters 1 through 3, the dissertation chair should poll the committee to gauge whether each member regards the written proposal as ready for defense.
5. The dissertation chair and student will complete the *Request for Defense* form and submit it to the Director of Doctoral Research for approval. The form can be found on the [Student Resources](#) page of the program.
6. After submission of the form, the student and dissertation chair may schedule the proposal defense.
7. The overall format of the proposal defense is at the discretion of the Dissertation Chair. In general, the student should give a brief oral presentation (about 10 minutes). The chair and committee members will ask the student questions that demonstrate mastery of the conceptual model, the translational nature of the study question, and about the research design.
8. The student may record the defense in order to review comments and notes for needed revisions.
9. The chair will document if revisions are needed to the proposal and the date by which the revisions will be received by all members of the committee.
10. On receipt of the completed revisions, or at time of proposal defense if no revisions are needed, the committee will sign the *Dissertation Approval* form. The form can be found on the [Student Resources](#) page of the program.

While the proposal is in the format of the first 3 chapters of the dissertation, approval of a proposal does not mean Chapters 1 through 3 are finished. Revisions should be anticipated throughout the dissertation process.

### Other Considerations

#### **Narrowing Down a Dissertation Topic and Research Questions**

In Year 1, students are strongly advised to focus on exploring research problems (rather than research topics or questions) of most interest. Students should work with their advisor, instructors, potential chair, and colleagues to examine health issues and problems that might lead to dissertation topics and to explore some more deeply through course assignments. Throughout the first year students will be introduced to concepts, situations, and outlets that will strengthen and narrow their areas of interest.

By the end of the first year (Semester 3), students should settle on a more focused area of interest, continue to gain considerable knowledge of the area as part of an ongoing dialogue with advisors, mentors, and their committee chair to identify important gaps that might be filled by dissertation research. Each gap will suggest one or more potential research questions which will be refined within year 2 (Semesters 4-5).

**Suitability of Research Questions.** Only a small portion of research questions will prove suitable for dissertation research. Through consultation with the dissertation chair, the feasibility and suitability of the questions will

be explored and finalized in Semester 6 when the student prepares their dissertation proposal.

**Using Secondary Data.** Secondary data may be available through any number of sources. Students should explore the appropriateness of using this type of data as part of their design and analysis in the dissertation. Students must consult with their advisors and dissertation chair regarding secondary data.

**Team Involvement on Dissertations.** Dissertation questions and sources of data may be embedded in a larger team project. Research is rarely an independent endeavor. Indeed, the dissertation committee is part of the team collaborating on the conduct of the research project. Almost all dissertations will involve collaboration with others. As such, it is very important for the dissertation chair to work with the student/candidate to establish the roles different individuals will take in the project and how those efforts will be appropriately acknowledged either as authors or as contributors within the written dissertation. The overall development of a research design, data collection/acquisition, analysis and interpretation of data are the responsibility of the student/candidate and are the measure of the candidate's ability to perform research as a doctorally prepared research professional.

**Completing Dissertation Research Activities.** Assistance with tasks related to completion of the dissertation like transcription services, technical assistance, and statistical coaching, may be required to adequately execute the dissertation project in a timely manner. These are all typical and permissible resources to utilize as part of the dissertation process. The dissertation chair, as the Principal Investigator of Record for the student's dissertation research, is responsible for ensuring that work contributing to the dissertation is reflective of the candidate's material involvement in the research activities.

**Ethical Responsibility for the Conduct of Dissertation Research.** The Dissertation Chair, and not the student/candidate, is responsible to the GW Institutional Review Board for the conduct of student/candidate research. Students/candidates should be aware that no part of the recruitment of study participants, data collection and/or acquisition of secondary data involving human subjects, or analysis of such data can occur until approval for the study has been obtained by the Office of Human Research in the form of a study protocol. **The candidate and dissertation committee chair may not submit a proposal to the GW IRB until after successful proposal defense.**

#### Dissertation Proposal Defense Preparation

All students must take THS 8961 Proposal Defense Preparation in Semester 6. The seminar provides guidance on the various steps of dissertation proposal preparation, dissertation research, and dissertation writing. The dissertation proposal is usually defended in Semester 7 or 8 as part of THS 8996 or THS 8997. It is the responsibility of the student, with assistance from the chair, to arrange for a suitable time for the chair, committee, and student to meet for the defense. If all parties cannot attend a face-to-face meeting (preferred), students can arrange for teleconference assistance.

#### Overview of Admission to Candidacy

Being granted candidacy is an important step in progress toward achieving a PhD in THS. Candidacy indicates that the student has completed most program requirements, achieved a level of expertise in a particular area, and described a collaborative plan for research and scholarship that has been approved by the dissertation committee.

#### **Requirements for Candidacy**

To qualify for candidacy, a student must satisfy the following requirements:

- Successfully complete all the required pre-candidacy coursework

- Be in good academic standing in the program
- Pass the written comprehensive examination (following Semester 5)
- Pass the proposal defense
- File the Dissertation Proposal Approval Form

**If Candidacy is Not Approved**

In the event that candidacy is not approved, the student should work with his/her advisor to determine if a remediation plan is appropriate.

**Master of Science in Health Sciences Eligibility**

Students who do not proceed past the pre-candidacy stage should discuss their eligibility for the [MSHS in Clinical and Translational Research](#) with the Program Director.

**CANDIDACY PHASE**

This portion of the handbook sets forth the general procedures for developing a successful dissertation. The overall goals of the dissertation phase are to:

- Encourage the student to integrate all of their doctoral study reading, thinking, and experiences in an original research and writing process that tackles a translational problem with a new perspective and approach.
- Build the student's intellectual and emotional stamina and prepare them for future intellectual work and contributions as a translational health care professional.
- Provide an opportunity to demonstrate capacity as an interdisciplinary and collaborative researcher.
- Provide a foundation for future research, publishing, presentations, and creative activities.
- Establish an important credential for university teaching and research appointments, consulting services, and/or practical leadership.

The major phases of dissertation work include:

- i. Developing the dissertation proposal (completed as a requirement of moving into doctoral candidacy),
- ii. Obtaining IRB approval to conduct the research,
- iii. Conducting the research and writing the dissertation, and
- iv. Defending the dissertation.

To move successfully through the dissertation process, the candidate must take responsibility to meet deadlines agreed upon with their dissertation committee, and deadlines set by the school for defense of the dissertation and graduation. The dissertation chair and program officials will make efforts to assist in the process but responsibility ultimately rests with the candidate.

**Time to Completion**

**Eight Year Limit:** The doctoral dissertation must be defended within eight years from the term of admission to the doctoral program. The first nine semesters constitute the initial three years meaning that five additional years are permissible. Exceptions to the eight-year limit are rarely given and only with compelling evidence that the student has made all practical efforts to complete within eight years.

Extensions require approval by the Director of Doctoral Research and the Doctoral Program Director. In the event the Director of Doctoral Research or the Doctoral Program Director is a member of the student's dissertation committee, the decision will be made by the Chair of the Department of Clinical Research and Leadership.

Students working on their dissertation research between Semesters 10-12 will use continuous enrolment as needed (i.e., up to three semesters). If a candidate has not successfully defended the dissertation by the end

of the Summer Semester of Year 4 (Semester 12), the candidate will be required to enroll in THS 8992: Directed Research starting Semester 13. This one credit course is required each semester until the dissertation is successfully defended or program time limits are reached, whichever comes first. Candidates will be charged the prevailing per credit rate and associated fees each semester of enrollment in THS 8992.

### Guidelines for the Dissertation

Dissertation guidelines are provided in a separate document called “PhD in THS Dissertation Guidelines” (aka, The Guidelines) available on the website. The student’s dissertation chair and other members of the committee may provide further guidance on the structure and the content of the dissertation.

The dissertation is written in good, formal English. Candidates should discuss editing needs with their dissertation chair. The dissertation chair and committee should not be expected to provide help with editorial formatting and grammatical errors. This is the responsibility of the candidate writing the dissertation.

The Guidelines provide details about the required formatting of all pages, including the preliminary pages, appendices, tables and figures. All dissertations must follow these Guidelines.

The Guidelines also provide details about how the student is to deposit their approved dissertation in the GW Himmelfarb repository (GW Research Commons). All students must deposit their approved dissertation to the repository within 6 weeks of final approval.

### Dissertation Defense Planning and Procedures

Readiness for dissertation defense rests with the dissertation chair in consultation with the candidate. In general, this means that the chair, in consultation with committee members, has determined the written portion of the dissertation is acceptable (even if changes will be requested after the defense).

At least 6 weeks prior to dissertation defense, the candidate should submit portions of the written dissertation to the Director of Doctoral Studies for review to ensure the format meets program requirements. The candidate should submit the Front Matter, Chapter 1, any tables and figures, and the Appendices. These will be reviewed and guidance on revising to follow department formatting requirements will be provided. It is the responsibility of the candidate to ensure all remaining portions of the dissertation follow these requirements.

Candidates should be sure to check with the program administrator for each semester’s deadlines for submitting materials and scheduling defenses. Defenses generally must be scheduled 6 weeks before the end of the semester if the candidate plans to graduate in the semester they defend. All necessary materials should be provided to the dissertation committee (members and readers) at least 30 calendar days prior to the scheduled defense. Doctoral candidates should avoid scheduling dissertation defenses during the last three weeks of December, from mid-March until the end of May, or in August.

The following actions are required prior to the defense:

1. Each dissertation committee member is to review the dissertation to ascertain that it is ready for defense.
2. Readers are identified, approved, and sent the written dissertation for review.
3. The dissertation chair, usually in collaboration with the candidate, is to arrange a date and time for the dissertation defense. The chair is to submit the *Request for Defense* form.
4. Submission of the request for defense documents to the Program Administrator must be made no less than 30 calendar days prior to the scheduled date of the defense.
5. The candidate should not make substantive changes to the dissertation once it has been provided to the committee members and readers but may make formatting changes and correct typographical errors.
6. On receipt of the Request for Defense form, the Program Administrator will review the candidate’s academic history and report any discrepancies to the candidate.
7. Following notification from the Program Administrator that the candidate may proceed, the candidate

will send the Program Administrator information regarding the date, time, place, and web conferencing details to the Program Administrator. These details should be received no later than 3 weeks prior to defense.

8. The dissertation chair will formally invite the dissertation committee members to the defense, as well as the readers. The letter will provide information about the date, time, location, web conferencing details, and expectations.
9. If a room is needed the candidate should contact the Program Administrator.
10. Following successful defense and completion of any requested revisions to the dissertation, the candidate is to submit notice that electronic version has successfully been posted to GW Research Commons to the Director of Doctoral Research.

### **Conducting the Dissertation Defense**

The dissertation defense is a formal proceeding conducted by the dissertation chair. The format of the defense is at the discretion of the chair but general guidance is provided to the chair by the Director of Doctoral Research at the time of the request to schedule the defense.

Defenses are open to the public who may attend in person or via videoconferencing. Family members may attend, but candidates should realize that the shortcomings and limitations of their work will be discussed.

After the student has defended their dissertation, they (along with any guests or spectators) are asked to leave the room or the videoconference while the committee considers the acceptability of the dissertation defense and the dissertation document.

The committee considers the quality of both the written dissertation and the oral defense of the dissertation in granting approval of the dissertation. Readers participate in the discussion regarding the quality of dissertation and defense but do not vote on the final outcome. The three types of decisions are: 1) Accept; 2) Conditional Accept; 3) Reject.

1. Accept: All aspects of the oral defense and the written dissertation are considered complete.
2. Conditional Accept: The oral defense is accepted but limited changes to the written material are required before acceptance.
3. Reject: Either the oral defense or the written material or both are considered unacceptable.

Refinements to the written dissertation are noted by the chair on the Dissertation Approval form at the time of the defense along with an indication of whether both committee members and dissertation chair, or only the chair, must approve the final version.

A student whose is unable to make the required revisions to the written dissertation in time to meet the deadlines for degree clearance may enroll in Continuous Enrollment (CE) in the subsequent semester.

When all revisions have been made to the satisfaction of the committee and/or chair the dissertation chair will complete and submit the Dissertation Approval form. The form can be found on the [Student Resources](#) page of the program.

### **An Unsuccessful Final Oral Examination**

Candidates are allowed one oral dissertation defense. If the candidate fails the defense, s/he is dismissed from the doctoral program.

## **GRADUATION PHASE**

### **Final Tasks Related to the Dissertation**

- After all the revisions have been made to the written dissertation, the candidate will submit one final

copy to the dissertation chair and/or committee as indicated on the *Dissertation Approval* form. After the dissertation chair determines that all revisions required by the committee have been made, the chair and/or committee sign the *Dissertation Approval* form. The candidate may now submit the dissertation electronically for archiving. The form can be found on the [Student Resources](#) page of the program.

- All graduates are required to submit an electronic version of their approved dissertation to the GW Himmelfarb Library [Health Sciences Research Commons](#) (HSRC) repository. The repository will provide graduates with a permanent URL, allows the work to be Google searchable, and allows capture of usage metrics. To archive a copy of the dissertation in HSRC, graduates submit a copy of the dissertation and the HSRC Non-Exclusive Distribution License to the Metadata and Scholarly Publishing Librarian, at [hsrc@gwu.edu](mailto:hsrc@gwu.edu)
  - Unless otherwise stated by the committee at time of dissertation defense, graduates have 30 calendar days to submit their dissertations and supporting documents after receiving signed approval from the chair. Not meeting these deadlines may result in graduation being delayed to another semester.
  - Dissertations are deposited in: Health Sciences Research Commons > School of Medicine and Health Sciences > Clinical Research and Leadership > Doctor of Philosophy in Translational Health Sciences Dissertations
  - [https://hsrc.himmelfarb.gwu.edu/smhs\\_crl\\_dissertations/](https://hsrc.himmelfarb.gwu.edu/smhs_crl_dissertations/)
- Graduates must provide evidence that they have closed the IRB related to their study to the program administrator.
  - The graduate must go to <http://humanresearch.gwu.edu/> and complete the [Study Closure](#) form to terminate their research and submit to the Principal Investigator (PI) (i.e., dissertation chair) for signature. It is the graduate's responsibility to submit the study closure form to the IRB Office.
  - Closure forms are not required for exempt studies. In this case, provide evidence of the exempt status to the Program Administrator.

### Application for Graduation

- Candidates may apply for graduation via GWeb as soon as they have scheduled their dissertation defense but no later than:
  - Spring = 3<sup>rd</sup> week of March (March 15)
  - Summer = 3<sup>rd</sup> week of July (July 15)
  - Fall = 3<sup>rd</sup> week of November (November 15)
- To ensure graduation in the semester in which a graduate defends, the defense should be scheduled about 6 weeks prior to the last day of class of that semester. This ensures time to revise the written dissertation, gain final approval, and deposit the approved dissertation in the digital repository. Students will find the online application to graduate form in GWeb. Instructions: <https://registrar.gwu.edu/online-graduation-application-instructions>
- Dates of the last day of class for each semester can be found at: <https://www.gwu.edu/academic-calendar>
- The graduate will need to review the graduation checklist with the Program Administrator to ensure all components have been completed. These include:
  - Dissertation deposited in Health Sciences Research Commons = no later than 2 weeks before the last day of class for the semester
  - Completion of all course work = no later than 1 week before the last day of class of the semester
  - Completion of all other documentation = no later than 1 week before the last day of class of the semester
- Once a graduate has submitted their graduation application, they will begin receiving communications

from the Health Sciences Dean's Office regarding all Commencement and graduation celebration matters (tickets, parking, obtaining regalia, etc.) if they indicated on the graduation application that they plan to attend Commencement.

- [Diplomas](#) are ordered by Graduation Services after they have been awarded, but students are first cleared to graduate by the School. Clearance is verification that the student has completed all the necessary requirements to be awarded the degree. Clearance submissions begin on or around the conferral date for the semester and can continue for several weeks. Diploma delivery is typically 6-8 weeks after awarding if mailed within the US, or 8-10 weeks for international mailing.
  - [Degree Conferral Dates:](#)
    - Spring = Date of Commencement Ceremony
    - Summer = August 31
    - Fall = January 8
- If the graduate is not able to complete all required activities in the semester in which they applied to graduate, they will need to re-apply in a later semester. Students must be enrolled in the semester in which they are applying to graduate.

#### Graduation Checklist

- Submission of signed and completed dissertation approval form (Buff and Blue form)
- Submission of dissertation to Health Sciences Research Commons
- Evidence of study closure (or evidence that study was designated as exempt)
- Completion of all coursework



## **MILESTONES**

The necessary milestones for successful progress within the program if the pre-candidacy, candidacy, and graduation phases of the program are described below. There are (7) pre-candidacy milestones, (5) candidacy milestones, and (3) graduation milestones. Many of the milestones have required forms that must be filed with the program. Consult the [Forms](#) section of this handbook for more details.

- A. **Pre-Candidacy Phase** - For coursework within the PhD in THS program, students complete all 18 units (3 credits per unit = 54 credits total), the Comprehensive Exam, and dissertation proposal defense, in semesters 1 – 9 (3 years). For course details see [Pre-Candidacy Course Sequence](#).

*Note: For students who take a leave of absence (LOA) during the pre-candidacy phase, the length of the LOA does not count towards the three years of this phase.*

- i. Students must successfully pass and complete 18 units of coursework, as outlined in [Course Grading and Advancement](#). Failure to do so will prevent the student from progressing forward with their Comprehensive Exam, proposal defense, or the Candidacy portion of their program of study.
  - ii. Students must successfully pass their Comprehensive Exams, as outlined in the [Comprehensive Examination](#) section of this handbook. Failure to do so will prevent the student from progressing forward in the program.
  - iii. Students must successfully pass their Dissertation Proposal Defense, as outlined in the [Overview of Dissertation Proposal Process](#) section of this handbook. Failure to do so will prevent the student from progressing forward in the program.
  - iv. Students are advised to focus on exploring research problems (rather than specific research topics) of most interest during semesters 1-3 (first year). (See [Narrowing Down a Dissertation Topic and Research Questions](#))
  - v. Students should settle on a more focused area of interest, continue to gain considerable knowledge of the area as part of an ongoing dialogue with advisors, mentors, and their committee chair to identify important gaps that might be filled by dissertation research by the end of semester 3 (end of year 1). Each gap will suggest one or more potential research questions which will be refined within semesters 4, 5, & 6 (year 2). (See [Narrowing Down a Dissertation Topic and Research Questions](#))
  - vi. Students may declare their dissertation committee chair beginning semester 4 (start of year 2). All students should have declared their chair no later than the end of semester 6 (end of year 2). (See [Dissertation Committee, Proposal Development, and Defense](#))
  - vii. Students should plan to have each of their dissertation committee members approved by the end of semester 6 (end of year 2). (See [Overview of Process for Identifying Dissertation Committee](#))
- B. **Candidacy** – In this phase of the PhD in THS program, candidates are required to complete the following milestones of their dissertation research (See [Candidacy](#) for additional details):
- i. Obtain IRB approval to conduct the research – Typically completed during semesters 7 or 8 of their studies and within 1-2 months of proposal defense.
  - ii. Conduct the research and write the dissertation – drafting of the chapters begins in semester 6 but the bulk of the dissertation writing begins after proposal defense and continues until successful approval of the dissertation.
  - iii. Successfully complete the oral dissertation defense – Typically completed after semester 9 (year 4). Although deciding when the candidate is ready to defend is the role of the dissertation committee, in general, candidates should expect to spend at least 4 semesters conducting their

- research and defending their dissertation.
- iv. Engage dissertation readers – in preparation for the proposal defense, candidates should engage 1-2 dissertation readers. Readers are typically engaged in the semester the candidate plans to defend.
  - v. Submit an approved written dissertation – Following the dissertation defense, candidates will most likely need to make some revisions to the written dissertation. In general, revisions
- C. **Graduation** – In this phase of the PhD in THS program, graduates are required to complete the following milestones in order to graduate:
- i. Deposit an approved copy of the dissertation proposal to the [Himmelfarb Library Research Commons \(HLRC\)](#) – graduates must receive dissertation chair approval of the written dissertation prior to depositing it with HLRC. The dissertation should be deposited prior to graduation.
  - ii. Close or revise IRB study status (See [Final Tasks Related to the Dissertation](#)) – Graduates should close their dissertation study and appropriately destroy study records per their approved protocol. If the graduate, chair and committee plan to continue working with the data after graduation, appropriate modifications to the study personnel must be made. IRB changes must be submitted prior to graduation. Exempt studies do not need to be closed.
  - iii. File intent to graduate form – graduates must file the intent to graduate for with the university in the semester in which they intend to graduate. Due dates for filing this form will often occur before the dissertation defense has occurred. Due dates for each semester can be found [Online Graduation Application Instructions](#) website.



**Figure 1: Successful Progress within the PhD in Translational Health Sciences Program**

**Duration:** Students must defend their dissertations within eight years from the term of admission to the doctoral program. The first nine semesters constitute the initial three years of coursework, comprehensive exams, and dissertation preparation and research; therefore, five additional years are permissible for completion. Exceptions to the eight-year limit are rarely given and only with compelling evidence that the student has made all practical efforts to complete within eight years.

Students working on their dissertation research between Semesters 10-12 will use continuous enrollment as needed (up to three semesters). If a candidate has not successfully defended the dissertation by the end of the Semester 12 (Summer Semester of Year 4), the candidate will be required to enroll in THS 8992: Directed Research starting Semester 13. This one credit course is required each semester until the dissertation is successfully defended or program time limits are reached, whichever comes first. Candidates will be charged the prevailing per credit rate and associated fees each semester of enrollment in THS 8992. See [Time to Completion](#) for additional detailed information.

In the event a student fails to meet one or more of the PhD program milestones, the Directors will work with the student's advisor or dissertation chair (depending on program phase) and the PhD Academic Progress Committee (APC) to determine the appropriate action item(s). In the case that the advisor/chair is one of the Directors, the Department Chair shall serve on the committee. Action item(s) may range from a remediation plan up to dismissal from the program. In the event that the APC determines that the student should be offered an opportunity for remediation, a documented learning plan will outline specific steps and a timeline for the completion of each. The student will be notified in writing of the expectations and will be provided a timeline. This notification will include a clear statement that failure to adhere to the plan will place the student at risk of

immediate dismissal from the program.

More information on Dismissal and Dismissal Appeal may be found in the Health Sciences Bulletin under the Academic Standing section: <http://bulletin.gwu.edu/medicine-health-sciences/#regulationstext>

**FORMS**

All forms are routed using AdobeSign. Please contact the Director of Doctoral Research by email to initiate the form. In the email, provide the information as specified below for the form you are requesting.

	Form	Purpose	Requested by	Signed by	Provide DoDR with this information: (AdobeSign unless noted)
<b>Pre-Candidacy Phase – Didactic Semesters</b>					
PCd1					
<b>Pre-Candidacy Phase – Proposal Semesters</b>					
PCp1	Designation of Doctoral Dissertation Chair	Select a chair	Student	Student Chair DoDR	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>o Student name &amp; email</li> <li>o Proposal topic</li> <li>o Chair name &amp; email</li> </ul>
PCp2	Designation of Dissertation Committee	Add committee members	Student	Student Chair Committee member DoDR	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>o Committee member name &amp; email</li> <li>o Separate request for each committee member</li> </ul>
PCp3	Change in Doctoral Dissertation Committee Member	Remove & replace committee members	Student	Student Chair Committee members DoDR	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>o Committee member name &amp; email (retiring)</li> <li>o Committee member name &amp; email (new)</li> </ul>
PCp4	Change in Doctoral Dissertation Chair	Remove committee chair	Student	Student Outgoing chair Incoming Chair Department chair DoDR	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>o Committee Chair name &amp; email (retiring)</li> <li>o Committee Chair name &amp; email (new)</li> </ul>
PCp5	Request for Dissertation Proposal Defense	Schedule proposal defense	Student	Student Chair Committee members DoDR	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>o Full proposal title</li> <li>o Date and time of proposal defense</li> </ul>
PCp6	Outcome of Written Dissertation Proposal and Oral Examination	Results of proposal defense and modifications needed	Chair	Chair Committee members DoDR	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>o DoDR will send to chair on day on proposal defense</li> </ul>
PCp7	Final Approval of Requested Proposal Revisions	Approval of any requested revisions	Student	Chair Committee members DoDR	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>o Request form be initiated</li> </ul>
<b>Candidacy Phase</b>					
CP1	Request for Dissertation Defense	Schedule dissertation defense	Student	Student Chair Committee members DoDR	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>o Full dissertation title</li> <li>o Date and time of dissertation defense</li> </ul>
CP2	Designation of Dissertation Readers	Invite readers to participate in dissertation defense	Student	Student Chair Committee members DoDR	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>o Reader name &amp; email</li> <li>o Separate request for each reader</li> </ul>
CP3	Outcome of Written Dissertation and Oral Examination	Results of dissertation defense and modifications needed	Chair	Chair Committee members DoDR	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>o DoDR will send to chair on day on dissertation defense</li> </ul>
CP4	Final Approval of Requested Dissertation Revisions	Approval of any requested revisions	Student	Chair Committee members DoDR	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>o Request form be initiated</li> </ul>
<b>Preparing for Graduation</b>					
PG1	Request to Graduate	Student requests to graduate from the program	Student	Student	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>o GW Banner</li> </ul>
PG2	Graduation Checklist	Assures student has met all requirements for graduation	Student	Program manager Samar?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>o Contact Program Director</li> </ul>

## **ADDITIONAL INFORMATION**

### **Registration Policy**

#### **Maintaining Continuous Registration**

As per the guidelines provided in the [SMHS Bulletin](#), all PhD candidates are required to maintain continuous registration from their first semester of enrollment through successful defense of their dissertation. Maintaining continuous registration means that the student is enrolled in at least one class every Fall and Spring semester until graduation. Summer is generally considered an optional term, but due to the PhD program schedule it is required until the dissertation phase is reached. The course can be independent research, internships for which credit is granted, and dissertation research. Based on the cohort-nature of the PhD program of study, students will be required to register for a fixed number of courses in the Fall, Spring, and Summer semesters through the pre-candidacy phase. Once a student transitions into candidacy, Summer becomes an optional term. There is a \$35 registration fee for each semester.

Failure to maintain continuous registration is considered breaking enrollment. If a student breaks enrollment, they will have to reapply for admission to resume their studies. Readmission is not guaranteed. Students who break enrollment and must reapply for admission are subject to the current criteria, regulations, curricula, and tuition rate at the time of readmission.

Under very specific circumstances, continuous registration may be maintained by registering for Continuous Enrollment (CE) or a Leave of Absence (LOA). Each is briefly described below.

#### **Continuous Enrollment (CE)**

Doctoral candidates who are unable to defend in the semester in which the dissertation defense materials are filed—usually because they filed too late in the semester— may register for Continuous Enrollment (CE) in the immediately following semester and defend in that semester. If a delay moves the student into Year 5, they must register for Directed Study (THS 8992).

Students who want to enroll in CE for this reason must have been enrolled in the correct number of dissertation credits during the semester in which the dissertation defense materials were filed. Students working on their dissertation research between Semesters 10-12 will use CE as needed (i.e., up to three semesters). The student must consult with their advisor regarding registration in the semester prior to when they wish to use CE.

#### **Leave of Absence (LOA)**

A doctoral candidate who, for compelling reasons, is temporarily unable to continue his or her program of study may request a Leave of Absence (LOA). If the request is approved, the student will be placed on a LOA in the approved semester. The LOA status is for a full Academic Year (note: LOAs not required for Summer terms), and this time counts towards the eight (8) year time limit. Students who request a one-year leave of absence must submit a Leave of Absence/Continuous Enrollment Registration form for each of the two semesters. After reaching the limit, doctoral students seeking a LOA in additional semesters must petition the Senior Associate Dean for Health Sciences for approval. Students should consult with their advisor regarding registration in the semester prior to when they wish to use a LOA.

**Note: during a LOA, faculty members are not to help students with the dissertation and students will not have access to many of the University's resources. If the student does not enroll each semester and has not been granted a LOA or CE, they will break enrollment and need to discuss their options for readmission with the Program Director. Students should monitor their GW email periodically while away from the program to not miss important registration or account notifications.**

#### **Deceleration**

The doctoral program is cohort-based. Upon entry into the program, students are expected to follow the recommended program of study through Year 2 (Semester 1 to Semester 6). Content and assignments in Year

1 and 2 courses are highly integrated so deceleration of any type, including individual course drops or withdrawals, is not feasible. Students who are having difficulty maintaining a full workload should speak to their advisor about other options (see [Leave of Absence](#)).

### **Registration Procedures**

Students will work with the PhD program administrator to register for courses each semester. The administrator will contact students individually during the course registration period to facilitate enrollment.

### **Course Drops and Withdrawals**

PhD students in the pre-candidacy phase should speak to their academic advisor before dropping or withdrawing from a course (see Deceleration, above).

#### *Drop vs. withdraw*

A dropped course is removed from the student's record and typically incurs a refund. A withdraw results in a grade of W and does not include a refund. The Health Sciences drop/refund schedule is available through Health Sciences [Student Services](#) and is updated each semester.

After the add/drop period, PhD students need approval from their faculty advisor, Department Chair, and Health Sciences Dean's Office for course drops. Both a Course Drop/Withdraw Petition and a Registration Transaction Form must be submitted for review. If the student is requesting to drop all courses, a request for a LOA should be included to maintain enrollment.

Withdraw requests prior to the deadline only require a Registration Transaction Form, but students should consult with their advisor prior to submitting the request. Requests to withdraw after the deadline require the same petition process as dropping a course after the deadline.

Failure to attend classes or unofficial notification to the instructor does not constitute dropping a course and may result in a transcript notation of Z (unauthorized withdrawal) or a failing grade. Courses can be dropped only through the add/drop procedure described above.

### **Course Grading and Advancement**

#### **Grading Policy**

The following grading system is used for graduate students: A, Excellent; B, Good; C, Satisfactory; F, Fail; other grades that may be assigned are A-, B+, B-, C+. Symbols that may appear include AU, Audit; I, Incomplete; IPG, In Progress; W, Authorized Withdrawal; Z, Unauthorized Withdrawal; CR, Credit; NC, No Credit.

#### **Unauthorized Withdrawal**

The symbol of Z is assigned when students are registered for a course that they have not attended or have attended only briefly, and in which they have completed no graded work. At the end of the academic year, students' records are reviewed; if there is more than one Z per semester, a student's record will be encumbered until released by the student's advising office. The symbol of Z is not a grade but an administrative notation.

Except for courses that specifically state that repetition for credit is permitted, a candidate for a degree at GW may not repeat a course in which a grade of C for graduate students or better was received, unless required to do so by the department concerned. A Registration Transaction Form must be submitted to the Health Sciences Student Services for processing, accompanied with a written statement by the Program Director authorizing the repeat registration.

#### **Incompletes**

The symbol I (Incomplete) indicates that a satisfactory explanation has been given to the instructor for the student's inability to complete the required work of the course during the semester of enrollment. At the option of the instructor, the symbol I may be recorded if a student, for reasons beyond the student's control, is unable to complete the work of the course, and if the instructor is informed of, and approves, such reasons

before the date when grades must be reported. This symbol may be used only if the student's prior performance and class attendance in the course have been satisfactory. Any failure to complete the work of a course that is not satisfactorily explained to the instructor before the date when grades must be turned in will be graded *F*, Failure. If acceptable reasons are later presented to the instructor, that instructor may initiate an appropriate grade change. The work must be completed within the designated time period agreed upon by the instructor, student, and school. Incomplete work must be made up by a date agreed upon by the instructor and the student but no later than the last day of the examination period for the semester immediately following the semester or summer session in which the notation of *I* is assigned. An extension of one additional semester can be requested by the student and may be approved by the Program Director.

Students who are granted an Incomplete must work with their instructor to develop a learning contract. This document outlines the work to be completed, due dates, and includes acknowledgement by the student and instructor that failure to complete work by the stated due dates will result in failure of the assignment(s).

When work for the course is completed, the instructor will submit a grade change form to the Office of the Registrar. The final grade will replace the symbol of *I*. If work for the course is not completed within the designated time, the grade will be converted automatically to a grade of *F*, Failure, 0 quality points, and the grade-point average and academic standing recalculated (see the [University Bulletin](#)).

### **The Grade-Point Average**

Scholarship is computed in terms of the grade-point average, obtained by dividing the number of quality points by the number of credits for which the student has registered, both based on his or her record in this university. The grade-point average is computed as follows: *A*, 4.0; *A-*, 3.7; *B+*, 3.3; *B*, 3.0; *B-*, 2.7; *C+*, 2.3; *C*, 2.0; *F*, 0.0 for each credit hour for which the student has registered as a degree-seeking student. Grades of *C-*, *D+*, *D*, and *D-* are not used for doctoral students. In the case of a student who is allowed to repeat a course, the first grade received remains on the student's record and is included in the grade-point average. Courses marked *AU*, *CR*, *I*, *IPG*, *P*, *NP*, *R*, *W*, or *Z* are not considered in determining the average, except that courses marked *I* will be considered when a final grade is recorded. With the exception of Consortium courses, grades in courses taken at other institutions are not considered in computing the grade-point average.

**Dismissal:** A doctoral student who has received two or more grades below "B" (3.0) may be recommended for dismissal. Additional conditions for dismissal and the full policy may be found in the Regulations section of the SMHS [Bulletin](#).

### **Program Time Limit**

Candidates in the PhD program are expected to complete their coursework, write, and defend their doctoral dissertation within eight years from the time of admission to the doctoral program. If a candidate finds that he/she cannot complete the degree within the allotted time period, a request for an extension of no more than one year at a time must be made in writing with the Program Director and then submitted to the Department Chair and the Senior Associate Dean for Health Sciences. Exceptions to the eight year limit are rarely given and only with convincing evidence that the student has made all practical efforts to complete the doctoral program within eight years. The candidate can expect to hear directly from the department with decisions regarding request for assignment of a new time limit.

### *Masters of Science in Health Sciences Candidacy*

Students who do not successfully defend their dissertation within the allotted eight-year time frame and are not granted an extension should discuss their eligibility for the [MSHS in Clinical and Translational Research](#) with the Program Director.

### **Academic Integrity**

GW SMHS faculty and students have the joint responsibility for maintaining the academic integrity and guaranteeing the high standard of conduct of the institution. An ethical code is based upon the support of both

faculty and students who must jointly accept the responsibility to live honorably and to take action when necessary to safeguard the academic integrity of this University.

Students enrolled in doctoral programs in the School of Medicine and Health Sciences assume an obligation to conduct themselves in a manner appropriate to The George Washington University's mission as an institution of higher education and in accordance to [the Code of Academic Integrity](#). A student is obligated to refrain from acts which he or she knows, or under the circumstances has reason to know, impair the academic integrity of the University. Violations of academic integrity include, but are not limited to: cheating; fabrication; plagiarism; knowingly furnishing forged or false information to any agent of the University for inclusion in an academic record; academic dishonesty; violation of the rights and welfare of animal or human subjects in research; and misconduct as a member of either School or University committees or recognized groups or organizations.

All members of the GW community are responsible for immediately informing the instructor, Department Chair, the Office of Academic Integrity, and/or the Academic Integrity Council of any suspected violations of its Code of Academic Integrity. The Academic Integrity Council, composed of four students and two faculty members, is responsible for implementing its Code of Academic Integrity according to the procedures set forth therein. This includes formal hearings of suspected violations. Students and faculty should become familiar with the Code of Academic Integrity, copies of which are provided in student and faculty publications and materials, posted on the GW website, and can be obtained at the Office of Academic Integrity.

#### **Student Appeals Process**

PhD candidates have the right to appeal any University decision made regarding their academic record. All appeals follow the same informal and formal attempts as resolution. Grade appeals include an additional aspect of the formal process, which is specified in the Regulations section of the [SMHS Bulletin](#) called *Appeal Procedures for Cases of Alleged Improper Academic Evaluation*.

#### **Conflict of Interest (COI)**

COI exists when the faculty member has personal financial interest in the research on which the student is working (either as part of lab work or as part of the dissertation) and from which the faculty member stands to gain financially.

Each faculty member serving as a mentor or thesis or dissertation advisor to a graduate student is responsible for disclosing in advance any COI that might in any way be pertinent to the research conducted by the student. In doing so, the faculty member should use criteria as outlined in Agreement of Expectations form, regardless of whether the company/entity is sponsoring research at the University.

All individuals serving as a dissertation chair, committee member, or reader will be asked to certify that they do not have a COI at the time they are appointed to the committee. However, since COI can arise at any time, it is the responsibility of the chair, committee member, or reader, to notify the Director of Doctoral Research whenever new COI arises. The Director of Doctoral Research will review the COI and determine the extent of potential harm to the doctoral student. If the harm is minimal, this will be noted on the Proposed Dissertation Member Approval form, Dissertation Proposal Approval form, or Dissertation Approval form, whichever is appropriate. If the COI is perceived to have the potential to harm the graduate student, the Director of Doctoral Research will not sign the form and will notify the Chair of the Department of Clinical Research and Leadership. The Chair of CRL is responsible for determining the solution. If the Director of Doctoral Research has COI, the CRL Department Chair will sign the forms. If the Department Chair of CRL has COI, the Sr. Associate Dean for Health Sciences will be notified and responsible for determining the solution.

#### **Mistreatment of Health Sciences Students**

The School of Medicine and Health Sciences is committed to maintaining a positive environment for study and training, in which individuals are judged solely on relevant factors such as ability and performance, and can

pursue their educational and professional activities in an atmosphere that is humane, respectful, and safe. The [Code of Conduct in the Learning Environment](#) establishes the expectations of faculty, residents, students, other health professionals, and staff in the learning environment. If a student believes he/she has been mistreated he/she has two options to address that mistreatment, consultation and formal complaint. Both procedures are outlined in the [Mistreatment Policy and Procedures](#). Students may choose from several resources for consultation including faculty and the designated student Ombudsperson. The Health Sciences Student Ombudsperson is Patrick Corr. He may be contacted via email ([pcorr@gwu.edu](mailto:pcorr@gwu.edu)) or phone (571-553-0329).

### **Student Accounts and Financing a Graduate Education**

Health Sciences admission decisions are made without regard to financial need. Descriptions of available financial assistance for the Department of Clinical Research and Leadership are available on the Department website ([CRL Tuition and Financial Aid](#)) and Health Sciences' [Tuition and Loans](#) webpage. An additional source of aid is available at the GW Office of Graduate Student Assistantships and Fellowships website (<http://www.gwu.edu/~fellows/>).

**NOTE: Please review the [eligibility factors](#) for details on financial aid eligibility. Students following the program of study will be considered full-time students from Semester 1 - 5, and half-time students in Semester 6. Students will be below half-time status starting Semester 7. Please contact [Office of Student Financial Assistance](#) directly for specific information about financial aid eligibility.**

Students utilizing federal financial aid must also be aware of [Satisfactory Academic Progress \(SAP\) regulations](#) for graduate students. These are minimum academic standards that must be met in order to receive federal financial assistance.

### **Billing**

The PhD in Translational Health Sciences is a set-tuition program. The tuition is divided over nine semesters:

Semesters 1 - 5: Students will be charged approximately 16 percent of the total program tuition each semester (example: if total tuition is \$70,000, students will be charged \$11,200 each semester for the first five semesters)

Semesters 6 - 9: Students will be charged approximately 4 percent of the total program tuition each semester (example: if total tuition is \$70,000, students will be charged \$2,800 each semester for four semesters)

### *Directed Study (THS 8992)*

If a student has not successfully defended the dissertation by the end of the Summer Semester of Year 4 (Semester 12), the student must enroll in **THS 8992 Directed Research** starting Semester 13. This one credit course is required each semester until the dissertation is successfully defended or program time limits are reached, whichever comes first. Students will be charged the prevailing health sciences graduate per credit rate and associated fees, as publicized on the [Health Sciences website](#), each semester of enrollment in THS 8992.

The George Washington University bills by semester. Statements are available approximately 4-6 weeks prior to the start of the Fall and Spring semesters and approximately 3-4 weeks prior to the Summer semester. An email notification is sent when the bill is ready to view. GW does not mail paper statements; all billing is done electronically through the [Student Accounts eBill system](#).

Students always have access to their [eBill](#) and Student Account status through [GWeb](#). Students are strongly encouraged to check their Student Account regularly to ensure that the account is in good standing.

Students can add Authorized Users (e.g., parent, relative, spouse) so they may also review account activity and/or make online payments.

**Due Dates:** Payment for each term is due on the first day of the semester or upon registration for any courses added after the first day. If an outstanding balance remains after the start of the semester, a monthly statement



including late payment fees and finance charges will be sent. This statement will have a new due date. Please remit payment by this date to avoid additional late payment fees and finance charges. Students are not dropped from classes for non-payment.

**Late Payment:** Failure to meet payment deadlines results in an administrative hold, late fees, and finance charges. The administrative hold will remain on the account until the balance is paid in full. It is the student's responsibility to ensure that payment arrangements are made in a timely manner.

**Financial Hold:** A financial hold can be placed on a student's account for a variety of reasons. The Student Accounts Office applies financial holds for outstanding balances, returned checks, and invalid addresses. It is the student's responsibility to monitor their account for holds. Financial holds may prevent a student from enrolling in courses until resolved.

### **Monthly Payment Plans**

The university has partnered with ECSI to offer an interest-free monthly payment plan available to all students. Specific information regarding these payment plans may be found online through the [Office of Student Financial Assistance](#).

### **Student Health Insurance**

GW offers a voluntary comprehensive health insurance through Aetna Health (more information can be found in the GW [Colonial Health](#) website). In accordance with the Affordable Care Act, many benefits that are offered include:

- An unlimited lifetime maximum benefit
- Prescription benefit coverage
- Preventative services covered at 100% (at preferred providers)
- Contraception covered 100% (at preferred providers)

**Note:** Students may opt out of GW's insurance plan through any private plan that [meets University criteria for coverage](#).

### **Tuition Awards and Scholarships**

GW SMHS offers limited tuition award and scholarship assistance for students in Health Sciences. These resources come from a variety of different endowed and restricted scholarship funds as well as through research or contracted training grants. To qualify, an applicant must be a U.S. citizen or permanent resident, be enrolled full-time in an approved program of study, and demonstrate exceptional potential for success in their program as evidenced by their post-secondary academic achievement, professional experiences, and leadership in the community. No additional scholarship application is required for consideration.

Tuition awards and scholarships are credited to the student's account at the beginning of each semester after the student has registered for the required credits. These awards cover the cost of tuition for coursework that is credited towards the student's degree program, up to the total amount of the award. Any part of the tuition award that is not used within the academic term stated reverts back to the department and cannot be converted to cash.

The student has full responsibility, unless the award letter states otherwise, for covering the costs of the following charges upon registration: registration fee, Student Association fee, tuition charges above the tuition award, late registration fees, special course-related fees, and the health insurance fee. The student will also be liable for any payment due and charges for courses that are (1) not on the student's program of study, or (2) not taken for credit. Consortium courses are allowed if the particular course is not offered at GW and if the consortium course is included in the student's official program of study document.

**Award Termination:** All or part of a tuition award or scholarship may be terminated at any time if the conditions

of the award as described in the award letter are not met or if poor academic performance warrants it. This also includes course registration situations in which a student drops a course once the semester has begun and does not replace it with another approved course carrying the same number of credit hours. In this case, the tuition award will be withdrawn and the student will be liable for any payment due. In some cases, the entire award is withdrawn. The George Washington University reserves the right to terminate a tuition award or scholarship immediately and without prior notice if, in the judgment of the Department Chair or awarding department and in concurrence of the Senior Associate Dean for Health Sciences, such action is warranted.

**Tax Implications:** It is the responsibility of the student to understand the federal and state income tax implications of receiving a tuition award or scholarship. The University has no tax withholding or reporting requirements related to the tuition component of a tuition award or scholarship. The Tax Department's website (<http://taxdepartment.gwu.edu>) provides general information to assist students in determining tax liability and reporting obligations. Because tax liability depends on a student's particular circumstances, students are advised to contact a personal tax advisor or the IRS with any questions or concerns

**Student Loan Implications:** It is the responsibility of the student to understand the student loan implications of receiving a tuition award or scholarship. If the student has applied to borrow any sum, and have financial awards, then an adjustment may be made to the loan amount. It is recommended that the student consult with a representative from the Office of Student Financial Assistance (OSFA) for additional information.

The OSFA is located in the Student Services Hub (Marvin Center, ground floor), 202-994-6620, [finaid@gwu.edu](mailto:finaid@gwu.edu), <http://financialaid.gwu.edu>.

#### **Important Information Regarding Federal Student Loan Eligibility**

Federal regulations require students to maintain good academic standing and make [Satisfactory Academic Progress \(SAP\)](#) in order to remain eligible to receive federal student loans. The federal standard for *making satisfactory academic progress* is measured three ways: cumulative GPA, Percentage of Credits Earned (PACE), and maximum time frame. For details regarding any of these policies and for evaluation of SAP, visit the [Office of Student Financial Assistance](#).

#### **Full-Time/Half-Time Certification**

Students who intend to register for less than the number of credit hours required in the Fall and Spring semesters (full-time = 9; half-time = 4.5 credit hours), and who need to be certified as in full or half-time status must complete the [Half-Time/Full-Time Certification Form](#). The requirements and limitations of this certification are listed on the first page of the form. The form should be completed and submitted to the Office of Student Services ([hsp@gwu.edu](mailto:hsp@gwu.edu)) after student registration and academic advisor approval.

**Note: Students enrolled in Summer Semester classes are considered half time as long as they are enrolled in at least 3 credits. They will not need to complete and submit the Half-Time/Full-Time Certification Form for the Summer Semester.**

Students registered for CE may be certified as half-time and will be reviewed on a case-by-case basis.

**STUDENT ACKNOWLEDGEMENT FORM - PH.D. IN TRANSLATIONAL HEALTH SCIENCES (THS)**  
**PROGRAM HANDBOOK**

**THE GEORGE WASHINGTON UNIVERSITY (GW)  
SCHOOL OF MEDICINE AND HEALTH SCIENCES (SMHS)  
DEPARTMENT OF CLINICAL RESEARCH AND LEADERSHIP (CRL)**

I, the undersigned, acknowledge that I am in receipt of the Ph.D. in Translational Health Science (THS) handbook, which contains pertinent information relevant to the School of Medicine and Health Sciences as well as the PhD in THS program curriculum. I understand that I am responsible for reading the contents of this handbook and all of its stipulated academic requirements and for following all policies and procedures put forth in this document, or its subsequent versions.

I understand any changes will result in an updated handbook being posted on the [Student Resource](#) page of the PhD in Translational Health Sciences website. It is my responsibility to be aware of and review any changes.

X

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Student Signature

DATE: August 12, 2021