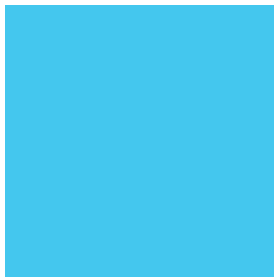


2026-2027 Student Handbook

Department of Health Services Administration

PhD in Administration-Health Services



UAB
The University of
Alabama at Birmingham.
School of Health Professions

UAB SCHOOL OF HEALTH PROFESSIONS
HEALTH SERVICES ADMINISTRATION
PHD IN ADMINISTRATION-HEALTH SERVICES
2026-2027 ACADEMIC HANDBOOK



Kristine Ria Hearld (Aug 21, 2026 15:25:36 CDT)

K. Ria Hearld, PhD

Program Director

08/21/2026

Date



Jane Banaszak-Holl, PhD

Department Chair

08/21/2026

Date



Mark Merrick, PhD, AT, ATC, FNATA, FNAP, FASAHP

Dean

School of Health Professions

08/21/2026

Date

Table of Contents

DEAN'S WELCOME MESSAGE	4
OVERVIEW OF THE SCHOOL OF HEALTH PROFESSIONS	4
SECTION 1 – SCHOOL AND UNIVERSITY INFORMATION	6
ACADEMIC CALENDAR	6
ACADEMIC INTEGRITY CODE	6
ADVISING	6
AMBASSADORS	6
ATTENDANCE	6
BLAZERID / BLAZER NET / EMAIL	7
BLAZER EXPRESS	8
BOOKSTORE	8
CAMPUS ONECARD	8
CAMPUS MAP	8
CAMPUS SAFETY	8
CANVAS LEARNING MANAGEMENT SYSTEM	8
CATALOG	9
COMMUNITY STANDARDS AND ACCOUNTABILITY	9
COUNSELING SERVICES	9
DISABILITY SUPPORT SERVICES (DSS)	9
EMERGENCIES	9
NONDISCRIMINATION STATEMENT:	10
FERPA TRAINING	10
FINANCIAL AID	10
FOOD SERVICES	11
GRADUATE SCHOOL	11
GRADUATION	11
HEALTH INSURANCE	11
HIPAA TRAINING	11
HONOR SOCIETIES	12
IMMUNIZATION POLICY	12
INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW BOARD FOR HUMAN USE (IRB)	12
INTELLECTUAL PROPERTY	12

LACTATION CENTERS.....	12
LIBRARIES AND LEARNING RESOURCE CENTER	12
UAB STUDENT CONDUCT CODE	13
ONE STOP STUDENT SERVICES	13
PARKING.....	13
PLAGIARISM AND TURNITIN.....	13
RECREATION CENTER	14
SCHOOL OF HEALTH PROFESSIONS AWARDS	14
SCHOOL OF HEALTH PROFESSIONS SCHOLARSHIPS.....	14
SCHOOL OF HEALTH PROFESSIONS SHARED VALUES	14
SOCIAL MEDIA.....	15
STUDENT HEALTH SERVICES	15
TITLE IX	15
TUITION AND FEES	15
WEATHER	15
WITHDRAWAL FROM COURSE / PROGRAM	16
SECTION 2 – SHP AND UAB POLICIES.....	17
SCHOOL OF HEALTH PROFESSIONS POLICIES.....	17
UAB POLICIES	22
SECTION 3: PHD IN ADMINISTRATION-HEALTH SERVICES SPECIFIC INFORMATION	23
PROGRAM OVERVIEW.....	23
INTRODUCTION	23
MISSION, VISION AND VALUES.....	25
PROGRAM OVERVIEW	25
FACULTY AND STAFF	26
ADMISSIONS & ENROLLMENT REQUIREMENTS.....	26
CRITERIA AND REQUIRED MATERIALS	26
EXAMPLE CURRICULUM.....	27
COURSE WAIVERS.....	28
DEGREE REQUIREMENTS, DISSERTATION PROCESS, AND	29
DEGREE REQUIREMENTS AND DISSERTATION PROCESS	29
DISSERTATION COMMITTEE.....	30
COMPREHENSIVE EXAMS	30
DISSERTATION PRE-PROPOSAL STRATEGIC ALIGNMENT MEETING	32

DISSERTATION PROPOSAL	32
DISSERTATION AND DEFENSE PROCESS.....	33
RESEARCH ETHICS	34
POLICIES & STANDARDS	34
ACADEMIC PROGRESS AND DEGREE COMPLETION.....	34
GRADUATE ASSISTANTSHIPS	35

INTRODUCTION

DEAN'S WELCOME MESSAGE

Welcome to the University of Alabama at Birmingham School of Health Professions where you are joining a legacy of excellence!

We are one of the six schools comprising the renowned UAB Academic Health Center. We offer more than 30 programs and 40 offerings at the certificate, baccalaureate, master's, and doctoral levels. And we are home to nearly 3,000 undergraduate and graduate students.

You came here for an outstanding education, and we provide exactly that. However, **only you** can control whether you will become an excellent professional. To do so, you must challenge yourself every day and take advantage of all our vast resources, state-of-the-art facilities and research opportunities during your academic and clinical education. You also need to make the most of your access to the world-class faculty who are here to teach and support your journey. You didn't enroll here to be to be an amateur. You came to become a professional, and not an average one. I encourage you to become a "Pro" and an excellent one at that. Own it, live it, excel at what you do, and make both us and yourself proud.

I look forward to seeing you grow in your respective fields and watching you become the leader we know you can be.

Go Blazers!

Mark Merrick, Ph.D., AT, ATC, FNATA, FNAP, FASAHP

Dean, UAB School of Health Professions

OVERVIEW OF THE SCHOOL OF HEALTH PROFESSIONS

The UAB School of Health Professions (SHP) is one of the largest academic institutions of its type in the United States. What began in the 1950s as a collection of training programs in various para-professional disciplines has grown into an internationally recognized center of academic and research excellence.

Today, we have five academic departments – Clinical and Diagnostic Sciences, Health Services Administration, Nutrition Sciences, Occupational Therapy, and Physical Therapy – that are housed in four buildings: Susan Mott Webb Nutrition Sciences Building (WEBB), Learning Resource Center (LRC), the School of Health Professions Building (SHPB), and the Center for Biophysical Sciences and Engineering (CBSE).

We are proud of many accomplishments including:

- *U.S. News & World Report* ranks all eligible SHP programs in the nation's top 25.
- Research funding is at an all-time high of \$26+ million and growing.
- Nearly 10 of our programs you will only find in Alabama at UAB.

- Our school has never been stronger or better positioned as a national leader in health professions education. And this status will only grow stronger as we continue to welcome students like you.

DISCLAIMER

This Handbook is an overview of general academic regulations specific to SOHP programs at UAB. Although UAB will make its best efforts to abide by this handbook, UAB reserves the right to interpret and apply its procedures and policies, and to deviate from these guidelines, as appropriate in the particular circumstances and in accordance with the mission and goals of the program. UAB also reserves the right to address issues not covered in this handbook and to make changes to the policy without advance notice. Changes become effective at the time the proper authorities determine so and the changes apply to both prospective students and those already enrolled. Please refer to our website for the most up-to-date version.

All students are responsible for knowing and abiding by the general University rules and regulations pertaining to studying at UAB and the specific academic requirements of their particular degree program. This Handbook is not intended to nor does it contain all policies or regulations applicable to students. Each student is responsible for familiarizing him/herself with the contents of this Handbook. Although the policies contained herein are intended to reflect current rules and policies of the University, users are cautioned that changes or additions may have become effective since the publication of this material. In the event of a conflict, current statements of Board policy contained in the Bylaws, Rules, official minutes, and other pronouncements of the Board or Chancellor, or superseding law, shall prevail.

This Handbook does not constitute a contract and may not be deemed or construed as part of any contract between UAB and any student or student representative.

IMPORTANT INFORMATION YOU SHOULD KNOW

Although UAB works hard to prepare students for future careers in their desired fields, employment and salaries are not guaranteed. Employment outcomes depend on a student's efforts and market conditions. Students are responsible for understanding their financial responsibilities. [Tuition costs can be found on this UAB website](#). Scholarships are competitive and not guaranteed. Admission to other graduate or professional programs is also not guaranteed. Advisors will provide students with guidance, but students are ultimately responsible for degree completion, and timelines for completion may vary based on individual circumstances.

SECTION 1 – SCHOOL AND UNIVERSITY INFORMATION

ACADEMIC CALENDAR

All dates related to registration, payments of tuition and fees, drop/add dates, other administrative requirements, and official school holidays are recorded on the [UAB Academic Calendar](#).

ACADEMIC INTEGRITY CODE

The University established a new Academic Integrity Code effective August 23, 2021. This Code, which applies to undergraduate, graduate, and professional students as well as all academic activities, defines academic misconduct and outlines procedures for breaches of the code. The Academic Integrity Code process is managed by the Academic Integrity Coordinator (AIC). In the School of Health Professions, the AIC is the Associate Dean for Academic and Faculty Affairs, and the office is located in SHPB 660. [You can see the full text of the Academic Integrity Code online.](#)

ADVISING

Undergraduate student advising is provided through advisors assigned to each program as well as through the Office of Student Services. Advisor and recruiter contact information can be found on the [Office of Student Services Website](#). Graduate student advising is provided through the SHP graduate programs.

AMBASSADORS

Ambassadors help to spread awareness of the School of Health Professions and its multifaceted undergraduate and graduate programs, serve as liaisons between the department and university-wide student organizations, and serve as a student voice in school and university committees. The SHP Ambassadors help to support the programs within the school that will impact recruitment and retention initiatives. [You can learn more about the SHP Ambassadors on their webpage.](#)

AskIT

AskIT is the technology help desk for faculty, staff, and students. You will be asked to supply your BlazerID when you request assistance. Contact them by phone at 205-996-5555 or [via email](#) or [visit the AskIT service portal online](#).

ATTENDANCE

Class attendance is expected in all SHP programs. Specific class, laboratory, or clinical site attendance requirements may be more stringent than university guidelines. Refer to the

program requirements in this handbook and in course syllabi for policies. The UAB attendance policy is as follows:

The University of Alabama at Birmingham recognizes that the academic success of individual students is related to their class attendance and participation. Each course instructor is responsible for establishing policies concerning class attendance and make-up opportunities. Any such policies, including points for attendance and/or participation, penalties for absences, limits on excused absences, total allowable absences, etc., must be specified in the course syllabus provided to students at the beginning of the course term. Such policies are subject to departmental oversight and may not, by their specific prescriptions, negate or circumvent the accommodations provided below for excused absences.

The University regards certain absences as excused and in those instances requires that instructors provide a reasonable accommodation for the student who misses assignments, presentations, examinations, or other academic work of a substantive nature by virtue of these excused absences. Examples include the following:

- Absences due to jury or military duty, provided that official documentation has been provided to the instructor in a timely manner in advance.
- Absences for students who have approved disability-related absence accommodations through Disability Support Services may follow the reasonable number of absences outlined in their flex plan or as determined by the instructor. Students are responsible for notifying instructors of these and any other approved accommodations through their Notice of Accommodations letter.
- Absences due to participation in university-sponsored activities when the student is representing the University in an official capacity and as a critical participant, provided that the procedures below have been followed:
 - Before the end of the add/drop period, students must provide their instructor a schedule of anticipated excused absences in or with a letter explaining the nature of the expected absences from the director of the unit or department sponsoring the activity.
 - If a change in the schedule occurs, students are responsible for providing their instructors with advance written notification from the sponsoring unit or department.
- Absences due to other extenuating circumstances that instructors deem excused. Such classification is at the discretion of the instructor and is predicated upon consistent treatment of all students.
- Absences due to religious observances provided that students give faculty written notice prior to the drop/add deadline of the term.

In these instances, instructors must give students the opportunity to complete assignments in a way that corresponds as much as possible to the nature, scope, and format of the original. Options may include making up exams or other assignments, rescheduling student classroom presentations, or arranging for early or late submission of written assignments. The course make-up policy should be included in the syllabus.

BLAZERID / BLAZERNET / EMAIL

BLAZERID

All students receive a unique identifier, the BlazerID, established at [BlazerID Central](#). Your BlazerID is required for accessing BlazerNET and other campus resources. To activate one's BlazerID, select "Activate Accounts."

BLAZERNET

[BlazerNet](#) is the official portal of the UAB information network and is accessible from any Internet-accessible computer, on- or off-campus.

EMAIL

UAB student email is provided through Microsoft Office 365, a cloud-based system. Students have 50 GB of email space and 25 GB of free file 1 TB storage. The UAB email is the official communication medium for courses, news, information, and announcements. Students should not forward their UAB account to a personal email account. UAB is not responsible for information not received by the student due to the 'redirecting' of a UAB account to another email server.

BLAZER EXPRESS

The UAB Blazer Express Transit System provides transportation throughout the UAB campus. With a valid UAB ID badge, students can enjoy fare-free bus transportation. All buses are ADA-accessible and can seat approximately 35 riders. For an updated schedule, route maps, and hours of operation please [visit the Blazer Express website](#).

BOOKSTORE

There is one bookstore located on the UAB campus in the Hill Student Center. It offers a wide variety of products and services to students, including online purchasing and shipping. The bookstore stocks UAB memorabilia and college wear in addition to all required textbooks and course material. Visit [the UAB Barnes and Noble Bookstore online](#) for more details.

CAMPUS ONECARD

The UAB OneCard is the official university identification card. It is used for personal identification, for entry to campus events and the recreation center, for library checkout, and for other UAB services. It also serves as a declining balance card for the UAB meal plans and for Blazer Bucks accounts. Additional information is available on the [UAB OneCard website](#).

CAMPUS MAP

[UAB's campus map can be found online.](#)

CAMPUS SAFETY

[Campus safety procedures and resources can be accessed online.](#)

CANVAS LEARNING MANAGEMENT SYSTEM

The Canvas Learning Management System is the platform used for managing instructional materials online. Canvas course sites are accessed through BlazerNET or at the [UAB Center for Teaching and Learning website](#). Students should monitor their course sites routinely for communication from faculty and to manage course assignments.

CATALOG

The UAB Catalog is published annually and includes UAB's courses, policies, and curricula. Students can [find the Undergraduate or Graduate catalog online](#).

COMMUNITY STANDARDS AND ACCOUNTABILITY

[Community Standards and Accountability](#) is responsible for upholding the integrity and purpose of the University through the fair and consistent application of policies and procedures to students' behavior to ensure a community that respects the dignity and right of all persons to reach their highest potential. UAB Student Advocacy, Rights & Conduct (SARC) delivers programs and services in order to promote student safety and success, the pursuit of knowledge, respect for self and others, global citizenship, personal accountability and integrity, and ethical development. More information can be found at the [UAB SARC website](#). [The UAB student conduct code may be accessed online](#).

COUNSELING SERVICES

Student Counseling Services offers no cost, confidential counseling for UAB students related to physical, emotional, social, intellectual, or spiritual concerns. Student Counseling Services is located on the 3rd floor of the Student Health and Wellness Center at 1714 9th Avenue South. For more information, call 205-934-5816 or [visit the Student Counseling Services website](#).

DISABILITY SUPPORT SERVICES (DSS)

UAB is committed to providing an accessible learning experience for all students. If you are a student with a disability that qualifies under the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) and/or Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act, and you require accommodations, please [contact Disability Support Services for information on accommodations, registration, and procedures](#). Requests for reasonable accommodations involve an interactive process and consist of a collaborative effort among the student, DSS, faculty, and staff. If you have a disability but have not contacted DSS, please call 205-934-4205 or visit [the DSS website](#).

If you are a student registered with Disability Support Services, it is your responsibility to contact the course instructor to discuss the accommodations that may be necessary in each course. Students with disabilities must be registered with DSS and provide an accommodation request letter before receiving academic adjustments. Reasonable and timely notification of accommodations for the course is encouraged and provided to the course instructor so that the accommodations can be arranged.

EMERGENCIES

Report suspicious or threatening activity to the UAB Police Department immediately. Law enforcement officers are available 24 hours, seven days a week. Also, more than 300 emergency blue light telephones connected directly to the police dispatch are located throughout campus.

BEHAVIORAL THREAT ASSESSMENT AND MANAGEMENT (BTAM)

The UAB and UAB Medicine Behavioral Threat Assessment and Management Team (BTAM) is an interdisciplinary team dedicated to maintaining a safe, secure, and healthy campus environment for all students, employees, and visitors. BTAM uses a structured, proactive process to identify, assess, and manage behavioral threats to campus safety and well-being. Concerning behaviors—such as a significant change in academic performance or conduct, aggressive or irrational behavior, expressions of severe distress, or inability to control anger—should be reported promptly. Non-emergency situations involving students may be reported through the Division of Student Affairs at (205) 975-9509 or via the online reporting form. For more information, visit the [UAB BTAM website](#).

UAB POLICE:

For an emergency, dial 911 *from a campus phone*. For non-emergencies call: 205-934-3535 or 205-934-HELP (4357) or 205-934-4434.

Emergencies affecting campus are communicated via the following:

- UAB Severe Weather & Emergency Hotline 205-934-2165
- [UAB home webpage](#)
- [UAB Emergency Management webpage](#)
- Announcements on [BlazerNET](#)
- Cell phone messages and SMS text via B-ALERT. [Register for B-ALERT online](#).

NONDISCRIMINATION STATEMENT:

UAB is an [Equal Employment/Equal Educational Opportunity Institution](#) dedicated to providing equal opportunities and equal access to all individuals regardless of race, color, religion, ethnicity, national origin, sex (including pregnancy), genetic information, age, disability, and veteran's status. As required by Title IX, UAB prohibits sex discrimination in any education program or activity that it operates. Individuals may report concerns or questions to UAB's Assistant Vice President and Senior Title IX Coordinator. [The Title IX notice of nondiscrimination is located online](#).

FERPA TRAINING

The Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA) of 1974 provides protection for all educational records related to students enrolled in an educational program. UAB has a dedicated [FERPA website](#) with information about your rights and protection of your records. You may [email any questions or concerns about FERPA issues](#) to FERPA@uab.edu. All SHP students are required to complete FERPA Training. The course can be accessed at [THIS WEBSITE](#).

FINANCIAL AID

Financial Aid Counselors are available each day in the One Stop Student Services Office located in the Hill Student Center, [1400 University Blvd](#), Suite 103. If you have general

questions, you can contact the Office of Student Financial Aid at 205-934-8223 or [via email](#). For additional financial aid information [visit the UAB Cost & Aid website](#).

FOOD SERVICES

There are several dining facilities available on campus. The [campus dining map](#) can show you the closest to the SHP buildings. For additional information about meal plans and campus dining facilities [visit the Campus Dining website](#).

GRADUATE SCHOOL

The UAB Graduate School offers doctoral programs, post-master's specialist programs, and master's level programs. Graduate programs in SHP are coordinated through the Graduate School, and students must adhere to the Graduate School policies and procedures. Graduate School information for current students is available at [the UAB Graduate School website](#). Policies and Procedures for the Graduate School can be found in the [Graduate School Catalog](#).

GRADUATION

All students must complete an application for degree six months prior to graduating and no later than the deadline in the academic calendar. The University holds commencement every semester. Check the [UAB commencement website](#) for the most current information.

HEALTH INSURANCE

To ensure that all students have adequate health care coverage, including ongoing primary and specialty care, the University of Alabama at Birmingham (UAB) requires all students to have major medical health insurance. Students can provide proof of their own private coverage or be enrolled in the Student Health Insurance Plan. The plan is a 1-year commercial policy provided by United HealthCare and is re-negotiated annually. This policy is a comprehensive health insurance policy at an affordable cost that is specifically designed to meet the needs of UAB Students. If you are required to have insurance but have sufficient coverage on another plan and wish to opt out of the Student Health Insurance Plan, you are required to submit a waiver to Student Health Services at the beginning of every semester. More information including submitting a waiver can be found at the [UAB Student Health Insurance Waivers website](#).

HIPAA TRAINING

The Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act (HIPAA) includes significant requirements for protecting individual privacy of health information. All students in the School of Health Professions must complete an online tutorial and be tested on HIPAA regulations at the time of program admission. A BlazerID is required to access the training site, located at [UAB Online Learning](#). Compliance with the training requirement is monitored by the Office of Academic and Faculty Affairs.

HONOR SOCIETIES

All students in the School of Health Professions are eligible for consideration for the Alpha Eta Honor Society. The UAB Chapter of this Society recognizes students registered in the final term of a baccalaureate or graduate health professions program. Inductees must have a cumulative grade point average of 3.0 (4.0 = A) and be in the upper 10% of their program. Nominations are made by program directors in spring and summer terms.

IMMUNIZATION POLICY

To provide a safe and healthy environment for all students, faculty, and staff at the University of Alabama at Birmingham (UAB), first-time entering students, international students and scholars, and students in clinical & non-clinical programs, must provide proof of immunization against certain diseases, unless they have an approved medical or religious exemption. Full details can be found on the [UAB Immunizations webpage](#).

INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW BOARD FOR HUMAN USE (IRB)

Student researchers must comply with all requirements for protection of human subjects. Detailed information is available on the [IRB website](#).

INTELLECTUAL PROPERTY

Intellectual property refers to an asset that originated conceptually, such as literary and artistic works, inventions, or other creative works. These assets should be protected and used only as the creator intends. Training materials defining inventor status, patent criteria, and other intellectual property issues, as well as University Policies on Patents, Copyright, and Intellectual Property are on [the Office of Compliance & Risk homepage](#).

LACTATION CENTERS

The University has provided several lactation centers for students, faculty, and staff across the campus. Visit [the UAB Lactation Resources webpage](#) for a resource guide and a location map. The School of Health Professions' lactation room is in the Susan Mott Webb Nutrition Sciences Building at [1675 University Blvd](#), Room 431. Lactating students enrolled in the School of Health Professions have access to the room via their student ID/OneCard. If you cannot access the room, contact the building administrator, Julia Tolbert-Jackson at 205-873-5666.

LIBRARIES AND LEARNING RESOURCE CENTER

[UAB's libraries](#) house excellent collections of books, periodicals, microforms, and other media. Students have online remote access to catalogs and online collections. Computers are available for student use during regular hours of operation.

SHP LEARNING RESOURCE CENTER (LRC)

The School of Health Professions Learning Resource Center (LRC) provides a unique set of enterprise solutions that promote an exciting, intriguing, and innovative learning environment. It provides audio/visual support, and information technology management of public, classroom,

and testing labs. The building is at [1714 9th Avenue South](#), and the SHP student space is on the second floor. You can contact LRC staff [via email](#) or via phone at 205-934-5146.

LISTER HILL LIBRARY OF THE HEALTH SCIENCES

[Lister Hill Library](#) (LHL) is the largest biomedical library in Alabama and one of the largest in the south. It is located [across the crosswalk](#) from the School of Health Professions.

MERVYN H. STERNE LIBRARY

[Mervyn H. Sterne Library](#) has a collection of more than one million items supporting teaching and research in the arts and humanities, business, education, engineering, natural sciences and mathematics, and social and behavioral sciences. It is located at [917 13th Street South](#).

UAB STUDENT CONDUCT CODE

The Student Conduct Code promotes honesty, integrity, accountability, rights, and responsibilities expected of students consistent with the core missions of the University of Alabama at Birmingham. This Code describes the standards of behavior for all students, and it outlines students' rights, responsibilities, and the campus processes for adjudicating alleged violations. Behavior that violates UAB standards of conduct listed within the Student Conduct Code and elsewhere will be subject to disciplinary action through the appropriate conduct process. Whether it is determined that an individual or group is responsible for the violation(s), either by direct involvement or by condoning, encouraging, or covering up the violation, appropriate response will occur with respect to the individual(s) and/or group involved.

[Undergraduate Non-Academic Policies](#)

[Graduate Non-Academic Policies](#)

ONE STOP STUDENT SERVICES

The mission of the One Stop is to provide a single point of professional integrated service to students. The One Stop serves students who need assistance with academic records, financial aid, registration, student accounting, OneCard, and other related topics. One Stop is located in the Hill Student Center, [1400 University Blvd.](#) Suite 103. You may contact the [One Stop](#) office by phone or email at 205-934-4300, 855-UAB-1STP (855-822-1787), [or via email](#).

PARKING

Student vehicles must be registered with [UAB Parking and Transportation Services](#), located at [608 8th Street South](#). Parking is allocated on a first-come, first-served basis. Parking fees are established by location, payable by semester or year, and are billed to the student's account.

PLAGIARISM AND TURNITIN

Plagiarism violates the Academic Integrity Code and will be addressed in accordance with it. All papers submitted for grading in any SHP program may be reviewed using the online plagiarism monitoring software. Please note that all documents submitted to [Turnitin](#) are added to their database of papers that is used to screen future assignments for plagiarism.

RECREATION CENTER

The [Campus Recreation Center](#) is located at [1501 University Blvd](#). A valid student identification card or membership card is required for access. Facilities include basketball courts, racquetball courts, weight rooms, swimming pools, exercise rooms, and indoor track.

SCHOOL OF HEALTH PROFESSIONS AWARDS

All students in the School of Health Professions are eligible for consideration for [the SHP Student Awards Program](#), which includes the following awards:

- Alfred W. Sangster Award for Outstanding International Student – This award is presented annually to an international student in recognition of their academic and non-academic achievements.
- Cecile Clardy Satterfield Award for Humanism in Health Care – This award is made annually to recognize one outstanding student for humanitarianism, professionalism, and commitment to health care.
- Charles Brooks Award for Creativity – This award is made annually in recognition of creative accomplishments such as written publications or artistic contributions which complemented the student's academic activities.
- Dean's Leadership and Service Award – Presented to a maximum of three outstanding SHP students annually, this award recognizes leadership to the School, UAB, and the community.

A call for nominations will be sent to program directors each year. Please refer to the program section of this handbook for awards available to students in individual programs.

SCHOOL OF HEALTH PROFESSIONS SCHOLARSHIPS

SHP has several scholarship opportunities for students enrolled in SHP programs. The Scholarship Committee, comprised of faculty from each department, reviews and selects awardees. Please go to [the SHP Scholarship Application webpage](#) for a list of scholarships and instructions for application.

Application announcements are made by the Office of Academic and Faculty Affairs. Many programs in SHP also have scholarships available to currently enrolled students in those programs. Please refer to the program section of this handbook for more information.

SCHOOL OF HEALTH PROFESSIONS SHARED VALUES

- Collaboration
- Compassion & Caring
- Excellence & Achievement
- Integrity
- Respect
- Service
- Social Responsibility

- Stewardship

SOCIAL MEDIA

Social media can serve as useful communication tools. However, health professions students should use the forums judiciously. For more information visit [the UAB Social Media Guidelines webpage](#). The school's official sites are on the following platforms:

- [Facebook](#)
- [Instagram](#)
- [LinkedIn](#)
- [Vimeo](#)
- [X/Twitter](#)
- [YouTube](#)

STUDENT HEALTH SERVICES

The University provides prevention, counseling, and treatment services to students through [Student Health Services](#) (SHS) located at [1714 9th Avenue South](#). Appointments may be scheduled via [their online portal](#).

TITLE IX

In accordance with Title IX, the University of Alabama at Birmingham does not discriminate on the basis of sex in any of its programs or services. The University is committed to providing an environment free from discrimination based on sex and expects individuals who live, work, teach, and study within this community to contribute positively to the environment and to refrain from behaviors that threaten the freedom or respect that every member of our community deserves. For more information about Title IX, policy, reporting, protections, resources, and supports, please visit [the UAB Title IX webpage](#).

TUITION AND FEES

[UAB tuition and fees are published online](#). They may be paid through BlazerNET. SHP programs have specific fees attached to programs, courses, and/ or laboratories. Payment deadlines for each semester are published on the official academic calendar. Please note that failure to meet payment deadlines can result in being administratively withdrawn from courses.

WEATHER

Severe weather situations that may affect the safety of students, faculty, and staff are communicated through the same channels as other emergencies. UAB has a dedicated [Preparedness webpage with Severe Weather Gathering Points and supply lists](#). Other information sources include the [B-ALERT System](#) (contact information must be setup and current) and the UAB Severe Weather & Emergency Hotline 205-934-2165.

WITHDRAWAL FROM COURSE / PROGRAM

Withdrawal from a course or from your program is an official process and should be discussed with your academic advisor and/or program director. Most programs in the School of Health Professions are full-time and the curricula specifically sequenced. Withdrawal from a course may risk you having to wait to register for the class again. Withdrawals are made through the UAB registration system via the Student Resources tab in BlazerNET. Notice of program withdrawal should be given in writing to the program director. For more information [visit the UAB Add/Drop, Extended Drop and Withdrawal Policy webpage](#), which also includes a medical withdrawal policy.

SECTION 2 – SHP AND UAB POLICIES

SCHOOL OF HEALTH PROFESSIONS POLICIES

DISMISSAL OF STUDENT FOR FAILURE TO MAKE SATISFACTORY ACADEMIC PROGRESS

[Dismissal of Student and Appeal Process](#)

EMERGENCY PLAN – SHPB/LRC/WEBB

[SHPB/LRC/WEBB Emergency Plan](#)

BACKGROUND CHECK AND DRUG SCREEN POLICY

Students in SHP programs are required to undergo a background check and drug screen using the school's approved vendor, [Disa Healthcare Technology](#), at the time of program admission, and again, prior to placement in a fieldwork placement (clinical, internship, practicum, residency, etc.). Additional checks/screens may be required by the individual sites therefore; students should work with the program to ensure compliance requirements are met. Instructions for requesting the background check and drug screens are provided to students by their programs. Students in SHP undergraduate programs must complete a module on drug screening and background checks during their first semester. The module will be located in Canvas, UAB's learning management system.

The [SHP Office of Academic and Faculty Affairs](#) is responsible for ensuring student compliance with the Background Check and Drug Screen Policy throughout the program. Students found to be non-compliant with this policy will not be allowed to matriculate in the program (orientation, attend class, fieldwork placement, etc.) until all requirements are met. Program Directors, Fieldwork Coordinators, and students will be notified of non-compliance and a hold will be placed on the students' account.

- Fees for these screenings will be the responsibility of the student.
- The rules and regulations governing individual fieldwork placement sites may include additional provisions and/or more stringent guidelines which supersede this policy. Fees for these screenings are the responsibility of the student.
- Should your criminal background check contain issues, or if you fail a drug screen that may prevent you from receiving or sitting for board certification/licensure, a representative from the Office of Academic and Faculty Affairs will contact you. Depending upon the outcome, students will have a registration hold placed on their account until in compliance and this may result in being dismissed from the program. See your program's guidelines regarding specific consequences.

Programs requiring a criminal background check and drug screening by the end of the first semester of enrollment and again, prior to fieldwork placement (if applicable in the program requirements), are the following:

- Administration Health Services, PhD
- Biomedical Sciences to Biotechnology Fast Track
- Biomedical Sciences to Clinical Laboratory Science Fast Track

- Biomedical Sciences to Health Physics Fast Track
- Biomedical Sciences to Nuclear Medicine & Molecular Imaging Sciences Fast Track
- Biomedical and Health Sciences, MS
- Biotechnology, MS
- Biotechnology, PhD
- Dietitian Education Program, Graduate Certificate
- Genetic Counseling, MS
- Health Administration (Residential), MSHA
- Health Care Management to Healthcare Quality and Safety Fast Track
- Health Care Management to Health Informatics Fast Track
- Health Care Management to Occupational Therapy Doctorate Fast Track
- Health Physics, MS
- Medical Laboratory Science, MS
- Nuclear Medicine & Molecular Imaging Sciences, MS
- Nutrition Sciences, MS
 - Dietetic Internship Clinical Track
 - Dietitian Education Program
 - Research Track
- Nutrition Sciences, PhD
- Occupational Therapy, OTD – (entry level)
- Physical Therapy, DPT
- Physician Associate Studies, MSPAS
- Rehabilitation Science, PhD

The following students enrolled in SHP undergraduate programs will complete a learning module related to background checks and drug screens in Canvas, UAB's learning management system by the first semester of enrollment. If a fieldwork placement (clinical, internship, practicum, residency, etc.) is required, students must complete criminal background checks and drug screens prior to the first day of the semester of a fieldwork placement:

- Health Care Management, BS
- Biomedical Sciences, BS
- Nutrition Sciences, BS
- Disability Studies and Rehabilitation Science, BS

Programs waived from the Criminal Background Check and Drug Screening requirements are the following:

- Applied Mixed Methods Research, Graduate Certificate
- Biotechnology Regulatory Affairs, Graduate Certificate
- Clinical Informatics, Graduate Certificate
- Health Administration (International and Executive tracks), MSHA
- Health Informatics, MSHI
- Healthcare Finance Management, Graduate Certificate
- Healthcare Leadership, DSc

- Healthcare Leadership, Graduate Certificate
- Healthcare Quality and Safety, MS
- Healthcare Quality and Safety, Graduate Certificate
- Health Services Research, MS
- Healthcare Simulation, MS
- Healthcare Simulation, Graduate Certificate
- Nutrition for Community Health, Graduate Certificate
- Nutrition Sciences, MS
 - Clinical Track-Prior Learning
 - Lifestyle Management and Disease Prevention Track
- Low Vision Rehabilitation, Graduate Certificate
- Multi-Tiered Approach to Trauma, Graduate Certificate
- Occupational Therapy Doctorate (Post Professional)
- Physical Therapy Residencies (Neurologic, Orthopedic)
- Primary Care Physical Therapy for Underserved Populations, Graduate Certificate

Students enrolled in exempt programs who participate in a course(s) incorporating community, corporate or other high impact, out-of-classroom activities such as service learning, capstone projects or other hands-on learning experiences, may be required by placement sites to submit background check and drug screening results. Students are responsible for the fees associated with such screening.

DISA HEALTHCARE TECHNOLOGY INSTRUCTIONS

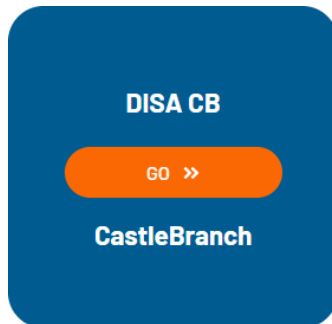
[Disa Healthcare Technology](#) is a secure platform that allows you to order your background check & drug test online. Once you have placed your order, you may use your login to access additional features, including document storage, portfolio builders and reference tools. Disa Healthcare Technology also allows you to upload any additional documents required by your school.

Order Summary

- Required Personal Information
 - In addition to entering your full name and date of birth, you will be asked for your Social Security Number, current address, phone number, and email address.
- Drug Test (LabCorp)
 - Within 24-48 hours after you place your order, the electronic chain of custody form e-chain will be placed directly into your CastleBranch account. This e-chain will explain where you need to go to complete your drug test.
- Payment Information
 - At the end of the online process, you will be prompted to enter your Visa or MasterCard information. Money orders are also accepted, but will result in a \$10 fee and additional turn-around-time.

Place Your Order

[Visit the website](#), click “place order” and choose the Disa CB platform (see logo screenshot below).



Enter package code AHO1 – Background Check and Drug Test. You will be required to enter your program under “Student Information” classification. You will then be directed to set up your Disa/CastleBranch profile account. This package code is for the following majors:

- Health Care Management
- Biomedical Sciences
- Biotechnology
- Biomedical and Health Sciences
- Genetic Counseling
- Health Administration – Residential (MSHA)
- Health Care Quality and Safety (not employees of health care organizations)
- Health Informatics
- Health Physics
- Medical Laboratory Sciences
- Nuclear Medicine and Molecular Imaging Sciences
- Occupational Therapy
- Physical Therapy
- Physician Associate Studies
- Rehabilitation Sciences

View Your Results

Your results will be posted directly to your Disa/CastleBranch profile account. You will be notified if there is any missing information needed to process your order. Although 95% of background check results are completed within 3-5 business days, some results may take longer. Your order will show as “In Process” until it has been completed in its entirety. Your school’s administrator can also securely view your results online with their unique username and password. If you have any additional questions, you may contact the Service Desk at 888-723-4263 x 7196 or submit a question [using the online contact us form](#).

ACCIDENTS / INJURIES OCCURRING ON CAMPUS:

All accidents/injuries occurring while involved in a program associated with the School of Health Professions are to be promptly reported to the faculty member in charge of class. Incident reports for accidents and injuries must be filed with the Department Administrative Office within 48 hours of the incident. Failure to report accidents or injuries within 48 hours of the incident may impact UAB's ability to address the accident or injury.

ACCIDENT / INJURY REPORTING PROCEDURE

When a student, visitor, faculty, or staff is involved in an accident or sustains an injury while involved in a program associated with the School of Health Professions, an accident / injury report is required. The faculty member in charge of the class where the injury occurs, or who is the first point of contact following the injury should download and complete this [Incident Report Form](#).

NEEDLESTICK/ BLOOD OR BODY FLUID EXPOSURES

When a student, visitor, faculty, or staff is involved in a body fluid or needlestick exposure while involved in a program associated with the School of Health Professions, they should follow the procedures on [the UAB Human Resources website](#). The faculty member in charge of the class where the exposure occurs, or who is the first point of contact following the injury should download and complete this [Incident Report Form](#).

UNDERGRADUATE AND GRADUATE VOLUNTEER RESEARCH:

Undergraduate or graduate volunteer students wanting to conduct research in a School of Health Professions laboratory should contact [Dr. Samantha Giordano-Mooga via email](#) for requirements.

UAB POLICIES

ACADEMIC PROGRESS

[UAB ACADEMIC PROGRESS POLICY FOR GRADUATE STUDENTS](#)

[UAB ACADEMIC PROGRESS POLICY FOR UNDERGRADUATE STUDENTS](#)

HEALTH

[UAB POLICY ON IMMUNIZATIONS](#)

[UAB POLICY ON NEEDLE STICKS AND EXPOSURES](#)

EQUAL OPPORTUNITY

[UAB POLICY ON EQUAL OPPORTUNITY AND DISCRIMINATORY HARASSMENT](#)

POLICE AND PUBLIC SAFETY

[UAB POLICY ON CAMPUS SAFETY](#)

[UAB POLICY ON FIREARMS, AMMUNITION, AND OTHER DANGEROUS WEAPONS](#)

RESEARCH AND SCHOLARLY ACTIVITIES

[UAB POLICY ON ACADEMIC INTEGRITY CODE](#)

[UAB POLICY ON ETHICAL STANDARDS IN RESEARCH AND OTHER SCHOLARLY ACTIVITIES](#)

[UAB POLICY ON PATENTS](#)

SUBSTANCE USE/ABUSE

[UAB POLICY ON ALCOHOLIC BEVERAGES, USE AND CONSUMPTION](#)

[UAB POLICY AS A DRUG FREE CAMPUS](#)

[UAB POLICY ON NON-SMOKING](#)

TECHNOLOGY

[UAB POLICY ON TECHNOLOGY RESOURCES](#)

STUDENT COMPLAINTS

[UAB COMPLAINT POLICY](#)

SECTION 3: PhD IN ADMINISTRATION-HEALTH SERVICES SPECIFIC INFORMATION

PROGRAM OVERVIEW

INTRODUCTION

Founded in 1978, the PhD Program in Administration – Health Services prepares the next generation of scholars to improve health and health care through rigorous research, innovation, and evidence-informed decision making. The program's mission is to advance health systems through the generation, translation, and implementation of knowledge that improves health care delivery, organizational performance, population health, and health policy. Graduates are prepared for careers in academia, health systems, government, research organizations, and other settings where they lead research that addresses complex challenges in health care.

The PhD program provides interdisciplinary doctoral training in health systems research, implementation science, health services research, health informatics, organizational and policy analysis, and quantitative, qualitative, and mixed research methods. Students develop the conceptual, methodological, analytical, and scientific communication skills necessary to generate new knowledge and translate research into practice, with the goal of improving the quality, safety, efficiency, reach, and value of health care.

The program benefits from UAB's rich research ecosystem, including partnerships with centers and institutes such as the Center for Clinical and Translational Science (CCTS), the Lister Hill Center for Health Policy, the Center for Outcomes and Effectiveness Research and Education, the Center for Healthcare Management and Leadership, and numerous clinical and population health research programs. These resources provide students with opportunities to participate in multidisciplinary research teams, collaborate with health system leaders, and engage in externally funded research projects.

The PhD program is designed primarily as a full-time, residential program and is typically completed in three to six years, with an average completion time of approximately five years. Exceptional applicants may be admitted on a part-time basis. During the first two years, students complete coursework in health systems research, implementation science, research design, statistics, and their selected area of specialization. Subsequent years focus on comprehensive examinations, dissertation proposal development, independent research, and dissertation completion. Students complete comprehensive examinations in health services and research methods and

participate in a strategic alignment meeting with their dissertation committee before formally proposing their dissertation research.

The curriculum is designed to prepare independent investigators capable of conducting impactful research that informs health policy and improves health care delivery. The program emphasizes close faculty mentorship and encourages students to become active members of research teams early in their doctoral training. Students frequently collaborate with faculty on peer-reviewed publications, conference presentations, grant proposals, and applied research projects.

A hallmark of the program is its collaborative learning environment. Small class sizes, individualized mentoring, research assistantships, seminars, and professional development activities foster strong relationships among students and faculty while preparing graduates for successful research careers.

Upon completion of the program, graduates are expected to be able to:

1. Design, conduct, and disseminate rigorous health systems research using appropriate theoretical frameworks and methodological approaches.
2. Apply advanced quantitative, qualitative, and mixed-methods research techniques to address complex health care challenges.
3. Develop, evaluate, and implement evidence-based interventions that improve health care delivery, organizational performance, and population health.
4. Translate research findings into practice and policy through dissemination and implementation science.
5. Demonstrate expertise within a specialized area of health systems research.
6. Secure and contribute to competitive research funding and multidisciplinary research collaborations.
7. Communicate scientific findings effectively to academic, clinical, organizational, policy, and community audiences.
8. Serve as independent investigators, educators, and leaders in academic institutions, health systems, government agencies, nonprofit organizations, and industry.

Recognizing that many graduates pursue academic careers, the program also provides opportunities to develop teaching and mentoring skills. Doctoral students may serve as teaching assistants, guest lecturers, or instructors for undergraduate and graduate courses while working closely with faculty to develop effective instructional practices. These experiences prepare graduates for faculty positions while complementing their development as independent researchers.

MISSION, VISION AND VALUES

The mission of the PhD Program in Administration – Health Services is to prepare the next generation of scholars, educators, and research leaders who advance health and health care through rigorous, innovative, and impactful research. We are committed to improving health systems, informing health policy, and accelerating the translation of evidence into practice through excellence in health systems research, health policy, implementation science, health informatics, and related disciplines.

We recruit a talented community of doctoral students from across the United States and around the world who are committed to careers in research, scholarship, and teaching. The program provides an interdisciplinary educational experience that draws upon expertise from across the University of Alabama at Birmingham, including the School of Medicine, the School of Public Health, School of Nursing, and other disciplines that contribute to improving health systems and services.

Central to the doctoral experience is close faculty mentorship. Students work collaboratively with faculty throughout their training to develop independent research skills, contribute to multidisciplinary research teams, disseminate scientific findings, and prepare for successful careers as independent investigators. The program also provides opportunities for students to develop as educators through teaching assistantships, guest lectures, course instruction, and faculty mentoring in effective teaching practices. These experiences prepare graduates to excel as both researchers and educators in academic settings while strengthening their ability to communicate complex concepts.

These mentoring relationships provide the foundation for lifelong scholarly collaboration and professional development. Our alumni remain active partners in the program by mentoring students, collaborating on research, providing guidance on curriculum and program development, and creating career opportunities for graduates.

We aspire to be an internationally recognized doctoral program known for excellence in health systems and health services research, implementation science, and the preparation of outstanding researchers and educators. We are committed to fostering an inclusive, collaborative, and intellectually vibrant learning environment while responsibly stewarding institutional resources. Our graduates are equipped to improve health and health care through research, teaching, and leadership in academic institutions, health systems, government agencies, nonprofit organizations, and industry across Alabama, the nation, and the world.

PROGRAM OVERVIEW

Program requirements include successful completion of the prerequisite courses, required Ph.D. coursework (including core courses, quantitative courses, and specialization courses), two comprehensive examinations, a dissertation proposal, and

a dissertation. A three-paper dissertation option may be used instead of the traditional dissertation format. Students must be registered for at least one credit hour of an AH-prefix course each term.

Upon entering the program, the Program Director serves as the primary academic advisor. Students should also consult with the Program Director regarding course selection, preparations for comprehensive exams, selection of faculty members for Program Committees, and selection of faculty members for dissertation committees. Academic advisors may change for the student after the first year. It is the student's responsibility to make appointments to meet with his or her academic advisor as needed.

FACULTY AND STAFF

A defining strength of the program is its interdisciplinary environment. Students work closely with nationally and internationally recognized faculty from the Department of Health Services Administration as well as collaborators across the University of Alabama at Birmingham, including the Schools of Medicine, Public Health, Health Professions, and Business. Faculty maintain active research programs spanning health services research, implementation science, health policy, organizational behavior, health informatics, artificial intelligence, quality improvement, and health care management. Through these collaborations, students gain exposure to different theoretical perspectives, methodological approaches, and real-world research opportunities. Visit the Department of Health Services Administration website for more information on our faculty: [Primary Faculty | SHP - Health Services Administration](#).

ADMISSIONS & ENROLLMENT REQUIREMENTS

CRITERIA AND REQUIRED MATERIALS

Applicants are admitted to the program during the fall semester only. The priority admission deadline for those needing financial support is March 1. Applications received after the priority admission deadline will be considered on a space-available basis.

All applicants will be reviewed by the Admissions and Policy Committee. Admission will be determined by a consensus of the committee after examining the applicant's qualifications, previous academic records, prior research efforts, motivation for pursuing doctoral work, invited interview, and potential contribution to the health services field.

- Complete and submit the online application via the UAB application system.
- Submit transcripts from all post-secondary institutions previously attended, including those you did not earn a degree from. Unofficial transcripts can be uploaded into the application for the application review process. If admitted, applicants will still be required to submit official copies.

- Three recommendations from professional contacts. The online system will require you to enter the names and email addresses for all three recommenders. The system will send them an email with a link to the online recommendation form and letter upload.
- Updated resume/CV
- Personal Statement
- Recent scores from an English Proficiency Exam (international students only)
- Interviews will be scheduled by the Admissions Committee for selected applicants.

EXAMPLE CURRICULUM

YEAR 1

Fall

HA 602: Introduction to Health Care Systems (3) ¹
 HA 632 Quantitative Methods (3)¹
 HPO 701: Health Economics (3)
 AH 755: Dissemination & Implementation Science in Health Care (3)
 GRD 717: Principles of Scientific Integrity (3)

Spring

HI 617: Introduction to Health Informatics (3)
 AH 760: Foundations for Health Policy Research And Evaluation (3)
 AH 722: Regression (3)
 AH 720: Doctoral Seminar (2)
 Elective (3)

Summer

AH 705: Health Care Finance (3)
 AH 727: Multivariate Statistics (3)
 AH 715: Research In Organization Theory (3) or AH 725: Information Systems Theory And Practice (3)²

YEAR 2

Fall

HRP 705: Teaching in Health Professions (3)

¹ Denotes prerequisite; may be waived based on prior coursework or qualifications

² AH 725 offered every other year

AH 703: Philosophy of Science (3)
AH 710: Comparative Health Systems (3)
AH 712: Organizational Behavior (3)
Elective (3)

Spring

AH 707: Research Methods (3)
AH 777: Mixed Method Research (3) OR AH 785: Qualitative Research (3)
AH 720: Doctoral Seminar (2)
AH 775: Strategic Planning And Management Health Care Organizations (3)
Elective (3)

Summer

AH 798: Independent Study (3)
Elective (3)
Elective (3)

NON-DISSERTATION RESEARCH HOURS:

12 hours of AH 798 taken over 2 or more semesters.

Dissertation Research Hours: 12 hours of AH 799 taken over 2 or more semesters.

Visit the UAB Catalog website for course descriptions: [Administration-Health Services | Catalogs | The University of Alabama at Birmingham](#)

COURSE WAIVERS

There may be some courses in the curriculum that a student has completed during previous graduate coursework. For that reason, the program allows students to waive a course based on previous academic work. Each waiver must be approved by the program director.

To initiate a petition to waive a course, the student should obtain a Course Waiver Form from the Program Director. The completed form, along with documentation of the previous coursework, must be submitted to the Program Director. Appropriate documentation of previous coursework includes a course syllabus, detailed course description from a published source (e.g., a printed or on-line graduate catalog from the university where the course was taken), or textbook used. Petitions to waive a course must be submitted to the program director at least six weeks prior to the beginning of the term in the which the course to be waived is offered. No student will be allowed to waive more than three courses in the PhD curriculum.

DEGREE REQUIREMENTS, DISSERTATION PROCESS, AND DISSERTATION COMMITTEES

DEGREE REQUIREMENTS AND DISSERTATION PROCESS

During the second year of the Program each student begins working with a faculty member of the student's choosing on selecting and specifying a dissertation topic and identifying potential members for the student's Dissertation Committee.

1. After successfully completing the required coursework and passing the Health Services and Research Methods comprehensive examinations, the student submits to the Program Director an abstract of the proposed dissertation topic, along with a proposed list of members for the student's Dissertation Committee.
2. Once the dissertation topic and the membership of the committee have been determined, the student will work with the Program Manager to request that the committee be appointed by the Dean of the Graduate School. The letter should list the membership of the proposed committee, providing for each member the academic rank, departmental affiliation, and role on the committee (i.e., chair, or member).
3. Once the Dissertation Committee has been appointed and the student has passed the required comprehensive examinations, the student's next step is to submit a Research Synopsis and complete a Pre-Proposal Strategic Alignment Meeting with the full committee, at which the student presents preliminary research plans and the committee provides early, structured feedback on the dissertation's scope, design, and feasibility.
4. When the Dissertation Committee agrees that the student is ready to start writing the proposal, the student prepares the proposal and allows the committee to provide structured feedback as it is being written.
5. When the Dissertation Committee agrees that the student's dissertation proposal is essentially completed, the dissertation proposal defense is scheduled. The final the dissertation proposal defense is not scheduled until each member of the committee concurs.
6. Once the Dissertation Committee approves the proposal and the student passes the dissertation proposal defense, provided all other pertinent requirements (including IRB approval) are satisfied, the student at that point advances to Candidacy.
7. When the Dissertation Committee agrees that the student's dissertation is essentially completed, the dissertation defense is scheduled. The dissertation defense is not scheduled until each member of the committee concurs.
8. Once the student successfully passes the dissertation defense and obtains approval of any final corrections, the student should have thereby met all

graduation requirements and is eligible to receive the Ph.D. degree upon completing a diploma application.

DISSERTATION COMMITTEE

The Dissertation Committee must consist of at least five members. The committee chair and at least two additional members must hold primary faculty appointments in the UAB Department of Health Services Administration (HSA). No more than four committee members may be from the same department.

The student should also identify a faculty member willing to serve as dissertation chair and work with that person to select a dissertation topic, refine the topic, and identify potential members for the student's Dissertation Committee. The committee chair is responsible for mentoring the student throughout the dissertation process, providing intellectual leadership, and guiding the design and completion of a rigorous, original doctoral dissertation.

Individuals who are not regular UAB faculty members, including qualified professionals from outside the University, may serve as special members of the committee when their expertise makes a significant contribution to the dissertation. Requests to appoint a special member must go through the Program Director, Program Manager, and Graduate School approval process and include a justification describing the individual's relevant expertise, and submission of a curriculum vitae.

The Dissertation Committee is officially constituted upon approval by the Dean of the Graduate School. Any subsequent changes in committee membership require approval by the Dean. Students should submit requests for committee changes, along with a brief explanation, to the Program Manager. Changes in a committee member's employment status, such as resignation or retirement, may require reconstitution of the committee to ensure compliance with Graduate School and program requirements. Students are encouraged to consult with the Program Director and Program Manager whenever such changes occur to minimize disruption to dissertation progress.

COMPREHENSIVE EXAMS

Students in the PhD Program in Administration – Health Services must pass two comprehensive examinations before they can be admitted to candidacy (i.e., before they will be allowed to defend their dissertation proposal):

- Health care and health services
- Research methods

Students are eligible to sit for a comprehensive exam once they have completed the required courses for that area and have obtained consent from the program director.

The comprehensive exam questions for a given area are written by one or more primary faculty members from that area after consulting with other primary faculty members from that area as she/he/they deem(s) appropriate. Not all faculty members from a given area will necessarily write and grade the comprehensive exam.

Each comprehensive exam consists of two parts: a written examination (consisting of several questions), followed by an oral examination. Written exams are blind-graded (i.e., the professors do not know the identity of the student when they grade each written exam) when possible. The purpose of the oral exam is to provide an opportunity for the faculty to clarify the students' answers to the written questions. Oral exams are usually given within 4 to 6 weeks after the written exam.

Approximately 4 to 6 weeks prior to a scheduled comprehensive exam, the program manager will notify students and request responses from those students who wish to take the exam. Students must reply to these requests; if no students state their intent to take the exam, preparations will not be undertaken (having faculty write questions, arranging for an appropriate testing site, etc.) and the exam will not be available until the following scheduled date. For the health care and health administration and the research methods and statistics exams, if the exam has already been written and arrangements made, additional students may request to take the exam up to one week before the scheduled date, but such requests will only be granted on a space-available basis.

Seven (7) days (Saturday-Friday) are allowed for the completion of each comprehensive exam. Students are encouraged to use resources such as published literature, the internet and course material in preparing responses. However, students are still expected to work independently on their responses and at no time during the exam should students talk with each other or anyone else about the exam. Use of AI is not allowed on comprehensive exams. Compliance with the letter and spirit of all academic integrity policies of the program and the university is fully expected. One overall grade of "pass" or "fail" will be provided for the entire exam. That grade will be determined by the committee after the student has completed both the written and oral

exams in that area. Students have only two opportunities to pass each comprehensive exam.

DISSERTATION PRE-PROPOSAL STRATEGIC ALIGNMENT MEETING

Effective for the 2026–2027 handbook update, the Pre-Proposal Strategic Alignment Meeting, supported by a written Research Synopsis, replaces the previously required third (specialization) comprehensive examination. The meeting occurs after a student has passed the Health Services and Research Methods comprehensive examinations, completed coursework, and formed a Dissertation Committee, but before the dissertation proposal is written. The meeting is intended to provide students with structured, early feedback from the full committee on the direction of the proposed dissertation and to establish shared expectations among all committee members regarding the dissertation's scope, design, and feasibility. Prior to the meeting, the student must prepare and submit a short Research Synopsis to the dissertation chair and incorporate any feedback received before distributing the synopsis to the full committee. All committee members must receive the synopsis no later than two weeks before the alignment meeting.

The student is responsible for scheduling the alignment meeting with all committee members after the Research Synopsis has been submitted and reviewed, and for notifying the Program Director and Program Manager of the scheduled date. At the meeting, the student delivers a structured presentation of approximately 10–15 minutes covering the problem the dissertation will address and its significance, preliminary insights from the literature, the proposed conceptual or theoretical framework, the proposed methodological approach, and a tentative timeline for completion. A collaborative discussion with the committee follows; this discussion is not an examination, but an alignment conversation intended to surface concerns, clarify expectations, and identify areas requiring early attention. Within five business days of the meeting, the student must send a brief written follow-up summary to all committee members capturing key decisions, agreed expectations, and next steps.

DISSERTATION PROPOSAL

The dissertation proposal is developed after the student has completed the Pre-Proposal Strategic Alignment Meeting with the Dissertation Committee. The proposal should reflect and build upon the feedback, milestone plan, and shared expectations established with the committee at that meeting.

The student must prepare a dissertation proposal for formal approval by the dissertation committee. This document must be sufficiently specific and well-grounded to guide the actual conduct of the dissertation. Although it should be relatively brief, it must be substantial enough to serve as a contract between the student and the dissertation committee. Although an exhaustive literature review is expected to be included in the dissertation, the proposal need not include an exhaustive one, nor does the proposal need to be the equivalent of several chapters of the dissertation itself.

KEY ELEMENTS OF AN ACCEPTABLE PROPOSAL ARE:

1. One-page summary.
2. The problem, question, or hypotheses to be addressed.
3. Review of key literature relevant to the topic.
4. Importance of the topic and its contribution to health systems research.
5. Scope of the investigation: limitations and assumptions.
6. Constructs or model that underlies the investigation.
7. Data and methods to be used.
8. timetable.

Whenever subsequent exploration of the topic results in the need to deviate substantially from an approved dissertation proposal, the changes should be formally approved by the dissertation committee. After the dissertation committee is satisfied that the proposal meets all committee and program expectations and the student has received IRB approval for his/her proposed research, the Program Manager will send a letter to the Graduate School Dean requesting that the student be advanced to candidacy status.

DISSERTATION AND DEFENSE PROCESS

The dissertation committee chair will inform the student when the committee considers the dissertation to be complete, and when the committee will be ready to conduct the final oral examination. The student and the committee members should then schedule the examination. Faculty, graduate students and others will be invited to attend. During the oral examination, the student may be asked to reconsider certain aspects of the work done for the dissertation and to make certain changes or corrections to the document submitted. At the end of the examination, the chair will discuss the oral examination with the other members of the committee in private and inform the student of their assessment results.

If a member of the committee is not able to attend the oral examination (either in person or via distance-supporting technology), the member must read the dissertation and abstract and submit their evaluations to the dissertation committee chair at least two working days before the examination. An absent member of the committee may also

communicate questions to the chair to be discussed at the oral examination. The findings of the absent member must be incorporated into deliberations of the committee.

After the oral examination, the dissertation committee chair will notify the Program Director of the outcome of the examination. If the dissertation committee asks for changes or corrections in the dissertation, the student should make these and show them to the committee chair for approval. The committee chair in turn is responsible for returning to the Program Director the oral examination report with signed certification that all requested corrections have been completed. Once all requirements have been met, the dissertation committee chair will recommend to the Dean that the student be awarded the Ph.D. degree.

RESEARCH ETHICS

All students are required to complete GRD 717 Responsible Conduct of Research offered through the UAB Graduate School prior to submitting a dissertation proposal or participating in any type of research activities. Therefore, it is highly recommended that students complete this training during their first academic year.

POLICIES & STANDARDS

ACADEMIC PROGRESS AND DEGREE COMPLETION

The UAB Graduate School generally expects doctoral students to complete all degree requirements within 7 years of matriculation into the program. One extension of these time limits can be requested when mitigating circumstances preclude completion of requirements within the time limit. Moreover, limited financial resources preclude 'open ended' support for students who are receiving financial support from the Ph.D. Program and the Department of Health Services Administrations. Given these considerations, the Ph.D. Program in Administration-Health Services has developed a policy to ensure its students are making meaningful progress toward completing the degree in a reasonable timeframe. The policy set forth describes important milestones for completing the degree and remedial steps to be taken when these milestones are not met.

MILESTONES: FULL-TIME WORKLOAD

- Pass Health Services Comprehensive Exam – within 1 years of matriculation
- Pass Research Methods Comprehensive Exam – within 2 years of matriculation
- Pre-Proposal Strategic Alignment Meeting – within 3 years of matriculation
- Successfully defend dissertation proposal – within 4 years of matriculation
- Successfully complete dissertation research – within 5 years of matriculation

MILESTONES: PART-TIME WORKLOAD

- Pass Health Services Comprehensive Exam – within 2 years of matriculation

- Pass Research Methods Comprehensive Exam – within 3 years of matriculation
- Successfully complete Pre-Proposal Strategic Alignment Meeting – within 4 years of matriculation
- Successfully defend dissertation proposal – within 5 years of matriculation
- Successfully complete dissertation research – within 6 years of matriculation

REMEDIAL STEPS IF MILESTONES NOT MET:

- If you miss passing the health services comprehensive exam, meet with the Ph.D. program director to discuss reasons for not completing.
- If you miss passing the research methods comprehensive exam, meet with the Ph.D. program director to discuss reasons for not completing.
- If you miss successfully completing pre-proposal strategic alignment meeting, meet with the Ph.D. program director and dissertation committee chair to discuss reasons for not completing. Submit plan for completion to program director and dissertation committee chair.
- If you miss successfully defending dissertation proposal within five years of matriculation, submit plan for completion to program director and dissertation committee chair.
- If you miss successfully defending dissertation proposal within seven years of matriculation, submit plan for completion to program director and dissertation committee chair.

It is the student's responsibility to monitor his/her progress toward degree and meet these milestones. Failure to meet these milestones and respond with an appropriate plan to bring him/herself into compliance in a timely manner will result in dismissal from the program.

GRADUATE ASSISTANTSHIPS

Each year a limited number of research assistantships are awarded on a competitive basis. These positions provide a monthly stipend, as well as tuition and most fees, and carry an obligation of 20 work hours per week.

Research assistants are assigned by the Department Chair and Program Director to work with faculty members in the Department of Health Services Administration or in the School of Medicine in order to facilitate the development of the students' own research skills and to provide research support to the faculty.

Assistantships are awarded to students for a period of one year and may be renewed after the first year based on satisfactory work and academic progress in the program, contingent upon available funds. Research assistants are formally evaluated by the faculty members for whom they work once each year. Faculty members are encouraged

to communicate regularly with the program director concerning the quality of work completed by the research assistants.

Research assistants must register for, and complete, at least thirty-two (32) semester hours of approved graduate work each year. Students will be responsible for all tuition and fees if they withdraw from the Graduate Assistantship Program after the published withdrawal deadlines for any term. Research assistants may not engage in other remunerated activities either on campus or off campus. Exceptions to this rule are rare and must be approved in writing by the Program Director and the Graduate Dean.

Appointments as a Graduate Assistant normally end on August 31. If recommended by the Program Director and approved by the Graduate Dean, the appointment may be renewed for a subsequent year.