

Epidemiology

2017-2018 PhD Student Handbook

**James T. Laney School of Graduate Studies
Emory University**

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Part 1: Academic Affairs

1.1 Program Overview

(A) Goal of Epidemiology PhD Program

The goal of the doctoral program in Epidemiology at Emory University is to train students in the methods of epidemiology and the application of these concepts to a broad scope of conceptual issues and health problems. Students have a wide range of unique opportunities for research and education through the Epidemiology Program and the health agencies affiliated with the Program. The goal of the program is to produce epidemiologists capable of being lead researchers (principal investigators), teachers of epidemiology and public health officials. Our graduates are in positions in academia, government and private industry.

The doctoral program in Epidemiology is one of 6 Public Health Sciences doctoral programs administered through the [Laney Graduate School \(LGS\)](#) and follows the rules and procedures set forth by the LGS. For a complete guide of the LGS policies and procedures please see the *LGS Handbook* (<http://www.gs.emory.edu/uploads/academics/LGS%20Handbook.pdf>).

(B) Admissions

In any year there are between 40 and 50 students at various points in their progress towards the PhD degree. The Program receives over 150 applications a year for 8 to 12 spaces. Admitted students most often have an advanced degree in epidemiology or a related field, a clear statement of purpose conveying an understanding of the field of epidemiology and explaining their desire to pursue the degree, defined research interests, outstanding recommendations from faculty and supervisors, some professional/research experience, and excellent GRE scores.

(C) Research Opportunities

The Department of Epidemiology has approximately 40 primarily appointed faculty, more than 60 jointly appointed faculty, and more than 100 adjunct faculty. These faculty members are actively engaged in research in methodology; cancer epidemiology; cardio-metabolic epidemiology; infectious disease epidemiology; reproductive, pediatric and perinatal epidemiology; genetic and molecular epidemiology; and social epidemiology.

Research opportunities are available not only in the Epidemiology Program but also in affiliated agencies and institutions. The Program has jointly appointed faculty from administrative units throughout the University including the School of Medicine and the Winship Cancer Institute. Adjunct faculty include researchers from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention and the American Cancer Society. Seminars presented by faculty, students and internationally known investigators offer exposure to ongoing research in the field and allow students to discuss research in progress.

(D) Advising

Students are assigned a faculty advisor upon entrance to the program based on the interest areas of both the student and faculty. The faculty advisor serves as a resource for progress through the program, including course selection and dissertation topic development. Often the

faculty advisor becomes the dissertation committee chairperson, however, the student is free to change advisors and/or change areas of interest. To change advisors, students should obtain agreement from the new advisor and notify the prior advisor, the DGS (Dr. Howards), and the ADAP (Jena Black). When a student develops a dissertation committee, the Chair of the Committee (if different from the assigned advisor) becomes the student’s advisor for the remaining duration of the PhD program. In addition to the faculty advisor, both the DGS and ADAP assist students with general course and program advisement, including communication of related policies specific to LGS.

Mentorship is an important component of doctoral training. As such, students are encouraged to review the LGS’ Mentoring Guide for Students: Building Successful Mentoring Relationships (<http://www.gs.emory.edu/professional-development/mentoring.html>) and to participate in professional development activities developed by the Program.

1.2 Degree Competencies

The following table outlines the basic competencies that the PhD students should master upon completing their doctoral program.

LITERATURE REVIEW AND INTERPRETATION	1. Critically evaluate scientific literature
	2. Synthesize scientific literature findings across studies, balancing limitations and contributions of each study
	3. Render an informed judgment on the state of knowledge in an area of public health
	4. Articulate research questions that advance scientific knowledge about the topic
DESIGN AND CONDUCT EPIDEMIOLOGIC RESEARCH STUDIES	5. Conduct an advanced, original research project in the student’s discipline
	6. Participate in data collection through one or more of the following: developing a questionnaire, piloting a study instrument, recruiting study participants, etc.
MANAGE & ANALYZE DATA	7. Apply quantitative and reasoning skills, as well as content-area knowledge to analyze data from epidemiological studies
COMMUNICATION	8. Present epidemiologic findings clearly, in writing and orally, to students, professionals and the public
GRANT WRITING	9. Develop a proposal for extramural research funding
TEACHING	10. Teach epidemiologic concepts to students and peers
ETHICS	11. Complete training on the basic principles of ethics in Human subjects research
	12. Recognize potential ethical issues in epidemiologic studies
	13. Prepare an application to an Institutional Review Board
INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY FOR SCIENTIFIC PRODUCTIVITY	14. Utilize information technology tools which are critical to scientific productivity including scientific literature databases and search engines, reference management software and statistical analysis software

1.3 Program Requirements

To successfully complete the doctoral program in epidemiology, students must complete the following:

1. Curriculum
2. LGS/Teaching Assistant Training and Teaching Opportunity Program ([TATTO](#))
3. LGS/[Jones Program in Ethics](#)
4. Primary Data Collection
5. Two Research Assistantships (RA)
6. English as a Second Language (ESL) Program (*International Students Only*)
7. Participation in the Student Research and Progress Symposium
8. Written Qualifying Examination
9. Dissertation including successful completion of the following milestones:
 - (a) Dissertation Concept Letter approved by PhD Program Committee
 - (b) Dissertation Overview approved by PhD Program Committee
 - (c) Written Dissertation Proposal approved by the Dissertation Committee
 - (d) Oral Defense of Dissertation Proposal
 - (e) Written Dissertation Document
 - (f) Oral Defense of the Dissertation
 - (g) Submission of written Dissertation approved by the Dissertation Committee
10. Departmental/Program Citizenship
11. Annual Submission of Individual Development Plan and Research and Progress Report

1.3.1 Epidemiology Program Curriculum Requirements

The Epidemiology doctoral curriculum consists of required classes that provide students with a foundation in epidemiologic methods and statistics as well as in advanced methodologic training. EPI 530: Epidemiologic Methods I, Biostatistics 500: Biostatistics Methods I, and EPI 533: Programming in SAS may be waived if students learned the concepts in coursework taken prior to entering the program. This is determined on a case-by-case basis upon consultation with the DGS and ADAP prior to matriculation. Elective coursework is meant to provide substantive information in areas of interest, to demonstrate how epidemiologic methods are applied in different areas, and to teach students how to critically review epidemiologic literature. Students are required to take at least 2 epidemiology courses in 2 different substantive areas of research to equal no less than 4 credit hours. Students may fulfill the additional 2 required elective hours with a substantive area or an elective EPI methods course. Students are encouraged to take additional electives relevant to their training. Required courses and all epidemiology electives counting towards the elective requirement must be taken for a grade; other courses may be taken with the satisfactory/unsatisfactory grading option (with permission of the course instructor).

All students must complete a minimum of 18 credit hours of graded coursework selected from methods and elective courses offered by the Epidemiology Program to be eligible for Candidacy. Further, LGS requires students to complete 54 credit hours (including required

coursework, research hours, TATT courses, and other optional coursework) to be eligible for Candidacy.

Epidemiology PhD Coursework Requirements

	Class Number	Semester Offered	Class Name	Credit Hours
Epidemiology Program Curriculum Requirements	EPI 530	Fall	Epidemiologic Methods I	4
	EPI 533	Fall	SAS Programming	1
	EPI 534	Spring	Epidemiologic Methods II	3
	EPI 591U	Spring	Application of Epidemiologic Concepts	3
	EPI 738	Spring	Advanced Epidemiologic Methods I	2
	EPI 739	Fall	Advanced Epidemiologic Methods II	2
	EPI 740	Fall	Epidemiologic Modeling	3
	EPI 750	Spring	Longitudinal Data Analysis	3
	EPI 790R*	Fall, Spring	PhD Journal Club	1
	BIOS 500	Fall	Biostatistical Methods I	4
	BIOS 591P	Spring	Biostatistical Methods II	3
	BIOS 510	Fall	Probability Theory	4
	EPI XXX	Fall, Spring	Electives (to include no less than 4 credit hours from 2 different substantive areas)	6
	EPI 701**	Fall	Translational Public Health Research	1
	EPI 731	Spring	Analytical Foundations of Epidemiology	3
EPI 798R/EPI799R	Fall, Spring	Research hours	≥18	
LGS TATTO Requirements	TATT 600	Fall	Teaching Assistant Training Course	1
	TATT 605	Fall, Spring	Teaching Assistantship	2
	TATT 610	Fall, Spring	Teaching Associateship	2
	EPI 791**	Fall	Teaching Epidemiology	1
LGS JPE Requirements	JPE 600	Spring	Jones Program in Ethics Core Course	0
		Fall, Spring	Program Based Instruction (6 hours)	0
	JPE 610	Fall, Spring	Jones Program in Ethics Workshops	0

*Enrollment in Journal Club is required every semester including through the semester of graduation unless the student is excused by the DGS

**EPI 701 and EPI 791 do not count towards 6 hours of EPI electives requirement.

EPI 701 Translational Public Health Research (1 credit hour)

The field of public health necessitates the translation of research into programs that promote population health. This course focuses on how research in each discipline of public health may be disseminated and put into practice, contributing to the improvement of population health. This course also lays the foundation for students to move beyond disciplinary silos common to doctoral work and enrich their studies through multiple perspectives. To both of these ends, this course prepares students to understand the language and approaches of several disciplines comprising the field of public health (in academic and practice), thereby fostering greater potential for collaboration and improvement in population health. This course is graded on a satisfactory/unsatisfactory basis.

1.3.2 Teaching Assistant Training and Teaching Opportunity Program (TATTO) Requirements

All students in LGS must participate in the Teaching Assistant Training and Teaching Opportunity (TATTO) program. The program consists of four components: (1) a 2 day course offered by LGS; (2) the Epidemiology Program course EPI 791 “Teaching Epidemiology”; (3) a teaching assistantship; and (4) a teaching associateship. Each of these components is described in more detail below. TATTO credits on the student’s transcript indicate fulfillment of the degree requirement. Students are required to complete their teaching assistantship and associateship prior to taking the Qualifying Exam because TAing provides an opportunity to prepare for the exam.

TATTO requirements are graded on an S/U basis. Students receiving a “U” for a TATTO requirement will repeat TATT 600 and the TATTO rotation in which they received a “U” (TATT 605 or TATT 610). Student’s earning TATTO credit do not receive payment for being a TA.

Students interested in receiving additional training in teaching may participate in paid TA opportunities beyond the TATTO requirements (see section 4.4). Before agreeing to TA for pay, the student must receive approval from his or her advisor, the DGS, and the Dean of the Graduate School. Per LGS policy, students may not serve as a Teaching Assistant or Teaching Associate for more than 5 semesters (including TATTO and other TA opportunities) in the first 5 years of the Program without permission from the Dean of the Graduate School. Further, a student who wants to TA for pay or as non-paid training opportunity during a semester in which he or she is fulfilling a TATTO requirement, must receive approval from the DGS.

Both the students in the lab section that the PhD student is teaching and the course instructor evaluate TA performance. The evaluations are distributed to the PhD student and the course instructor, and a copy is included in the student’s file.

The requirements for completion of the TATTO program are as follows:

1. Teaching Assistant Training Course (TATT 600); 1 credit hour

This is a 2 day course taught in August. This course must be taken before students can receive credit for the teaching assistantship or teaching associateship. The course covers syllabus writing, grading, lecturing, facilitating discussion, using writing as a pedagogical

tool, conducting lab sessions, and using new technologies. Though this course occurs in late summer, it appears on the student transcript as a fall course.

2. Teaching Epidemiology (EPI 791); 1 credit hour

This Epidemiology Program teaching course is taken concurrently with TATT 605 and is taught by an Epidemiology Graduate Faculty Member.

3. Teaching Assistantship (TATT 605); 2 credit hours for 1 semester

Students assist faculty in the teaching of one of the basic epidemiology courses (typically EPI 530: Epidemiologic Methods I) as a lab section leader. Typically, the lab section leader for EPI 530 reviews information presented in the lecture. Responsibilities include: grading homework, holding review sessions, providing individual help to students through office hours, and other duties deemed necessary by the instructor. Students who are fulfilling this requirement must be present from the first course meeting through grading of the final exam or equivalent. As a general rule, elective courses do not fulfill the TATT 605 requirement.

Receiving a grade of S after TAing for one semester indicates successful completion of the TATT 605 requirement. All students must complete TATT 600 before they TA for TATT 605. Typically, students entering the Program with an MPH in Epidemiology will complete TATT 600 at the start of their first year and will TA EPI 530 in their first semester; international students must complete any requirements of the LGS ESL assessment as well as TATT 600 prior to receiving a TATT 605 assignment. Students who do not TA in their first Fall typically TA EPI 530 in the Fall of their second year. Decisions about when to complete the TATT 600 and 605 requirements are made in consultation with student, the DGS, and the Program ADAP. For incoming students, that discussion typically occurs in May before they enter the program.

4. Teaching Associateship (TATT 610); 2 credit hours for 1 semester

Student teaching associates lead a lab section in an advanced epidemiologic methods course (typically EPI 534: Epidemiologic Methods II, EPI 591U: Applications of Epidemiologic Methods, or EPI 740: Epidemiologic Modeling). Teaching Associates take more responsibility for a lab section, often presenting new information and reviewing challenging methodological concepts. The faculty member who is the instructor for the lecture portion of the course provides opportunities for Teaching Associateships to provide feedback and suggestions on course components such as: syllabus, homework, exams, general format, lectures, etc. As a general rule, elective courses do not fulfill the TATT 610 requirement. Students who are fulfilling this requirement must be present from the first course meeting through grading of the final exam or equivalent.

Receiving a grade of S after TAing for one semester indicates successful completion of the TATT 610 requirement. Typically, students complete the TATT 610 requirement in the Spring before they take the Qualifying Exam. Discussions about when to complete the TATT 610 requirement are made in consultation with student, the DGS, and the Program ADAP, and

discussions about which course the student will TA are made in consultation with the instructors of the eligible courses as well. The decision about which course each student will TA for typically occurs in October. However, discussions about when a student will complete the TATT 610 requirement are initiated in May before the student enrolls and are revisited as needed.

1.3.3 [Jones Program in Ethics](#) Requirements

Students receive training in ethics in research both through the Epidemiology Program and the LGS. Within the required Epidemiology PhD coursework students may gain exposure to topics such as ethics in human subject research and ethics of authorship. The LGS sponsors numerous seminars and workshops on scholarly integrity. Students are required to enroll in JPE 600 and a minimum of 4 JPE 610 workshops. Though not required, students are strongly encouraged to complete the minimum 4 JPE workshops prior to entering candidacy. Additionally, students receive at least 6 hours of ethics training related to Epidemiology through EPI 790R (Journal Club) class sessions in the first two years of the Program.

1.3.4 Primary Data Collection

It is required that all PhD students have primary data collection experience during their doctoral training. The goal of the primary data collection requirement is to ensure that students have direct experience with the challenges associated with obtaining primary data for epidemiologic research. This experience will provide a more nuanced understanding of the strengths and limitations of research data. Primary data collection refers to obtaining data from the primary source (e.g., recruiting study participants, conducting interviews with participants, abstracting medical chart data, collecting laboratory data, etc). Both the student's advisor and the DGS must approve a student's satisfactory completion of at least one relevant primary data collection experience.

Although some students will collect primary data for their dissertation, it is strongly recommended that students fulfill this requirement prior to beginning their dissertation research. For most, this experience can be achieved during one of their research assistantships (RAs) described in the next section. If a student will not fulfill the Primary Data Collection Requirement through an RA opportunity or dissertation work, he or she must identify an alternative opportunity to complete the requirement.

Students must submit a description of proposed primary data collection activities to the DGS for approval. In some cases, proposed activities will be reviewed by the full PhD Program Committee. Most students should plan to complete the Primary Data Collection Requirement prior to entering Candidacy. However, students who plan to collect primary data as part of their dissertation work may complete the requirement later. If plans to collect primary data as part of the dissertation change, the student must identify and complete an alternative, approved primary data collection experience prior to the dissertation defense.

1.3.5 Research Assistantships

All students are required to complete no less than 2 RAs *prior to advancing to candidacy and ideally by the beginning of year 3*. Typically, at least one if not both RAs should be completed after completing at least one semester of training in Epidemiology at Emory or elsewhere (e.g., students with an MPH from another institution). The goal of the RA is for the student to gain experience in a real research setting, expand his/her skillset, and perform tasks that he/she would do as a practicing epidemiologist. It could include performing an analysis, developing a questionnaire, interviewing study participants, writing a manuscript, assisting in writing a grant proposal, and/or performing a validation sub-study. It is also an opportunity to develop a relationship with a faculty member and to explore and develop dissertation research ideas.

Students are encouraged to consider the following when proposing an RA:

- Will it provide you with the opportunity to work with someone who might be a long term mentor for you (even beyond Emory)?
- Will it help you to identify what you want to do for your dissertation?
- Will it result in a first author paper (papers are the currency of our field for most types of positions you might have in the future and are important when submitting an F31. First author papers are weighted heavier than middle author papers)?
- Will it provide you with a valuable experience that you can't easily get another way?

Specific details about the RAs include the following:

1. Two RA rotations must be completed prior to entering candidacy.
2. Proposed RA activities must be approved by the DGS and the mentor before commencing activities. To receive approval, students must submit the RA Agreement Form (located on Canvas).*
3. RAs should contribute to expanding the student's skillset and experience. The skills/experience gained through each of the RAs should be different (some overlap is okay as long as each RA also includes a unique contribution to the student's training).
4. Meeting the Primary Data Collection Requirement through an RA is encouraged but not required.
5. Each RA should be completed with a different faculty mentor. The faculty mentor typically has a primary or joint appointment in the Department of Epidemiology. However, in some circumstances, a mentor may have primary affiliation elsewhere (e.g., CDC) for one of the RAs. In such cases, the student must identify a co-mentor in the Department of Epidemiology. The co-mentor may not be the mentor for the other RA. Co-mentors who are not appointed to the Department of Epidemiology must be approved by the DGS.
6. The training objectives of the RA are expected to require a minimum of 200 hours although completing the RA is based on meeting the proposed objectives, rather than the number of hours spent on the RA.
7. The timing of the RA is not tied to the semester but is instead determined by agreement between the mentor and the student. However, all or part of an RA may be included as an objective on the Research Hours Agreement Form for a given semester.

8. Objectives can be modified during an RA with agreement from the mentor, the student, and the DGS. Generally, modification is expected to be limited to unforeseen circumstances. A revised RA agreement form should be submitted in these circumstances.
9. Research completed during the RA cannot be counted toward the 3 paper dissertation requirement. The RA can be related to the student's dissertation topic, but it should not be work the student would be perform as part of his or her dissertation (e.g., not cleaning dissertation data, not writing the dissertation proposal, etc.).
10. Students must submit the RA Completion Form* no more than 2 weeks after the conclusion of the RA.
11. Certain funding sources (training grants) may have additional criteria related to RAs. Please check with the principal investigator of the training grant, the DGS, or the ADAP for more information.

*All forms should be submitted electronically to Emory Box "EPI PhD DropBox Folder" with the RA mentor(s) signature(s). Electronic Forms should be titled: "StudentLastName_RA1_Agreement_FacultyLastName" or "StudentLastName_RA2_Completion_FacultyLastName." Do not submit forms that do not have the signature of the faculty mentor of the RA and/or a screenshot of an emailing approving the RA Agreement.

Students are only required to complete 2 RAs. However, students are encourage to consider opportunities to participate in research training beyond the RAs and their dissertation research. Before committing to such opportunities, students should consider how the additional training will contribute to their career goals and how it will affect their forward progress in the program. Students should discuss their training plans with their mentor and/or the DGS. Training opportunities that provide funding beyond the stipend are subject to additional conditions (see section 4.4).

1.3.6 English as a Second Language Program (International Students Only)

International students must participate in mandatory English assessment sessions by the LGS prior to the first day of class. Students who do not meet the minimum assessment requirements must participate in oral and written English communication classes directed by LGS. The ESL curriculum consists of three courses:

1. Intermediate Pronunciation/Communication
2. Advanced Pronunciation/Communication
3. Graduate Writing

These required courses carry 2-4 hours credit and are graded S/U. Courses appear on official transcripts. These courses do not count towards the 18 credit hours of required coursework in Epidemiology.

1.3.7 Student Research and Progress Symposium

Each Fall, the faculty and students convene for a one-day conference to share the research and progress of our PhD students. All PhD students, including incoming students, are required to

attend this Symposium every year. Beginning as early as their second year, students will present at the Student Research and Progress Symposium. Students should plan on presenting at least every other year. The setting is conducive to giving the student feedback and preparing the student for her/his dissertation proposal defense, dissertation final defense, and conference presentations. The research day also serves the purposes of promoting discussion about research-in-progress, introducing the incoming students to the kind of research going on in the Program and fostering collaborations through intellectual and social exchanges during the formal sessions. There are opportunities throughout the day for informal conversations between students and faculty.

1.3.8 Qualifying Examination

Upon completion of all required coursework and the TATTO program, the student may take the Qualifying Examination (QE). The QE determines the student's mastery of epidemiologic methods and the ability to apply epidemiologic thinking to a substantive area.

Students entering with a recent Master's degree in epidemiology from Emory may take the QE after completing 2 semesters of coursework with permission from the DGS and his or her advisor. Students who enter without a Master's degree in epidemiology or a degree from another program will take the QE after their second year.

Students who opt to take the QE after only one year of study in the PhD program should be aware that the sequence of required courses is most appropriate when spread out over 2 years, and there will be topics that are out of sequence for students completing required coursework in just 1 year.

Students are encouraged to form study groups and set aside a period of 2 to 3 months of intense study before the QE.

The QE consists of two parts: 1) a general section covering epidemiologic methods, data analyses, and an article critique and 2) a substantive section.

Students taking the QE in June 2018 will be asked to identify one substantive area that aligns with their research interests no later than January 25, 2018 on which they will be tested during the QE period. The options for substantive area questions are: Cancer Epidemiology; Cardio-Metabolic Epidemiology; Reproductive, Perinatal and Pediatric Epidemiology; Genetic and Molecular Epidemiology; Social Epidemiology; and Infectious Disease Epidemiology.

The Qualifying Exam will be held during the week of June 11-15, 2018. The QE is generally offered the week prior to the Society for Epidemiologic Research Meeting. Students must take these dates into account when making summer plans.

The specific format of the QE (i.e., open/closed book, hours, etc.) will be determined by the QE Committee and may vary from year to year. At least 2 faculty members will grade each question. A letter with exam results is sent to each student from the DGS by mid-August. There

are 2 possible outcomes for each section: pass or fail. A failing grade on one of the 2 sections of the examination requires that the student retake that section of the examination the following year. A second failure on the examination results in dismissal from the program.

Students are bound by the honor code and are not to discuss specific questions from the QE with anyone.

1.3.9 Dissertation

(A) Overview

Students are encouraged to begin exploring research topics as soon as they enter the program. The faculty advisor and DGS will help to guide the student in this search. The doctoral dissertation must meet the requirements of the Epidemiology Program and the LGS. In particular, the dissertation must demonstrate mastery of epidemiologic research methods applied to a research question and the capability for independent and creative thought and research. As indicated in the LGS catalog, "the dissertation must make an actual contribution to existing knowledge or be a fresh and significant critical interpretation of existing knowledge."

Dissertation research in the Epidemiology Program may address a substantive research question or a methodological question. Dissertation research in epidemiologic methods shall significantly advance epidemiologic techniques, methods or theory. Except in rare instances, the relevance of the methodologic research to epidemiology shall be demonstrated using existing data from a substantive study rather than exclusively using simulated data.

Students are encouraged to contribute to data collection as part of their dissertation (e.g., performing interviews, analyzing blood samples, etc.) where possible, even if they have already met the Primary Data Collection Requirement. Students whose dissertation does not involve primary data collection are expected to meet the Requirement before entering Candidacy through work on some other epidemiologic study (during an RA or an alternative arrangement). See section 1.3.4.

The Dissertation includes the following Milestones:

- 1) Dissertation Concept Letter
- 2) Dissertation Proposal Overview
- 3) Written Dissertation Proposal
- 4) Oral Defense of the Dissertation Proposal
- 5) Written Dissertation Document
- 6) Oral Defense of the Dissertation
- 7) Submission of the Approved Dissertation Document to LGS

Below is a table depicting progress expectations for Epidemiology doctoral students:

Year 1	Year 2	Year 3	Year 4	Year 5
Completion of the following: Coursework TATTO JPE 600 & 605 2 RAs Primary Data Collection QE		10/15 – Submit Dissertation Concept Letter with Chair Identified	09/15 – Student must be in Candidacy to remain in good standing with LGS	Defend Dissertation
		04/15 – Submit Dissertation Proposal Overview with Committee Members Identified	12/10 – Submit written Dissertation Proposal to Dissertation Committee and successful Oral Defense of Dissertation Proposal in order to remain in good standing with EPI PhD Program	
Progress towards proposing, completing, and defending dissertation				

(B) Dissertation Concept Letter

Students are expected to submit the Dissertation Concept Letter (Concept Letter) no later than October 15th of their third fall in the program. Students are encouraged to submit Concept Letters earlier if they start working on their dissertation earlier. Although Concept Letters are generally reviewed after students pass the QE, students who submit a grant proposal to fund dissertation work prior to October 15th of their 3rd year are strongly encouraged to share their Aims with the PhD Program Committee prior to submitting the proposal.

I. Purpose

The Concept Letter provides the student with an initial and early opportunity to organize their thoughts regarding their dissertation topic, committee, and timeline. This letter represents the first of three milestones that aim to facilitate timely and successful progress through the dissertation process. The Concept Letter provides the proposed dissertation chair and the PhD Program Committee with the opportunity to provide early feedback about any concerns, such as that the proposed project may not meet the standards for a dissertation in epidemiology. Further, it provides an opportunity to gain experience in concisely communicating research ideas. Students should anticipate receiving constructive feedback on the submission, even when the Concept Letter is approved. Students should not undertake substantial dissertation work until their Concept Letter has been approved.

The projects described in the Concept Letter will likely evolve as the proposal develops and the student conducts the research and writes the dissertation. A new Concept Letter must be

submitted if there is a substantial change in the dissertation. A substantial change includes (but is not limited to) a change to the proposed dissertation chair or a change to the data source.

II. Process

- A. Timing: Students who have passed the QE should submit the Concept Letter to the PhD Program Committee by October 15th of their 3rd year in the program. Students who have not passed the Qualifying Examination before the start of their 3rd academic year should arrange a separate deadline with the DGS.
- B. Review: The Dissertation Concept Letter should be reviewed and approved by the dissertation chair before submission to the PhD Program Committee (via Emory Box). The PhD Program Committee will review Dissertation Concept Letters at its monthly meeting. The decision of the PhD Program Committee will be provided to the student and the proposed dissertation chair typically within 2 weeks of the review.
- C. Resubmission: Substantial concerns by the PhD Program Committee may be accompanied by a request for the student to revise and resubmit the Dissertation Concept Letter. Revised Concept Letters, should be approved by the dissertation chair before resubmission. Revised Concept Letters may be accompanied by a concise point-by-point response to the PhD Program Committee's concerns. The primary concerns raised by the Committee should be addressed in the Revised Concept Letter, and the point-by-point response should serve to guide the Committee in identifying the changes rather than being a place to provide extensive additional information. The point-by-point response does not count against the page limit and is encouraged but not required. Revised Concept Letters must be submitted by the 15th of a given month to be reviewed at the next month's meeting.
- D. Research Hours: The Concept Letter should be included as an objective in the Research Hours Agreement starting in the semester in which it is due and continuing until it is approved.

III. Content. The Dissertation Concept Letter is a 2 page document (not including title page and references) describing the student's proposed research. The Concept Letter should be single-spaced with 1-inch margins in an NIH approved font and font size. The Concept Letter should follow the outline below.

- A. Title Page: title, name, dissertation chair name, and date (does not count against page limit)
- B. The overarching research question and the public health or clinical importance of the topic
- C. Brief description of 2-4 aims expected to be included in the dissertation.
- D. Proposed approach. This should include:
 1. Potential available data sources and the student's role in obtaining them
 2. Barriers/feasibility (e.g., the main concerns with moving this project forward)
 3. Next steps

- E. Dissertation chair and proposed areas of expertise to be represented on the committee.
Note: students are not expected to have approached potential committee members, aside from the chair, when they submit their Concept Letter
- F. References (does not count against page limit)
- G. The student's signature and the dissertation chair's signature (does not count against page limit)

(C) Dissertation Proposal Overview

Students are expected to submit the PHD Dissertation Proposal Overview (Overview) no later than April 15 of their 3rd Spring in the program assuming their Concept Letter has already been approved. However, students who are able to prepare their Overview earlier are encouraged to submit it earlier with approval of their Dissertation Chair.

I. Purpose

The Overview is intended to provide the PhD Program Committee the opportunity to formally review the proposed dissertation and dissertation committee. The Overview represents the second of 3 milestones that aim to facilitate timely and successful progress through the dissertation process. It consists of two parts: 1) a 4-page single spaced description of the proposed objectives of the dissertation and the approach to achieving these objectives and 2) a list of the proposed dissertation committee members with a brief description of their contribution to the student's dissertation training. In addition, the CVs of any proposed committee members who are not primarily or jointly appointed in the Department of Epidemiology should be submitted separately (to Emory Box). This Overview will help to ensure consistent application of program standards to all epidemiology dissertations. Students should anticipate constructive feedback on the Overview and should not undertake substantial dissertation work until the Overview is approved.

II. Process

- A. Timing: Students may submit the Overview only after the Concept Letter has been approved and should submit the Overview to the PhD Program Committee no later than April 15th of their 3rd year in the program.
- B. Approvals: The Dissertation Proposal Overview must be developed based on the approved Dissertation Concept Letter and must be reviewed and approved by the dissertation chair before submission to the PhD Program Committee (via Emory Box). The proposed dissertation committee members should be familiar with the proposed work and should have agreed serve on the committee, but they do not need to sign off on the Overview. The PhD Program Committee will review Dissertation Proposal Overviews at its monthly meeting. The decision of the PhD Program Committee will typically be provided to the student and the proposed dissertation chair within 2 weeks of the review.
- E. Resubmissions: Substantial concerns by the PhD Program Committee may be accompanied by a request for the student to revise and resubmit the Dissertation Proposal Overview for further review. Revised Overviews should be approved by the

dissertation chair before resubmission. Revised Overviews may be accompanied by a concise point-by-point response to the PhD Program Committee's concerns. The primary concerns raised by the Committee should be addressed in the Revised Overview. The point-by-point response should serve to guide the Committee in identifying the changes rather than being a place to provide extensive additional information. The point-by-point response does not count against the page limit and is encouraged but not required. Revised Overviews must be submitted by the 15th of a given month to be reviewed at the next month's meeting.

- C. Research Hours: The Overview should be included as an objective on the Research Hours Agreement in all semesters following approval of the Dissertation Concept Letter until the Overview is approved.

III. Content. The Overview will be an expanded version of the Dissertation Concept Letter, which clearly addresses any issues or concerns raised by the PhD Program Committee. However, the initial Overview submission should not be accompanied by a point-by-point response to the PhD Program Committee's review of the Concept Letter. The Overview should not exceed 4 pages single-spaced (not including the title page, references, or committee composition) with 1-inch margins in an NIH approved font and font size. The Overview should follow the outline below.

- A. Title Page: title, name, dissertation chair name, and date (does not count towards page limit)
- B. The overarching research question and the public health or clinical importance of the topic. This is likely more developed than the concept letter.
- C. Specific aims and how each aim supports the overarching research question
- D. A brief summary for each specific aim with information about:
 - 1. Study design to address the aim and data source(s)
 - 2. Study population, including sample size considerations
 - 3. Potential analysis plan – this should be brief
 - 4. Barriers/feasibility (e.g., the main concerns with moving this project forward)
- E. Overall study timeline
- F. References (does not count against page limit)
- G. The composition of the proposed dissertation committee (does not count against page limit). Anyone listed as a Committee Member should have orally agreed to be part of the dissertation committee and should be familiar with the proposed work. For each proposed committee member, starting with the chair, please include the following information:
 - 1) Chair, Co-chair, Committee member
 - 2) Graduate faculty, Not graduate faculty
 - 3) Primary appointment in Epidemiology, Joint appointment in Epidemiology, Other
 - 4) Department or agency affiliation
 - 5) A brief summary of the individual's contribution to the committee (redundancies are fine). This summary should be shared and approved by each proposed committee member prior to submission.

- 6) In a separate document, include the CV of any committee member who does not have a primary or joint appointment in the Epidemiology Department.
- H. The student's signature and the dissertation chair's signature. The signatures do not count against the page limit and can be included on the proposed dissertation committee page.

After the Dissertation Proposal Overview has been approved but prior to the Dissertation Proposal Defense, the student must submit the Epidemiology Dissertation Committee Form signed by all committee members (see below). The student will then work with his or her dissertation committee to prepare for the 3rd milestone, the Dissertation Proposal, which includes a written document and an oral defense. The Dissertation proposal should be written, defended, and approved by the dissertation committee by December of the student's 4th year.

Substantial work on the dissertation should not be undertaken until after the dissertation committee is approved by the PhD Program Committee. It is the expectation that all committee members will be provided with the opportunity to contribute to the development of the dissertation.

(D) Dissertation Committee

Student's research is to be supervised by a dissertation chair and a committee of advisors. The dissertation chair must be Epidemiology Graduate Faculty and be approved by the PhD Program Committee. The committee must consist of at least 4 qualified individuals, fulfilling the following requirements:

- Three Committee Members must be Emory Graduate Faculty
 - Epidemiology Graduate Faculty are denoted on the faculty webpage [INSERT LINK THAT WILL BE UPDATED 8/2017](#) with an asterisk. Students should consult their committee chair or ADAP if they have any difficulties determining if a faculty member from another department is also Graduate Faculty.
- Two Committee Members must have primary appointments as Graduate Faculty in the Department of Epidemiology.
 - Jointly appointed faculty whose primary appointment is in another department may serve as 1 of these 2 committee members (including chair) with approval of the PHD Program Committee.

It is recommended that the committee include a member whose expertise is related to the clinical and/or biologic understanding of the proposed area of research, and also one member representing methodologic expertise.

The PhD Program Committee will approve composition of the dissertation committee after the student submits his or her Dissertation Proposal Overview. Students must meet with their committee at least once per year; it is the responsibility of the student to coordinate the time and location for committee meetings.

In circumstances where a proposed Committee Member does not have an affiliation with Emory University, an outside reader request must be sent to LGS from the DGS including a letter outlining why this particular proposed member is necessary to the Committee and the proposed member's CV. This request should be submitted with the Dissertation Committee form and Application to Candidacy. Students are encouraged to contact the ADAP for assistance prior to submission.

The Epidemiology Program Committee Form should be submitted to EPI PhD Dropbox no earlier than a student receiving approval of the Dissertation Overview and no later than one month prior to the oral proposal.

Students are required to meet with their full dissertation committee annually and more frequent meetings are recommended.

(E) Dissertation Proposal

The Dissertation Proposal includes two parts, the written dissertation proposal and the oral dissertation proposal defense. For both the dissertation proposal document and the oral defense of the proposal, the student's Dissertation Committee assesses student success.

The format of the written dissertation proposal is determined by the dissertation chair. However, it must include a critical review of the relevant literature and a discussion of how the dissertation will make a significant contribution to the field. The proposal should also include the specific aims of the dissertation and a methods section, including the study design, study population, and proposed analytic methods for all components of the research. The proposal typically covers many of the sections included in federal grants (e.g., NIH, CDC). However, the proposal is often longer.

The student should submit a draft of the Dissertation Proposal to each committee member well in advance of the planned oral defense date to allow time for review and comment. Typically, the Dissertation Chair will review the Dissertation Proposal before it is distributed to the committee. However, in most circumstances, members of the Dissertation Committee will have met individually or as a group several times with the student to help refine the research hypotheses and the plan to evaluate these hypotheses before receiving the written proposal.

The Oral Dissertation Proposal Defense includes a public presentation of the proposed research (40-45 minutes) and a question and answer period (15-20 minutes) that is open to the public. This is followed by a closed-door examination by the Dissertation Committee. The examination may address any methodologic or substantive material deemed appropriate by the Dissertation Committee. For example, committee members may ask questions about the proposed approach to the research, questions about alternative approaches, contextual or substantive questions about the research, or questions about epidemiologic concepts. At the conclusion of the closed session, the Dissertation Committee must decide whether or not the student has the necessary knowledge and skills to successfully implement the PhD dissertation work. The Dissertation Committee may pass the student unconditionally, request additional work before

passing the student, or fail the student. A student who fails the oral examination will be given one additional attempt. Students failing the oral examination twice will be dismissed from the Program.

The student is responsible for scheduling a time, date, and room for the Dissertation Proposal Defense (classrooms may be reserved at <https://25live.collegenet.com/emory/> - students should consult Steve McGee if they have any difficulties reserving a room). Students should not schedule a dissertation proposal defense for Fridays between 12:00 and 2:00 pm. This time is traditionally used for Faculty Meetings, Epidemiology Grand Rounds, and Public Health Sciences Grand Rounds. Other times to avoid include during Journal Club (Thursdays 12:00-1:00), EPI PhD Program Committee Meetings (typically the first Friday of the month from 2:00-3:30 p.m. though this changes on an annual basis), EPI PhD Applicant Interview Days (February 1-2, 2018), and the MPH Admitted Student Visit Days (typically the third or fourth Thursday and Friday in March). Students are encouraged to check potential times with their ADAP to make sure there are no unexpected conflicts.

Students must submit a dissertation proposal announcement (1-page summary) that will be distributed to the Epidemiology Program (faculty and PhD students) to the ADAP **at least two weeks prior to the proposal, after the Dissertation Chair has approved the announcement.** The announcement must include the student's name; preliminary dissertation title; committee members; date, time and location of the proposal; and a brief structured abstract (300-500 word limit). The abstract should include the following content: study goals/objectives/hypotheses; methods, including study design, study population, and proposed analytic methods; and potential impact of the work on public health.

To be in good standing with the Epidemiology PhD program, a student must successfully defend the Dissertation Proposal orally and in writing no later than December 10th of Year 4 in the program. Successful completion of the Dissertation Proposal Defense is marked by submission of the Dissertation Committee Form to LGS with each Committee Member's signature and DGS approval.

(F) Dissertation Format

The format of the dissertation should follow Emory University guidelines. Typically, the first chapter consists of an introduction to the problem including a critical review of the literature with a justification and rationale for the research. Although the dissertation format is determined at the discretion of the Dissertation Chair, students are strongly encouraged to include manuscripts that are suitable for publication in lieu of the results chapters; this should include three or more publishable papers. In addition, the dissertation should include a concluding chapter with a discussion of the strengths, limitations, and overarching conclusions of the research. Analyses not included in the manuscript chapters may optionally be included in an appendix. Students may access successful epidemiology dissertations via <https://etd.library.emory.edu/>.

(G) Dissertation Defense

The Dissertation Committee will indicate to the student when the final oral defense of the dissertation research may be scheduled. It is expected that the full Committee will be provided the document with sufficient time to have read a complete draft prior to the oral defense, typically at least 4 weeks prior to the final defense. The Dissertation Defense includes an oral presentation (40-45 minutes) with a question and answer period (15-20 minutes), which is open to the public. This public presentation is followed by a closed-door session with the Dissertation Committee during which the Committee may raise questions or concerns about the dissertation work. The final discussion of approval is made by the Committee in the absence of the student. The Committee may decide to pass the student unconditionally, request additional work, or fail the student. Failure is expected to be rare because the Dissertation Defense is typically only scheduled when the Dissertation Committee believes the student is ready to defend. However, requesting additional work after the Dissertation Defense to address Committee concerns may be more common. After submission of the dissertation and prior to graduation, the Dean of the LGS reviews and approves the dissertation.

Students ready to defend their dissertation should submit an announcement for the ADAP to disseminate to faculty and students, at least 2 weeks prior to the defense. This announcement should include the following information: student name; title of dissertation; committee members; date, time, and location of the defense; and an abstract following the format of the dissertation proposal. Students are responsible for arranging the time and location of their defense (refer to previous specifics for coordinating the Oral Dissertation Proposal Defense).

Students should refer to the LGS website for dissertation submission deadlines related to Fall, Spring, and Summer graduation dates. Typically, submission of paperwork and the dissertation to LGS is required at least one month prior to the conclusion of the semester (<http://www.graduateschool.emory.edu/academics/policies/completion.html>). This site contains forms, processes and deadlines.

(H) Dissertation Publication Guidelines

The dissertation is expected to result in at least 3 manuscripts publishable in peer-reviewed journals. The timing of submission of these manuscripts relative to the final Dissertation Defense is at the discretion of the Dissertation Committee but should not occur prior to the Dissertation Proposal Defense. The expectation is that substantial work on the dissertation should only occur after the Dissertation Proposal has been successfully defended and the Dissertation Committee has had the opportunity to provide feedback on the proposed work. Manuscripts submitted for publication prior to the Dissertation Proposal defense cannot be counted towards the dissertation. Manuscripts may be submitted for publication prior to the final Dissertation Defense with committee approval.

Authorship should be discussed as early as possible to avoid potential problems regarding who is included and in what order. The student should be first author on all publications of their dissertation research. The Committee Chair is generally senior author, which may be second or last, depending on the Chair's preference. Members of the committee should have the

opportunity to contribute to the dissertation manuscripts to a degree that warrants authorship although individual committee members may opt not to be a co-author on individual manuscripts. Students are encouraged to review authorship standards of American Journal of Epidemiology and/or International Committee of Medical Journal Editors (ICMJE) [recommendations for defining the role of authors and contributors](#). Manuscripts should be reviewed and approved by all authors prior to submission for publication. Persons who have made contributions to the study that are not sufficient to merit authorship should be acknowledged. Those who are acknowledged should agree to be named.

PhD students should note that it is a policy of the LGS that it be acknowledged on all work published during their doctoral studies. For example, PhD student affiliation should be listed as "Epidemiology PhD Program, Rollins School of Public Health and Laney Graduate School, Emory University, Atlanta, Georgia." The student should consult the Dissertation Chair and co-authors about other funding sources that need to be acknowledged.

1.3.10 Departmental/Program Citizenship

Departmental/Program citizenship enhances the learning experience. The Program expects PhD students to be active in the life of the Department throughout their time in the Program. This includes attending Epidemiology Grand Rounds and other Department-sponsored lectures and seminar series (e.g., faculty candidate seminars) as well as supporting other students by attending their Dissertation Proposal Defenses and final Dissertation Defenses. These activities help prepare students for their own presentations and expose students to the scope of current research in the field. Doctoral students are expected to attend an average of at least one Department, Rollins School of Public Health, or LGS sponsored event per week during the academic terms.

Students are strongly encouraged to remain in Atlanta for the tenure of the program unless dissertation research is occurring elsewhere. Residency in Atlanta provides direct benefits to the student such as access to professional development and research training activities beyond the classroom, and it provides indirect benefits such as fostering a sense of community with peers and mentors. This community provides the foundation for professional ties that will continue beyond graduation from the Program. Although the Program does not have a residency requirement, students who wish to move outside of the Atlanta area, should discuss this with his or her dissertation chair and the DGS. Typically, a student making such a request is expected to be making adequate progress in the program and to have successfully defended his or her dissertation proposal.

1.3.11 Individual Development Plan

In accordance with recommendations from the National Institutes of Health, all Epidemiology PhD students are required to submit an Individual Development Plan (IDP) on an annual basis after discussion with his or her advisor(s). The DGS will also review the submitted IDP and provide feedback. Returning students must submit the IDP in September and matriculating students must submit an IDP in January of their first year.

The IDP is a useful tool both for students and their mentors. It provides a guide to thinking and talking about the student's goals, progress towards his or her goals, potential barriers to meeting these goals, as well as progress in the program (e.g., plans for future funding). Although the IDP concept was initially developed as a tool to assist employees in career and personnel development, it is increasingly being used in research fields (both pre- and post-doctoral level training), and the NIH is now requiring it for all trainees who are supported by NIH funding (e.g., T32). It is not a performance evaluation or a one-time activity. Rather, it should be viewed more as a partnership between the student, his or her advisor, and the Epidemiology Program, which is intended to make sure the student is receiving the training and support needed to accomplish his or her short and long term goals. Students are invited (and encouraged) to consult with other appropriate faculty and public health professionals in completion of this document.

1.4 Admission to Candidacy

The following requirements must be met in order to apply for candidacy:

- 1) Completion of Required Coursework including EPI elective hours that total no less than 18 hours (excluding EPI 701, EPI 791, TATT 600, 605, 610, and EPI 798R).
- 2) Completion of no less than 54 credit hours total at the 500 level or above composed of the EPI Required coursework above, EPI 798R, pre-candidacy research hours, and the TATT courses.
- 3) Completion of 2 RAs
- 4) Completion of JPE 600 and 6 hours of Program-based Training.
- 5) Completion of all TATTO requirements including TATT 600, TATT 605, TATT 610, and EPI 791.
- 6) Passing the Qualifying Exam
- 7) Approved Dissertation Concept Letter
- 8) Approved Dissertation Overview

It is strongly recommended but not required that a student complete his or her primary data collection requirement before entering candidacy.

Application for admission to candidacy is made by submitting the "Application for Admission to Candidacy" form to the LGS. Information and forms related to applying for candidacy can be found at: <http://www.gs.emory.edu/academics/policies/candidacy.html>. Students must complete and submit the Admission to Candidacy Form within one week of completing all requirements to apply for Candidacy; most often, this will be after the student is notified of approval of the Dissertation Overview.

In order to remain in good standing with the LGS, students must be in Candidacy by September 15th of their fourth year. Students who do not meet this deadline will be placed on probation, will not be eligible for PDS funds, and may forfeit financial support. These sanctions will be lifted when the student enters Candidacy.

Students enrolled prior to the Fall of 2017 may be admitted to Candidacy based on the requirements in the Epidemiology PhD Program Handbook from the year in which they first enrolled in the program or this Handbook, depending on which criteria are met first.

Part 2: Student Due Progress

2.1 Due Progress Expectations

Students are expected to be making satisfactory, full-time progress towards their degree (i.e., be in full time training) throughout their tenure in the doctoral program. Full time progress is indicated by enrolling in a minimum of 9 credit hours each semester (Fall, Spring, and Summer). Credit hours may include course work and/or research hours.

During coursework, due progress according to the LGS and the EPI PhD Program, is indicated by maintaining a GPA of 2.7 or higher in each semester, receiving no grade lower than a B- in any required course, taking no more than one grade of incomplete in any semester, having no more than two grades of incomplete active at any point, and completing the TATTO and RA requirements by the Fall of Year 3 in the program.

Receiving less than an A- in any required Epidemiology coursework may raise concerns about the student's ability to successfully pass the Qualifying Examination. Therefore, any PhD student having difficulty in coursework and/or earning less than an A- in a required course should meet with his or her faculty advisor, the course instructor, and/or the DGS.

If a student is registered for 5 or more research hours, a Research Hours Agreement Form must be submitted prior to the first day of the semester. Students are encouraged but not required to submit a form even if they are registered for 1-4 research hours. The Research Hours Agreement, found on Canvas, at least three measureable objectives that will be the focus of their progress towards the degree in a particular semester. These objectives should be activities that can be realistically completed during the given semester. The Agreement Form provides a formal opportunity to communicate goals with the student's advisor and is the basis on which the faculty mentor will assign the student a grade of S or U at the end of the semester.

The type of research training completed during research hours can vary widely. Most research activities that a student and the student's mentor agree contribute to the student's training and forward progress in the program would likely qualify. However, training activities for which the student is receiving supplemental pay should not be included (see section 4.4) in the Research Hours Agreement Form. Some examples of research activities (not broken down to the task level) that may be included in the Research Hours Agreement Form are:

- Writing a manuscript
- Performing a literature review
- Performing an analysis

- Writing the Concept Letter
- Studying for the Qualifying Exam
- Writing the Dissertation Proposal
- Working on an RA or part of an RA (see section 1.3.5)
- Writing a dissertation paper
- Preparing an F31
- Performing primary data collection
- Participating in other research training activities

This form must be reviewed and signed by the student and the student's advisor prior to uploading it to Emory Box. A student's grade (S/U) in Research Hours is assigned by the Faculty Mentor listed on the Research Hours Agreement based on successful completion of the objectives listed on the Agreement Form. Modification of the objectives due to unforeseen circumstances (e.g., data needed for an analysis are not available in time) is permitted if the student, the faculty mentor, and the DGS all agree with the change. Students should submit a revised Research Hours Agreement Form to Emory Box in this circumstance.

Students who are determined to be making inadequate progress by the DGS and Faculty Advisor in consultation with the PhD Curriculum Committee (based on GPA, ability to complete Research and/or Teaching Assistantships within the first two years, or receipt of an unsatisfactory grade in Research Hours) may be placed on probation. The student's advisor and the DGS will establish the terms and conditions of the probationary period (at least one semester), and the probation will be reevaluated each semester. At the end of the probationary period, the DGS will provide each student who is on probation with a written evaluation of their progress under probation. Students who meet the condition of their probation will be reinstated to good standing. The Epidemiology Program, rather than the LGS, will notify the student of this action. Students who have not met the condition of their probation will continue on probation for a second semester. A student who merits a third consecutive probationary semester will be terminated from the Program by the LGS unless (1) the Program provides written justification for the student's continuation and (2) the LGS approves.

2.2 Time to Degree

PhD students typically graduate within 5 years (see table in section 1.3.9). Students complete required coursework during Years 1 and 2, and take the QE by June of their second year in the program. In Year 3, students focus on preparing their dissertation Concept Letter and Dissertation Proposal Overview. Students must be in Candidacy no later than September 15th of Year 4 and must successfully write and defend their Dissertation Proposal by December 10th of Year 4. Students who do not meet either deadline will be placed on probation, will not be eligible for PDS funds, and may forfeit financial support. These sanctions will be lifted when the student enters Candidacy or successfully defends his or her Dissertation Proposal.

Students complete their dissertation work during Years 4 and 5. However, the timing of dissertation milestones between Candidacy and Graduation differ depending on the specific demands of the dissertation research project. Steady progress towards graduation should be maintained during all semesters. Generally, students will be considered to be making due progress after Candidacy if their research has advanced in substantial, demonstrable ways over the past 12 months.

According to LGS policy, a student must complete all requirements for the PhD within 6 years of commencing the Program. Extensions beyond this will be granted only under extraordinary circumstances and as described in the LGS Handbook.

2.3 Terminal Master's Degree

Some students admitted to the doctoral program may leave the program before completing the requirements for a PhD. Such students may choose to petition the Epidemiology PhD Program Committee to earn a Master's of Science in Epidemiology. The PhD Program Committee reviews all petitions. If the petition is approved, then all LGS requirements for the Master's degree must be satisfied and additional Departmental requirements, such as a thesis, must be fulfilled for the degree to be awarded. The requirements for the Master's degree are specified in the LGS Handbook: http://www.graduateschool.emory.edu/uploads/LGS-Handbook_2013-14.pdf.

Part 3: Academic Policies and Procedures

3.1 Registration

Students will register for coursework after consultation with their advisor and with the aid of the ADAP. Students will self-register, or ask the ADAP to enroll them in courses during the pre-registration period. Pre-registration begins in April for the following Fall and in October/November for the following Spring. Students are responsible for enrolling in at least 9 hours per semester. Students must register for EPI 790R, Journal Club, every Fall and Spring semester.

3.2 Auditing Courses

Students should consult with their faculty advisor, the DGS, and their ADAP as needed prior to registering. All courses taken as audit status and/or outside RSPH require instructor permission. If, upon consultation with his or her advisor, the student chooses to audit a course or register for a course outside RSPH, the student must first get permission via email from the course instructor. The email approval should be submitted to the Epidemiology Program ADAP for registration in the course. **Audited courses do not fulfill degree requirements, count towards full-time student status, or fulfill specific credit hour requirements.**

3.3 Grades

Courses have the following grading options: letter grade (A, A-, B+, B, B-, C, or F), satisfactory/unsatisfactory (S/U), or audit. All required courses and epidemiology electives must be taken for a letter grade; other courses may be taken for S/U or audit, provided the student

obtains permission from the instructor of the course *and* the course is not counting towards the 54 credits required to enter Candidacy. Although courses contributing to the 54 credits required before Candidacy must be taken for a letter grade, research hours are graded on an S/U basis and may count towards the 54 required credits once the required coursework is complete.

Please note that per LGS Policy (1.1.1 C), courses in which students receive a letter grade of C do NOT count towards 54 credit hours needed to apply for Candidacy.

TATTO requirements are graded on an S/U basis. Students receiving a “U” for a TATTO requirement are required to repeat the unsatisfactorily performed teaching experience (including TATT 600).

3.4 Add/Drop/Swap

Students may change their course schedule through OPUS during add/drop period. This period usually occurs during the first five days after registration in the fall and spring semesters.

3.5 Transfer Credit

Coursework taken at other institutions may be accepted as transfer credit toward the degree with Epidemiology Program approval. To be considered for transfer credit, the coursework cannot have been used toward another degree and must have been completed within 3 years prior to entering the Epidemiology program. Receiving credit for coursework taken elsewhere is rare, but prior coursework may allow students to place out of required classes with Program approval (see below).

3.6 Course Waivers

Students may petition the Program to waive out of a required course if they can demonstrate they have sufficient knowledge in the subject matter. Courses that may be considered for a waiver include EPI 530: Epidemiologic Methods 1, BIOS 500: Biostatistical Methods 1, and/or EPI 533: Programming in SAS. If a student would like to waive a required course he or she must submit a detailed syllabus of a course covering the same material that has been previously taken. If approved, the student may be required to replace those hours with electives. See the Program ADAP for more information.

3.7 Leaves of Absence

A student in good standing may be granted 2 one-year leaves of absence. A leave of absence provides time away from the program for the student to attend to any personal issues. Time spent in a leave of absence does not count towards the 6 year time to degree requirement of the LGS.

Students interested in taking a leave of absence should first contact the DGS and ADAP. If they approve, the Epidemiology Program forwards a recommendation that the student be granted the leave of absence to the LGS Dean who provides final approval. For additional information, see the LGS Handbook. Per LGS policy, a readmission form must be filled out by the student

returning from a leave of absence. This may be done as early as the pre-registration period prior to the semester the student wishes to return or at least 2 weeks prior to registration.

3.8 Completion of Degree

A student approaching the end of a degree program is responsible for ensuring that all Epidemiology Program, LGS, and University requirements are met. It is the student's responsibility to be aware of and to meet all deadlines. Failure to do so may result in failure to receive the degree until the following semester. Students must be registered in the semester they receive their degree. Detailed steps for graduation are available at:

http://www.gs.emory.edu/resources/progress.php?entity_id=7.

Part 4: Financial Information

4.1 Tuition and Stipend Information

Epidemiology doctoral making adequate progress who are in good standing, receive funding including a stipend and tuition scholarship for 5 years. Typically, students receive their first 2 years of support from the LGS. This includes full tuition support and 12 months of stipend support set at the NIH pre-doctoral training level. In some instances, support in the first 2 years may be in the form of training grants or faculty mentor funding. The support in the first 2 years covers the student's time to complete coursework, RA, and TA requirements.

Students receiving stipends must be registered as full-time students (no less than 9 credit hours/semester) during the period that they are receiving their stipend and be in good standing with both LGS and the Epidemiology Program. During the summer, students must register for 9 credit hours of Research Hours to maintain their full-time student status. Students are expected to make full-time progress (be in full time training) during the summer although not enrolled in coursework.

After the second year, students are expected to transition to alternate sources of funding such as research grants, dissertation grant support, mentor support, fellowships, etc. A student may receive funding directly related to his or her dissertation work, or the funding may be related to other research training activities. Although students in good standing can expect to be funded for 5 years, students are expected to actively participate in identifying funding for years 3-5. Towards the end of their first year, students will collaborate with their advisor, mentors, and the DGS to develop a plan for ongoing support. Students are strongly encouraged to proactively seek funding opportunities; in this process, they will gain valuable experience in proposal writing and the funding process.

4.2 External Funding

Given the importance of grantsmanship to professional development in the field of epidemiology, students are encouraged to seek external funding for research projects through writing grants to federal or other agencies (e.g., foundations, non-profit organizations). Students who seek external funding should discuss their plans with their advisor. Planned proposals should be entered into the Research Administration Services (RAS)

Public Health and Nursing Intent to Submit Form (<https://redcap.emory.edu/surveys/?s=M7FE4ADH73>) in order to be assigned support personnel. The DGS should also be informed of any grant submissions.

Sample proposals are available on Canvas.

4.3 Student Fees

Students are responsible for all activity, athletic, computing, and mental health fees throughout their tenure in the doctoral program unless a Training Grant or other funding source specifically covers these fees.

A summary of tuition and fees can be found here:

<http://www.gs.emory.edu/funding/tuition.html>.

4.4 Supplemental Pay While Receiving a Stipend

Students may choose to supplement their stipend by engaging in research or training beyond their training in the Program. Students may also decide to TA for pay. This additional work, related to public health services or research/doctoral training, may not total more than 10 hours per week. Students who considering such opportunities should discuss the advantages and disadvantages of participating with their faculty mentor. If their mentor approves the experience, the student must request approval from the DGS.

At the beginning of each semester, the student may request approval for supplemental pay activities through a survey that will be sent to all students. If a student is invited to participate in a paid activity mid-semester, he or she should send the relevant information to the DGS and ADAP with a copy of his or her mentor's approval prior to accepting the position.

4.5 Professional Development Support Funds

All students are encouraged to apply for PDS funds for financial assistance with attending conferences, gaining special training that is not available at Emory, and conducting research. Approval from the DGS must be acquired prior PDS fund submission. Instructions for applying and application forms can be found at: <http://www.gs.emory.edu/professional-development/pds/index.html>.

Students are strongly encouraged to plan to request funds in advance of conference deadlines. PDS applications for funding are typically not accepted mid-June through mid-September.

Part 5: Grievance Policy

Students who have a grievance related to some aspect of their PhD program in Epidemiology should report it to the DGS. The student should describe the grievance and relevant details in a letter addressed to the DGS, who will try, if possible, to resolve the grievance in conversation with the student and relevant parties. If this is not successful, the DGS will appoint a committee

of three Epidemiology Graduate Faculty members (or faculty members outside the Epidemiology Graduate Faculty if the situation warrants it) who will review the grievance and propose an appropriate response. If it is impossible to resolve the grievance within this committee or within the framework of the Epidemiology PhD Program administrative structure, the DGS will forward the grievance to the Office of the Senior Associate Dean of the LGS. From this point forward, the grievance will be handled according to the Grievance Procedure outlined in the LGS Handbook. If the issue is with the DGS, the student should go directly to the Senior Associate Dean of the LGS.

Appendix

Course plans vary by student and depend on the courses the student has completed prior to entering the PhD program. All students MUST be registered for at least 9 hours a semester to be in full-time status. The course plans below do not include TATTO class hours or other course requirements NOT specified as EPI required coursework on in section 1.3.1.

Possible course plan for a student entering without a Master's degree in epidemiology

Sequence for Entering Students without a Master's Degree in Epidemiology				
	Fall 1	Spring 1	Fall 2	Spring 2
	EPI 530 (4) EPI Methods 1	EPI 534 (3) EPI Methods II	EPI 739 (2) Advanced EPI Methods II	EPI 750 (3) Longitudinal
	BIOS 500 (4) Biostats 1	EPI 591U (3) Applications	EPI 740 (3) Modeling	EPI 738 (2) Advanced EPI Methods 1
	EPI 533 (1) SAS	BIOS 501 (4) Biostats II	EPI 790R (1) Journal Club	EPI 790R (1) Journal Club
	BIOS 510 (4) Probability Theory	EPI 731 (3) Analytical Foundations of EPI	Elective(s)	
	EPI 790R (1) Journal Club	EPI 790R (1) Journal Club	TATT 600 and TATT 605	TATT 610
	EPI 701 (1)	Elective(s)	EPI 791	Electives
	JPE 600 (0)			
Suggested TA/RA Order	RA	RA	TA EPI 530	TA 534 or 591U

Possible course plan for a student entering with a Master's degree in Epidemiology or a related field from a program outside of Rollins School of Public Health; exact courses will depend on the student's prior coursework completed.

Required Course Sequence for Students Entering with an MPH in EPI (Not RSPH)				
	Fall 1	Spring 1	Fall 2	Spring 2
	EPI 530 (4) EPI Methods 1 (Typically waived)	EPI 534 (3) EPI Methods II	EPI 739 (2) Advanced EPI Methods II	EPI 750 (3) Longitudinal
	BIOS 500 (4) Biostats 1 (Typically waived)	EPI 591U (3) Applications	EPI 740 (3) Modeling	EPI 738 (2) Advanced EPI Methods 1
	EPI 533 (1) SAS (Typically waived)	BIOS 501 (4) Biostats II	EPI 790R (1) Journal Club	EPI 790R (1) Journal Club
	BIOS 510 (4) Probability Theory	EPI 731 (3) Analytical Foundations of EPI	Elective(s)	Elective(s)
	EPI 790R (1) Journal Club	EPI 790R (1) Journal Club		TATT 610
	EPI 701 (1)	Elective(s)		
	JPE 600 (0)			
	EPI 791			
	TATT 600 and TATT 605			
Suggested TA/RA Order	TA EPI 530	RA	RA	TA 534 or 591U

Possible course plan for a student entering with a Master’s degree in Epidemiology or a related field from Rollins School of Public Health; exact courses will depend on the student’s prior courses completed. Student’s taking just one year of coursework prior to the written qualifying exam should note that some topics will be taught out of order because the ideal sequence of courses takes two years to complete.

Sequence for Students Entering with an MPH in EPI from RSPH				
	Fall 1	Spring 1	Fall 2	Spring 2
	BIOS 510 (4) Probability Theory	EPI 750 (3) Longitudinal	Research Hours	Research Hours
	EPI 739 (2) Advanced Methods II	EPI 738 (2) Advanced Methods 1		
	EPI 790R (1) Journal Club	EPI 731 (3) Analytical Foundations of EPI		
	Electives	EPI 790R (1) Journal Club		
	EPI 701 (1)	Electives		
	JPE 600 (0)	TATT 610		
	TATT 600 and TATT 605			
	EPI 791			
Suggested TA/RA Order	TA EPI 530 or EPI 740	TA EPI 534 or 591U	RA	RA

Epidemiology PhD Program Candidacy Checklist*	
Students must be in Candidacy no later than September 15 of year 4	
Coursework Requirements	
	Completion of specified required Epidemiology coursework, including EPI electives that total no less than 18 credit hours
	Minimum GPA of 2.7
	No I (Incomplete) or IP (In Progress) on record
Research Hours Requirements	
	Satisfactory completion of EPI 798R, pre-candidacy research hours, that when added to the above required coursework requirements total no less than 54 hours.
Primary Data Requirement	
	DGS and Advisor approval that Primary Data Collection Requirement is complete OR approval dissertation involves significant primary data collection experience
Research Assistantships	
	Completion of 2 approved Research Assistantships of no less than 200 hours/each
Jones Program in Ethics	
	Complete JPE 600 course
	Completion of 6 hours of Program-based Training.
TATTO	
	Completion of TATT 600
	Completion of TATT 605 (TA 1)
	Completion of EPI 791 (Concurrent with TATT 605)
	Completion of TATT 610 (TA 2)
Qualifying Exam	
	Passed Qualifying Exam
Dissertation Milestones	
	Approval of Dissertation Concept Letter by EPI PHD Program Committee
	Approval of Dissertation Overview by EPI PHD Program Committee
Students are encouraged to consult the LGS information on degree completion no later than submitting the Application for Candidacy: http://www.gs.emory.edu/academics/policies/completion.html	

*Students enrolled prior to Fall 2017 may enter Candidacy based on the expectations in the PhD Program Handbook from the year they enrolled or this Handbook, whichever occurs first.