“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 contains references to UAB, UAB Graduate School, and UAB School of Public Health policies documented elsewhere, as well as policies that are specific to the Department of Epidemiology PhD Program. Students should also refer to the UAB Catalog of Graduate Programs (http://catalog.uab.edu/graduate/ link current 7/22/19). UAB Graduate School forms may be found on the UAB Graduate School website (https://www.uab.edu/graduate/students/current-students/academic-policies-progress/forms link current 7/22/19) or through BlazerNET.

This handbook is not a contract between UAB and the student. 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. Please refer to our website for the most up-to-date version.
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Introduction

Epidemiology at the UAB School of Public Health

Epidemiology has been a central part of medicine and public health at UAB from the early 1970’s. Our Department of Epidemiology faculty members have active research grants for projects in Alabama, the United States, and around the world. Areas of research include osteoporosis, diabetes, environmental health, obesity, hypertension, cardiovascular disease, injury, immunosuppression, HIV/AIDS, human papillomavirus and sexually transmitted disease prevention, systemic lupus, psoriasis, Alzheimer’s disease, cancer, and the safety and effectiveness of pharmaceuticals.

Our faculty members collaborate with key researchers and clinical units throughout UAB and around the world. The faculty members in the Department of Epidemiology provide expert assistance and research consultation to the World AIDS Foundation, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, the American Heart Association, Agency for Toxic Substances and Disease Registry, the National Institute of Occupational Safety and Health, the National Center for Health Statistics, the National Institutes of Health, the Alabama Departments of Public Health, Mental Health, Education, Food and Drug Administration, Hudson-Alpha, Gorgas Institute, and multiple units within UAB including the Comprehensive Cancer Center, the UAB Health System, the Center for AIDS Research, the Center for Health Promotion, the Injury Control Research Center, the Center for Injury Sciences, the Sparkman Center for International Public Health Education, the Nutrition Obesity Research Center, and others. In addition, several faculty members collaborate with industry and also participate on advisory panels.

Doctoral students may work with investigators in the Schools and Centers throughout UAB. Students co-author and publish with faculty members in such diverse disciplines as Obstetrics and Gynecology, Medicine, Pediatrics, Dentistry, Nursing, Ophthalmology, Optometry, Nutrition, Microbiology, and Virology.

Educational Objectives of the PhD Program

The goal of the Epidemiology PhD program is to prepare exceptionally qualified individuals for a career of research (in academic and other settings) and teaching in the field of epidemiology. Specific areas of concentration within the broader field of epidemiology are available. These include occupational epidemiology, infectious disease epidemiology, chronic disease epidemiology, injury epidemiology, epidemiologic methods, molecular epidemiology, pharmacoepidemiology and genetic epidemiology. The aim of the PhD program is to provide students with a firm background in epidemiology, biostatistics, and information management. Candidates who successfully complete the program will have mastered the skills required for conducting independent research in epidemiology.
Program Requirements

The Doctor of Philosophy (PhD) is administered by the UAB Graduate School. The degree is granted in recognition of scholarly proficiency and distinctive achievement in a specific field of academic study.

The Director of the Epidemiology PhD program is appointed by the Dean of the Graduate School in consultation with the Department Chair and Dean of the School of Public Health. The current Program Director is Dr. Emily Levitan (elevitan@uab.edu, 205-975-7680).

Subject to the policy-making authority of the Board of Trustees of the University of Alabama and processes for approval of policies as outlined in Board Rule 108, program policy is established by UAB Graduate School Faculty holding primary and secondary appointments in the Department of Epidemiology within the guidelines of and in compliance with the general rules and regulations of the UAB Graduate School as well as the UAB School of Public Health. Changes in academic policy in the School of Public Health are generally initiated through the Educational Policy Committee (EPC). Decisions of the EPC are subject to approval by the School of Public Health Faculty. Students are responsible for meeting all UAB Graduate School requirements and deadlines.

Structure of the Program

The Epidemiology PhD program includes required and optional coursework, two written qualifying exams, an oral proposal defense, intensive mentored research leading to a dissertation, and a formal dissertation defense. In addition, students are required to serve as a teaching assistant or in another teaching capacity for at least one semester, to conduct primary data collection and to participate in the academic life of the department, school, and university through journal clubs and seminars.

Mentorship

Students are assigned an academic advisor with a primary appointment in the Department of Epidemiology when they are admitted to the PhD program, based on research interests. Often the academic advisor will also serve as the student’s main research mentor. However, PhD students will sometimes have a main research mentor whose primary appointment is not in the Department of Epidemiology. In those cases, the Epidemiology faculty member will serve as the academic advisor, epidemiologic methods mentor, and chair of the dissertation committee. Advisor assignments may be changed in consultation with the PhD Program Director.
**Program Timeline**

The first 2 years are primarily devoted to coursework, though students are encouraged to begin participating in research projects as soon as possible. The focus shifts to mentored research as students progress. Any deviation from the timeline below must be discussed with and approved by the academic advisor and PhD Program Director. Full-time students generally complete the PhD program in three to five years. As per UAB Graduate School policy, doctoral students are expected to complete their degrees within 7 years with extensions granted only in exceptional circumstances. Students who need reasonable accommodations due to illness or disability must contact the UAB Office of Disability Support Services (https://www.uab.edu/students/disability/ link current 7/22/19). Students experiencing extenuating circumstances may request a leave of absence of up to one year from the UAB Graduate School (https://www.uab.edu/graduate/students/current-students/academic-policies-progress/forms link current 7/22/19).

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<th></th>
<th>Year 1</th>
<th>Year 2</th>
<th>Year 3</th>
<th>Year 4+</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Didactic coursework</td>
<td>X</td>
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<tr>
<td>First year qualifying exam</td>
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<td>Second year qualifying exam</td>
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<td>Oral proposal defense</td>
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<td>Admission to candidacy</td>
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<tr>
<td>Dissertation research</td>
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<tr>
<td>Dissertation defense</td>
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Students are required to submit progress reports to the PhD Program Director at the end of fall and spring semesters.

**Enrollment Requirements**

The minimal period in which the doctoral degree can be earned is three academic years (nine semesters) of full-time study, or longer if the student has periods of part-time enrollment or takes a leave of absence. The nature of doctoral study requires close contact between the student and the faculty of the graduate program, and the individual investigation or other special work leading to the dissertation must be performed directly under the guidance and supervision of a full member of the UAB graduate faculty. Therefore, doctoral students should be enrolled for three full semesters each year, including summers.

**Program Dismissal**

As outlined in the UAB Graduate School catalog (http://catalog.uab.edu/graduate/ link current 7/22/19), students may be dismissed for failure to maintain good academic standing. Dismissal for failure to maintain good academic standing is administered by the UAB Graduate School.
In addition, students may be dismissed from the Epidemiology PhD program if they fail either of the written qualifying exams more than once, if they fail the oral proposal defense, or if they fail to make sufficient progress in the judgement of the advisor and/or the PhD Program Director in two semesters, whether or not they are consecutive. Students who fail to make sufficient progress in a given semester will receive a memo from the PhD Program Director outlining the deficiency in progress and steps and benchmarks necessary for sufficient progress in the subsequent semester. The student will be required to develop a degree completion plan with detailed timelines that must be approved by the advisor and PhD program director (Appendix: Degree completion plan). A student wishing to appeal a dismissal because of failure of the departmental exams or failure to make progress must submit, in writing, the justification for the appeal to the Department Chair within two weeks of being notified of dismissal. Should a student wish to further appeal the decision of the Department Chair, the appeal would be taken to the Dean of the School of Public Health. The written appeal must specify the grounds for the appeal.

Finally, penalties for academic or nonacademic misconduct may include program dismissal. Academic misconduct includes but is not limited to cheating, plagiarism, misconduct in research, and breach of confidentiality. See the UAB Academic Honor Code (https://www.uab.edu/students/one-stop/policies/academic-honor-code, link current 7/22/19) and the UAB School of Public Health Honor Code (https://www.soph.uab.edu/students/honorcode, link current 7/22/19). A more detailed description of nonacademic misconduct can be found here: https://www.uab.edu/students/conduct/ (link current 7/22/19).

**Course Requirements**

Doctoral students are required to register for at least three hours of graduate-level credit each term. The PhD program emphasizes epidemiologic study design and data analysis. The program is comprised of advanced course work (both didactic and practical). PhD students are expected to have successfully completed a Masters degree in epidemiology or have a Masters degree in a related field and have taken the following courses or their equivalents prior to enrollment in the program.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Courses and topics expected as background knowledge</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Epidemiology</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EPI 610</td>
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<tr>
<td>EPI 626</td>
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<tr>
<td>EPI 625</td>
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<tr>
<td>EPI 627</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Biostatistics</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BST 611/612</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
A minimum of 60 credit hours must be earned to receive the PhD in Epidemiology degree. Of this 60 credit hour minimum, at least 24 hours must be advanced epidemiology and biostatistics courses, at least 12 hours must be directed research EPI 798 completed prior to admission to candidacy, and at least 12 hours must be dissertation research EPI 799 completed after admission to candidacy. The remaining credit hours are electives. Students must complete at least two full semesters in candidacy (EPI 799 credits) before being allowed to graduate (Appendix: Curriculum planning sheet).

During the first year of PhD studies, all students, including part-time students, are required to take EPI 704, EPI 710, EPI 720, BST 621 and BST 622. During the second year of coursework, students will be required to take the doctoral seminar (EPI 790) fall and spring semesters and EPI 703 Grant Proposal Writing. Students also take electives during the first two years in the program to complete the required didactic coursework.

The student must successfully complete all of the following doctoral courses (or equivalent credit):

**Department of Epidemiology Course Requirements**

**Didactic:**
- EPI 703 Grant Proposal Writing or equivalent PUH course (year 2)
- EPI 704 Advanced Epidemiologic Methods (year 1)
- EPI 710 The Analysis of Case-Control Studies (year 1)
- EPI 720 The Analysis of Follow-up Studies (year 1)

**Seminar and tutorial:**
- EPI 790 Doctoral Seminar (fall and spring semester year 2)
- EPI 798 Doctoral Directed Research (at least 12 hours must be completed by the end of the semester prior to entering candidacy)
- EPI 799 Dissertation Research (at least 12 hours over at least 2 semesters; may only be taken after entering candidacy)

**Department of Biostatistics Course Requirements**

**Didactic:**
- BST 621 Statistical Methods I (year 1)
- BST 622 Statistical Methods II (year 1)

At least one additional doctoral level elective epidemiology courses must be taken.

**Current elective doctoral level epidemiology courses:**
- EPI 706 Cardiovascular Epidemiology
- EPI 713 Cancer Epidemiology and Control
- EPI 721 HIV/AIDS and STDs
- EPI 731 Genetic Epidemiology and Lab
- EPI 781 Special Topics in Epidemiology
We anticipate adding additional elective courses. With the advisor’s or PhD Program Director’s approval, EPI 798 credits may be taken as an elective. EPI 798 credit hours counted as an elective may not also count toward the 12 hours required to enter candidacy.

At least two additional advanced level biostatistics courses must be taken. Other biostatistics courses beyond BST 621/622 may be counted as an advanced course except BST 626 (Data Management with SAS) and BST 625 (Design and Conduct of Clinical Trials). Please consult your advisor to fulfill the advanced biostatistics requirement. Although Survival Analysis (BST 665) is not a required course, it is highly recommended for all PhD students in the Department of Epidemiology.

Selected advanced level biostatistics courses:
BST 623 General Linear Models
BST 655 Categorical Data Analysis
BST 665 Survival Analysis
BST 723 Theory of Linear Models
BST 735 Advanced Inference (Spring/odd years)
BST 740 Bayesian Analysis (Fall/even years)
BST 760 Generalized Linear and Mixed Models (Spring/even years)

At least one doctoral level course in an area of medicine or in one of the major areas of public health other than epidemiology and biostatistics must be taken.

All students must take a course related to research ethics and scientific integrity prior to entering candidacy: GRD 717, Principles of Scientific Integrity. Note that GRD 717 is valid for four years; if a student is still enrolled four years after completing GRD717, they must retake this course. Students receiving a PhD are required to complete a self-paced online course titled "Overview of Public Health" by the end of their second semester. “Overview of Public Health” must be completed within a single semester; if not completed within a semester, students must start over from the beginning. Students with prior public health education (coursework in each of the public health core disciplines) or experience (five years in public health) may receive a waiver from this requirement by permission of the Academic Dean. GRD 717 and “Overview of Public Health” do not count towards the required 24 credit hours of didactic course work.

Upon approval of the Director of the Epidemiology PhD program and the course instructor, courses taken at other institutions and in other degree programs may be used to satisfy selected program requirements.

A student wishing to have a required course waived must seek the approval of his/her advisor, the PhD Program Director and the course instructor. Even if the course is waived, the total number of credit hours required will remain unchanged. Students are responsible for providing written documentation of any courses that have been waived or approval of courses accepted from other departments or institutions.
Credits more than seven years old may be used to satisfy Graduate School degree requirements only with the approval of the PhD Program Director and the Graduate School Dean.

**Written Qualifying Examinations**

All epidemiology doctoral students are expected to be proficient in the design, conduct, analysis, and interpretation of epidemiologic studies. Students must be able to demonstrate this proficiency in writing. There are two written qualifying exams. Each section of the examination must be successfully completed before the oral proposal defense can be scheduled.

The first qualifying examination is administered following the summer semester of the student’s first year. This applies to both full-time and part-time students. The examination will test the student’s general knowledge of epidemiology and biostatistics concepts and methods. The examination will be in-class, closed book and will consist of short and long qualitative and quantitative questions.

The second written examination will be integrative and will include the critique of epidemiology studies (e.g., article and grant review) and the analysis of data and drafting of a manuscript. This exam will be take-home and open book, administered following the summer semester of the student’s second year. This applies to both full-time and part-time students. The student has up to 10 days to complete the second part of the written examination.

Students will be required to achieve a score ≥ 70% to pass each examination. A student who fails an examination (first or second) will be permitted to re-take the examination one time. A second failure will result in the student’s dismissal from the program. Students will not be permitted to take both written qualifying examination in the same year without permission of their academic advisor and the Program Director.

If a student fails a qualifying exam, they may appeal the decision within one month of receiving the results. The policy for appeals requires that the student first discuss their exam with their academic advisor and the Program Director. The appeal will then go to the Chair of the Department and two other Faculty Members who were not involved in the grading process, and the department Chair will make the decision based on the recommendations by the new Faculty graders. Should a student wish to further appeal the decision of the Department Chair on the exam, the appeal would be taken to the Dean of the School of Public Health. The written appeal must specify the grounds for the appeal.
Dissertation

In order to be an acceptable dissertation, the research proposed must be original and make an important contribution to the literature. The dissertation can either include original data collection and/or the analysis of secondary data sources. The development of new epidemiologic methods is also appropriate. Students whose dissertation involves secondary data analysis should conduct primary data collection for an epidemiological study/investigation and serve as an author of at least one publication related to the primary data collection at some point during enrollment in the PhD program.

The student is expected to demonstrate the following through the dissertation project:

1. Originality/creativity in developing a question relevant to epidemiology.
2. Competence in applying epidemiologic study designs.
3. The ability to analyze, interpret and present the findings of the study in a written document and public presentation.

The dissertation must meet all the requirements of the University of Alabama at Birmingham Graduate School for doctoral-level dissertations. It should follow the generally accepted format for doctoral dissertations, including an extensive introduction to the thesis topic that includes an up-to-date literature review, a detailed materials and methods section, presentation of the results of the study, a brief discussion of these results, and specific conclusions.

The Epidemiology PhD program encourages a compilation of published or publishable papers along with an overall introduction and conclusion as a dissertation (i.e., paper-based approach). If a student writes a paper-based dissertation, the student is expected to be first author on all of the papers. Typically, the paper-based dissertation contains at least three published or publishable original research papers, though the number of papers required for any specific project is at the discretion of the Doctoral Committee.

All studies involving human subjects research, including dissertation research, must be reviewed by the UAB Institutional Review Board. Institutional Review Board approvals must be included in the dissertation document. Generally, PhD students must obtain Institutional Review Board approval for their dissertation research independently of other approved protocols. Information on UAB Institutional Review Board policies, procedures, and forms can be found here: https://www.uab.edu/research/administration/offices/irb/Pages/Home.aspx (link current 7/22/19).
**Dissertation Timeline**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Event</th>
<th>Year 1</th>
<th>Year 2</th>
<th>Year 3</th>
<th>Year 4+</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Preliminary discussions of dissertation topics with advisor and other faculty</td>
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<tr>
<td>Predissertation research</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Identification of potential dissertation committee members</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Write dissertation proposal</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Oral proposal defense</td>
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<td></td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Formal approval of dissertation committee</td>
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<td></td>
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<td>X</td>
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<tr>
<td>Admission to candidacy</td>
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<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dissertation research</td>
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<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Regular progress meetings</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
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<tr>
<td>Dissertation defense</td>
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</table>

**Doctoral Dissertation Committee Selection**

A dissertation committee should be selected as soon as the student and academic advisor have agreed on the dissertation research. The “Graduate Study Committee Letter” form is available online ([https://www.uab.edu/graduate/students/current-students/academic-policies-progress/forms](https://www.uab.edu/graduate/students/current-students/academic-policies-progress/forms) link current 7/22/19). The student should submit the completed form to the PhD Program Director who will forward the memorandum to the Dean of the Graduate School.

The student, academic advisor, and primary research mentor (if not the same as the academic advisor) should identify members of the dissertation committee. The doctoral committee consists of the academic advisor as chair (the academic advisor must have a primary appointment in the Department of Epidemiology, and may or may not be the primary research mentor) and at least four other individuals with UAB Graduate Faculty status. At least two of the committee members (including the advisor) must be full-time primary faculty members of the Department of Epidemiology. At least two of the members of the committee must have primary appointments outside the Department of Epidemiology. At least one of the committee members must hold a primary appointment outside the School of Public Health. Each of these members should bring relevant insight and expertise to guide the student. The Epidemiology PhD Program Director, the Department Chair, and the Graduate School Dean will serve *ex officio* on the committee.

A candidate may request a change in academic advisors or committee members. However, they may be made only with the approval of the PhD Program Director and the Dean of the Graduate School. The required form “Request to Change Graduate Study Committee” form is available online ([https://www.uab.edu/graduate/students/current-students/academic-policies-progress/forms](https://www.uab.edu/graduate/students/current-students/academic-policies-progress/forms) link current 7/22/19).
Students should be aware that many UAB faculty, especially those in the UAB School of Medicine do not have faculty appointments with the UAB Graduate School. They can be on the committee only if approved by the Graduate School. This often requires additional material (usually the faculty member's CV) be sent to the Graduate School for review and approval several weeks in advance of the submission to candidacy form.

**Dissertation Proposal**

The student must prepare a formal document detailing the proposed dissertation topic. The formal proposal document should include objectives, hypotheses, literature review, significance, study design, power analysis, analytical methods, and strengths and limitations. Often the proposal resembles the science section of a predoctoral fellowship application. Students are encouraged to create table shells as part of the proposal. Table shells are mock-ups of the eventual presentation without numeric results that are used to plan and guide analysis. Students should work with their advisor and proposed dissertation committee members to develop this document. When the student is ready to formally present a research proposal to the doctoral dissertation committee, a memorandum and a copy of the proposal must be sent to each doctoral committee member at least 14 days prior to the scheduled meeting. Sometimes a pre-proposal meeting of committee members is held to iron out details. It is highly recommended that the student discuss with committee members their comments on a draft proposal before giving them the copy of the final proposal.

**Oral Proposal Defense**

The oral proposal defense is a formal presentation of the research proposal for the dissertation. It tests the student’s specific knowledge of the area in epidemiology within which the student proposes to conduct dissertation research. It should be scheduled in the 3rd year of study in the PhD program once the both written examinations have been successfully completed. The oral proposal defense is a pass/fail oral examination with the dissertation committee members serving as examiners. The Department of Epidemiology advisor serves as the chair of the oral proposal defense committee. In the event the student fails, he/she may be invited to repeat the oral examination or may be dismissed from the PhD program.

The student is responsible for scheduling the oral proposal defense and notifying the Program Director. The student is responsible for inviting all Epidemiology faculty members, via memorandum and/or email, to the student’s oral proposal defense at least 7 days in advance.

The proposal defense begins with the student presenting the significance of the study question, including prior research in the area and gaps that the dissertation will address, and plans for the dissertation research. After the student’s
presentation, any of the audience members may question the student. After the non-committee members have completed their questioning, they (with the exception of interested Epidemiology Program faculty) will be asked to leave and the meeting will be closed, leaving the committee members who will begin the examination. This should be a challenging examination that delves into how well the student understands not only the proposed project itself, but also the principles underlying its design and analysis, alternative designs and analysis, and any underlying biologic aspects of the project.

**Admission to Candidacy**

Once a student has successfully completed the written qualifying examinations, the oral qualifying examination, 12 credit hours of EPI 798, and GRD 717 and has obtained IRB approval for their dissertation research, they may apply for admission to candidacy using the “Application for Admission to Candidacy for Doctoral Degree.” This form is available on the UAB Graduate School website ([https://www.uab.edu/graduate/students/current-students/academic-policies-progress/forms](https://www.uab.edu/graduate/students/current-students/academic-policies-progress/forms) link current 7/22/19).

A student must be in good academic standing and apply for candidacy at least two semesters before expected graduation. Students must have completed at least 12 credit hours of EPI 798 before entering candidacy. No student may register for EPI 799 until they have been admitted to candidacy. The formal dissertation proposal approved by the doctoral committee at the end of the oral proposal defense will serve to guide the student as to the expectations of the doctoral committee regarding the dissertation.

Deadlines for admission to candidacy are published by the UAB Graduate School. Students should consult these deadlines to ensure they are able to register for EPI 799 in the following semester.

**Progress Meetings**

Each doctoral student with an approved dissertation proposal is required to meet with his or her dissertation research committee at least once each term during which he or she has enrolled for dissertation research credits (EPI 799). The student will schedule a 1-hour meeting on a day and at a time when the committee chair and at least two additional committee members are available to attend. Participation via conference call is permitted. At this meeting the student will present an agenda which shall include an update of the following: 1) progress made since the previous meeting; 2) preliminary data; 3) problems or obstacles that have arisen and their possible solutions; 4) ways in which committee members or other UAB faculty or staff could facilitate completion of the research or dissertation; 5) goals for progress in the upcoming months.

Upon completion of the meeting, the student will submit a summary report of the meeting to the PhD Program Director within two weeks of the meeting. The essence
of the report will be the “minutes” of the meeting. The report should include the date and time of the meeting and which committee members were present. The report can be written in outline format with bullets and submitted via email. This document should also be reviewed with the advisor.

If the student fails to hold a meeting, or holds a meeting at which he/she fails to demonstrate progress or a clear plan for making progress, an Incomplete or Failing grade may be assigned for that academic term. The continuation of financial aid may be affected by such a grade. The advisor shall notify the PhD Program Director if a student fails to hold a meeting, or if lack of progress is indicated at a meeting. Unresolved incompletes or failing grades in two semesters are grounds for dismissal from the program.

**Dissertation Defense**

A draft of the dissertation should be submitted to the doctoral committee before a final copy is prepared. For students preparing a paper-based dissertation, the student should circulate the papers individually to committee members for their comments, rather than waiting until there is a draft of the complete dissertation. Doctoral committee members should provide the candidate with written comments and suggestions regarding each draft received. At least two weeks should be allowed for a faculty member to respond to any draft. The student should incorporate all comments from committee members into the dissertation or be prepared to explain and justify why specific suggestions were not incorporated.

Final defense deadlines are published by the UAB Graduate School. The defense must be publicized in information sources available to the general University of Alabama at Birmingham community. At least two weeks before the defense a memo announcing the defense is to be sent to the committee members, the Department of Epidemiology faculty and the Graduate School Dean. The memo should be prepared by the student and sent by the doctoral research committee chair. Also at least two weeks before the defense the student program manager is to prepare and distribute an announcement of the defense to each department in the School of Public Health.

The student is responsible for bringing two copies of the "Dissertation Approval Form" to the presentation. The forms may be obtained from the Graduate School. These forms are not available online for completion, but the Graduate School will prepare them for students who fill out and submit the Approval Form Request which is available online (and must be filled in online) at: [https://www.uab.edu/graduate/students/current-students/theses-dissertations/request-approval](https://www.uab.edu/graduate/students/current-students/theses-dissertations/request-approval) (link current 7/22/19).

All members of the doctoral committee should be present at the thesis defense although it can proceed with as few as four. Any of the audience members may question the candidate. It is at the discretion of the committee chair whether the committee will question the candidate at the same time as the other audience members, or whether there will be a closed session for only committee members.
and Epidemiology Faculty. When the questioning is finished, the doctoral committee will meet in private to decide whether or not the candidate has carried out a body of work and prepared a written document that is, in the judgement of the committee, worthy of a PhD in Epidemiology at the University of Alabama at Birmingham.

Two original copies of the Dissertation Approval Form will be signed by the research committee at the completion of a successful defense. The doctoral committee may sign the dissertation approval form immediately following the public defense, or require the candidate to make alterations in the document before signing. Once signed, the student is responsible for delivering these forms to the Graduate School along with the final version of the dissertation that follows all formatting requirements of the Graduate School.

**Submission of the Dissertation**

No later than 2 weeks (10 business days) following the public defense, the completed, final version of the committee-approved dissertation must be submitted (as a single PDF) for approval to the UAB Graduate School. Also submitted online are the UAB Publication Agreement, Survey of Earned Doctorates, and Graduate School Exit Survey. One copy of the signed approval form is submitted to the Graduate School office. Additional information concerning completing graduation requirements and the dissertation submission and publication process is available online at: https://www.uab.edu/graduate/images/documents/resources/current_students/Thesis-Dissertation-Submission-Checklist.pdf (link current 7/22/19).

Students are encouraged to work closely with the UAB Graduate School in all phases of dissertation preparation.

**Teaching Assistantships**

All students must serve as a teaching assistant (TA) for at least one Department of Epidemiology course after successful completion of the second year comprehensive exam; they may serve as a teaching assistant for additional courses if they choose. The TA must participate in teaching the course by, for example, giving a lecture or teaching help sessions. The particular duties to be performed by the TA are to be negotiated between the student and course director. The Department of Epidemiology has a specific compensation algorithm for TAs. For policies related to TAs, please contact the Program Coordinator. Interested students may also have the opportunity to serve as the primary instructor of a course under the mentorship of a faculty member, depending on departmental and school needs.
Funding

There is a variety of sources of funding for PhD students in Epidemiology. Currently the Program has a few fellowships through the Blazer Graduate Research Fellowship program (https://www.uab.edu/graduate/faculty-staff/other/blazer-graduate-research-fellowships, link current 7/22/19). These fellowships generally provide a stipend (the amount of which varies over time), health insurance, and tuition for 4 semesters. At the conclusion of the fellowship, successful students will be supported by institutional training grants, individual fellowship awards, or research assistantships. Students should work with their advisors for assistance in securing funding. Students who do not receive Blazer Graduate Research Fellowships may seek employment working on a funded research project (often one which could lead to a dissertation topic) or seek their own grant funding. Our current students are funded through various external mechanisms such as NIH F31, NIH R25, T32 training programs, or American Heart Association pre-doctoral fellowships. All students are encouraged to apply for independent funding.

Generally, graduate students funded through individual or institutional training grants receive Graduate Student Trainee appointments. Graduate students funded through work on a research project receive Graduate Research Assistant appointments. Graduate Research Assistants work up to 20 hours per week and receive a stipend, health insurance, and tuition support. In some cases, the UAB Graduate School may approve a secondary appointment to work up to 10 additional hours per week. For example, a Graduate Research Assistant may obtain a secondary appointment as a Graduate Teaching Assistant. Secondary appointments have not been allowed during a Blazer Graduate Research Fellowship. Note that the different types of appointments have different tax implications. Please consult the UAB Graduate School for questions about the rules for each type of appointment (https://www.uab.edu/graduate/faculty-staff/other/blazer-graduate-research-fellowships, link current 7/22/19).

Administrative Procedures

PhD Program Director

Dr. Emily Levitan is currently the PhD Program Director in Epidemiology. She can be reached at elevitan@uab.edu or 205-975-7680.
**PhD Program Committee**

The PhD Program Director, Dr. Levitan, is advised by a committee. Currently, the committee members are Dr. Sadeep Shrestha, Dr. Ryan Irvin and Dr. April Carson.

**Administration**

PhD Program Assistant: Ms. Catherine Sreenan, ksreenan@uab.edu
Coordinator of Graduate Academic Programs: Ms. Kimberly Hawkins King, hawkinsk@uab.edu

**Registration**

This School of Public Health catalog of graduate programs is available online at [http://catalog.uab.edu/graduate/](http://catalog.uab.edu/graduate/) (link current 7/22/19) and the Academic Calendar [https://www.uab.edu/students/academics/academic-calendar/2019-2020](https://www.uab.edu/students/academics/academic-calendar/2019-2020) (link current 7/22/19).

These documents list course information and give full details on registration dates and procedures. Students should become familiar with this information to avoid unnecessary registration delays.

Full time students typically register for 9 to 15 hours of course credit per semester. Part-time students generally enroll for 6 hours per semester. Students should meet with their assigned advisor prior to registration to review academic progress and discuss course work for the upcoming term.

Some courses that require specific background may need the approval of the instructor and/or the Academic Dean. The UAB Class Schedule or BlazerNet will usually indicate when this is necessary.

Students are expected to register during the normal registration period and to only register for courses they intend to complete. Registering late or adding or dropping courses is possible, but only until the date specified in the UAB Academic Calendar ([https://www.uab.edu/students/academics/academic-calendar/2019-2020](https://www.uab.edu/students/academics/academic-calendar/2019-2020) link current 7/22/19).

Note: If you are receiving a Blazer Fellowship, or other funding that pays your tuition, you must inform the department of any courses with additional charges, such as online courses, or courses added after your regular tuition is paid so that the tuition payments are handled properly. If you are receiving a Fellowship, it is your responsibility to notify those paying your tuition of any late registration for courses. If you do not, you will be responsible for any late fees incurred.
**Leave of Absence**

A leave of absence may be granted under special circumstances. Leaves of absence are granted for no more than a one-year period (https://www.uab.edu/graduate/students/current-students/academic-policies-progress/forms link current 7/22/19). Any student who does not obtain prior written approval for a leave of absence and fails to enroll for two consecutive semesters will be dropped as a student.

Student taking leaves of absence must abide by the UAB Graduate School requirement of completing a PhD program within seven years of active enrollment, not including periods during which they were on an official leave of absence.

**Application for Degree**

To begin the process, the candidate must submit the Application for Degree form through BlazerNET by the deadline date. Some of these requirements, along with a brief explanation, follow:

**Application for Degree** is a form that must be completed by the candidate and turned in to the Graduate School before the end of the second week of the semester of expected graduation. There is an additional fee. If, for any reason, graduation does not take place as expected, then the student must fill out another application form and pay the diploma order fee.

**Abstract of Dissertation** must be approved by the research committee chair and PhD Program Director and submitted online via ProQuest.

**Survey of Earned Doctorates** is distributed by the Graduate School and is completed by the candidate.

**Publishing Your Dissertation** Appropriate copyright contract forms must be completed by the candidate. Other forms as required by the graduate school may be necessary and the student is responsible for completing these forms. The graduating student is also requested to complete an anonymous "Exit Interview" questionnaire at this time.

**Award of degree**

Based upon the recommendation of the Graduate School faculty, payment of outstanding financial obligations to the university, and approval of the UAB President, the candidate will receive the degree of doctor of philosophy. Diplomas are issued at the end of each semester. Degrees are formally awarded at commencement exercises in December, April, and August.
Additional Comments

Revision of Policies

Subject to the authority of UAB leadership, the Chancellor, and the Board of Trustees for the University of Alabama outlined in Board Rule 108, the Department of Epidemiology reserves the right to make revisions in policies at any time. When feasible in the judgement of the PhD Program Director and Department Chair, students will have the option of selecting the academic degree requirements under which they matriculated or the new policy.

Travel Funds

The Department encourages PhD students to present their research at national conferences. Each academic year, funds (up to $500) are available to reimburse travel expenses for students to attend conferences. This research should be epidemiological in nature. To be eligible for these funds, students must provide a request to the Department Chair and PhD Program Director by e-mail two weeks prior to submitting the abstract for review. This request should include the name of the conference, location (city, state) and the abstract being submitted. The Department Chair will review this request and provide a response to the student within 30 days.

Student Questions and Problems

If students have questions or problems, they are urged to address them first with their advisor. If the advisor is not available, the student may contact the Program Director’s office.

International Student Questions and Problems – immigration, federal and state taxation, and UAB policies questions can be answered through International Student and Scholar Services: [https://www.uab.edu/global/international-students-and-scholars/students](https://www.uab.edu/global/international-students-and-scholars/students) link current 7/22/19). They also serve as a resource center to promote international understanding and awareness on campus and in the community. They are located in the new international center on the second floor of the Mervyn H. Sterne Library on the corner of 9th Avenue and 13th Street South and are open from 8:00 AM until 5:00 PM Monday through Friday.

Nonacademic Conduct

The University is a community of scholars and learners; therefore, all participants are expected to maintain conduct that (1) facilitates the institution’s pursuit of its educational objectives, (2) exhibits a regard for the rights of other
members of the academic community, and (3) contributes to the maintenance of a healthy learning environment. Through appropriate procedures, action will be taken in response to behavior that violates these principles. The office of Non-Academic Student Conduct supports the mission of the University by protecting the rights of all members of the university community and by promoting civility, integrity, responsibility, openness, mutual respect and justice by enforcing community standards. A more detailed description of nonacademic misconduct can be found here: https://www.uab.edu/students/conduct/ (link current 7/22/19). It is the student’s responsibility to be fully aware of the policies and procedures described.

**Grievances**

If a student has a grievance, it is recommended that the student discuss it with the individual with whom they have the grievance. If this is not appropriate or the student does not feel comfortable doing this, the sequence of persons to be approached is as follows: the faculty advisor, the Chair, and, if necessary, the Dean of the Graduate School or the Dean for Academic Affairs of the School of Public Health (whichever is appropriate).
Epidemiology Faculty

Affuso, Olivia, Associate Professor, MS (Georgia State Univ.), PhD (Univ. of North Carolina at Chapel Hill); Special interests: Applied epidemiology for the prevention of obesity and chronic disease through physical activity and nutrition, food security, health disparities, and design of obesity randomized controlled trials.

Aslibekyan, Stella, Associate Professor; MS (Harvard School of Public Health), PhD (Brown Univ.); Special interests: cardiovascular disease, statistical genetics, nutritional epidemiology.

Carson, April P., Associate Professor and Associate Dean for Diversity, Equity and Inclusion, MSPH in Epidemiology (Univ. of North Carolina at Chapel Hill), PhD in Epidemiology (Univ. of North Carolina at Chapel Hill; Special interests: Health disparities in cardiovascular disease and diabetes

Griffin, Russell L., Associate Professor, MSPH in Epidemiology (Univ. of Alabama at Birmingham), PhD in Epidemiology (Univ. of Alabama at Birmingham); Special interests: epidemiological methodology; injury epidemiology of motor vehicle collision related injuries; risk factors for community-acquired sepsis; health and safety among commercial long-haul truck drivers.

Hardy, Shakia T., Assistant Professor, MPH in Public Health Administration (Univ. of South Florida), PhD in Epidemiology (Univ. of North Carolina at Chapel Hill); Special interests: Determinants of health disparities in hypertension and cardiovascular disease across the life course, psychosocial and behavioral risk factors for cardiovascular disease

Hidalgo, Bertha, Assistant Professor, MSPH Biostatistics/Epidemiology (Univ. So California), PhD Epidemiology (Univ. of Alabama at Birmingham); Special interests: nutrition, obesity, heart disease

Howard, Virginia, Professor; MSPH (Univ. of North Carolina at Chapel Hill), PhD (Medical Univ. of South Carolina Charleston); Special interests: Stroke symptoms and associated risk factors, life-course exposure to the stroke belt geographic region, and risk factors for outcomes following carotid endarterectomy and carotid stenting.

Irvin, Ryan, Associate Professor, MS in Biostatistics (Medical Univ. of South Carolina, Charleston), PhD in Epidemiology (Univ. of Alabama at Birmingham); Special interests: Pharmacogenetics of antihypertensive treatment with a focus on genetic risk for incident diabetes mellitus due to thiazide diuretic treatment and treatment resistant hypertension.

Jolly, Pauline, Professor, PhD in Science Education (Louisiana State Univ.), MPH and PhD in Immunology and Infectious Diseases (Johns Hopkins Univ.); Special
interests: HIV immunopathogenesis, STIs and other infectious diseases, Immune and health effects of aflatoxin.

**Lewis, Cora E.**, Professor and Chair, MD (Indiana University) and MSPH in Epidemiology (Univ. of Alabama at Birmingham); Special interests: Cardiovascular and other chronic diseases, design and conduct of long-term longitudinal studies

**Levitan, Emily B.**, Associate Professor, SM and ScD in Epidemiology (Harvard School of Public Health); Special interests: the relationship between diet, lifestyle, and cardiovascular diseases and the application of epidemiologic and statistical methods to address public health questions

**Martin, Kimberly**, Assistant Professor, PhD (Yale Univ); Special interests: Quality of care and healthcare disparities in cardiovascular disease and stroke

**McGwin, Gerald**, Professor and Vice Chair, MS (Harvard), PhD (Univ. of Alabama at Birmingham); Special interests: Injury epidemiology, Epidemiologic Methods, Ophthalmic epidemiology.

**Muntner, Paul**, Professor and Associate Dean of Research, MHS (Johns Hopkins Univ.), PhD (Johns Hopkins Univ.); Special interests: Renal disease epidemiology, Cardiovascular epidemiology.

**Ojesina, Akinyemi**, Assistant Professor, MD (Univ. of Ibadan in Nigeria) and PhD (Harvard Univ.); Special interests: Translational genomics, integrative molecular epidemiology, oncology, infectious disease, and global health, with a primary focus on infection-related cancers (including HIV-associated malignancies) and women’s cancers

**Padilla, Luz (Aly)**, Assistant Professor, MD (Univ. of Guadalajara) and MSPH in epidemiology (Univ. of Alabama at Birmingham); Special interests: Surgical research, pediatric heart disease

**Sathiakumar, Nalini**, Professor, MD (Madras Medical College, India), MSPH (UAB), DrPH (Univ. of Alabama at Birmingham); Special interests: Environmental and occupational epidemiology, Pediatric epidemiology.

**Shrestha, Sadeep**, Associate Professor, MHS in Infectious disease/Genetic Epidemiology (Johns Hopkins Univ.), PhD in Genetic Epidemiology (Johns Hopkins Univ.), MS (Biotechnology) from Kreiger School of Arts and Sciences, Johns Hopkins Univ; Special interests: Interplay of human genetics with behavioral and environmental factors in the natural history, pathogenesis and outcomes of HIV/AIDS and other infectious diseases

**Waterbor, John W.**, Associate Professor, MS, MD (Pennsylvania), DrPH (Univ. of Alabama at Birmingham); Special interests: Cancer epidemiology and control, Injury epidemiology.
Wright, Nicole C., Associate Professor, PhD (Univ. of Arizona); Special interests: osteoporosis and fractures; Multiple Sclerosis

Yun, Huifeng, Associate Professor, MSc and PhD (Univ. of Alabama at Birmingham); Special interests: pharmacoepidemiology and pharmacovigilance
APPENDIX

Curriculum planning sheet 2019-2020

Example degree completion plan
### CURRICULUM PLANNING SHEET

**Epidemiology PhD Fall 2019**

At least 24 credit hours must be earned in doctoral level didactic epidemiology courses or advanced biostatistics courses. Other biostatistics courses beyond BST 621/622 may be counted as an advanced course except BST 626 (Data Management with SAS) and BST 625 (Design and Conduct of Clinical Trials). Please consult your advisor to fulfill the advanced biostatistics requirement. A total of at least 60 credit hours must be completed to earn the PhD-EPI degree.

Students receiving a PhD are required to complete a 37 hour, self-paced online course entitled "Overview of Public Health" by the end of their second semester. Students with prior public health education (coursework in each of the public health core disciplines) or experience (5 years in public health) may be waived from this requirement by permission of the Associate Dean.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Required (18 Hours)</th>
<th>Course Name</th>
<th>Term</th>
<th>Course Available</th>
<th>Credit Hours</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>BST 621: Statistical Methods I</td>
<td>C</td>
<td>Fall</td>
<td></td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BST 622: Statistical Methods II</td>
<td>C</td>
<td>Spr</td>
<td></td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EPI 703: Grant Proposal Writing</td>
<td>C</td>
<td>Sum</td>
<td></td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EPI 704: Advanced Epidemiologic Methods</td>
<td>C</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EPI 710: Analysis of Case-Control Studies</td>
<td>C</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EPI 720: Analysis of Follow-Up Studies</td>
<td>C</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EPI 798: Doctoral-Level Directed Research (Register prior to admission to candidacy: Must have at least 12 hours)</td>
<td>C</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

One (1) course related to research ethics and scientific integrity (Does not count toward the required 24 credit hours of didactic course work.)

**GRD 717: Principles of Scientific Integrity**

At least one (1) additional doctoral level Epidemiology course - select from the following:

**EPI 713: Cancer Epidemiology and Control**

At least two (2) advanced level Biostatistics courses. Other courses may be available in Biostats, with your advisor's approval. Please check the course catalog.

**At least two (2) advanced level Biostatistics courses.** One (1) course related to research ethics and scientific integrity (Does not count toward the required 24 credit hours of didactic course work.)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Required Doctoral Seminars (Please note EPI 790 must be taken at least 2 times)</th>
<th>Course Name</th>
<th>Term</th>
<th>Course Available</th>
<th>Credit Hours</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>EPI 790: Doctoral Seminar in Epidemiology</td>
<td>C</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EPI 799: Dissertation Research (Register after admission to candidacy) (Must have at least 12 hours and at least 2 semesters of EPI 799)</td>
<td>C</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Optional Electives (with advisor's approval and in some cases, also approval of instructor) - to complete total hours required for degree.

**HCO 670: Social and Ethical Issues in Public Health**

| Minimum Total Credit Hours for Degree | CO | O | 3 |

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**Course Availability Key:**

O = Online;  C = In Class;  CO = Both In Class and Online;  I = On site

† Indicates course taught every even calendar year

* Indicates course taught every odd calendar year

± Indicates course may or may not be taught (check with the program manager for course availability)
The below completion plan should list specific goals and specific deadlines for meeting those goals towards completion of the PhD in Epidemiology academic program. This plan should include a stipulation that the student will meet with his/her committee or committee chair to review progress at each of the proposed deadline times. It is suggested that the time between proposed committee meetings be no longer than three months. The student’s plan of completion should be incorporated into this written document, signed by the student, his/her advisor, and the program director.

Completion Timeline and Specific Goals - PhD in Epidemiology

Student Name:  
Student Number:

Committee Member Assignment [5 committee members required]:  
Dissertation Committee Assignment Form Submitted: (Date or date range)

Name of Committee Members:  
(please type in your committee member names below)
Chair, Committee member 1  
Committee member 2  
Committee member 3  
Committee member 4  
Committee member 5

Outstanding Work to be Completed with Deadline Dates and Goals to be met:  
(below are examples of dates and a timeline of work towards the oral proposal and final dissertation defense; the dates and expected goals associated with each date should fit into the student’s timeline):

August 6th –October 4th ---- Finish analysis for proposal

August 26th ---- Start Fall classes  
EPI ___  
EPI ___

October 4th --- Meet with advisor to review proposal progress and classes.

October 7th – October 21st ---- Prepare proposal presentation for defense

October 17th --- Meet with advisor to review progress toward proposal completion and presentation

Week of October 28th --- Proposal defense

November 4th --- Meet with advisor to review progress in classes
January --- Submit admission to candidacy paperwork by deadline date of ____.


February ---

March -----

April ----

May ----- Register for ____ number of EPI 700 credits for Summer 2020. Deadline date to register is ____.

June ----

July ---

August ---

September ---

October –

November ---

December ---

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**Signatures:**

Student ___________________________ Date ___________________________

Advisor ___________________________ Date ___________________________

Program Director ___________________________ Date ___________________________