

Health Services and Policy, Ph.D.

Requirements

The Doctor of Philosophy program in health services and policy requires a minimum of 72 s.h. of graduate credit. Students must maintain a cumulative g.p.a. of at least 3.25 to earn the degree. Those who enter with a master's degree can apply to use transfer credit toward their doctorate degree with approval of the health services and policy program.

The Ph.D. program is oriented toward applied, interdisciplinary research and scholarly inquiry. Students develop mastery of theories and research methodologies necessary to study the complex American health system. They work closely with faculty mentors on research projects and develop research design and methodology skills through coursework and an apprenticeship model of training.

Individual plans of study allow students to prepare for specific careers, and small class size encourages frequent student-faculty interaction, including participation in research projects as well as scholarly publications.

The Ph.D. program has three focus areas: health economics, health management and organization, or health policy. Students work with a faculty advisor and a mentorship team of faculty members from their focus area; the advisor and mentorship team participate in initial planning with a student during orientation and in annual professional development reviews. Students conduct required independent study and thesis research in their focus area; their comprehensive exam and dissertation committees include faculty members from their focus area.

Focus Areas

The health economics focus area provides students with in-depth training in economic theory and its applications to health and health care. Students in this area acquire advanced theoretical knowledge and state-of-the-art analytical and econometric skills that enable them to build careers as health economists in academic departments, research organizations, and health care industries. The health economics focus area provides comprehensive coursework covering all main areas in health and health care economics, including demand for health and health care, economic determinants and consequences of health behaviors, health insurance, economic organization of health care markets, impact of government policy and regulation, econometric methods, and economic evaluation methods.

The health management and organization focus area prepares students to conduct research on organizational, strategic, and operational issues that confront health institutions and systems. Emphasis is placed on health care applications of theories, concepts, and models from the fields of organizational theory (macro), organizational behavior (micro), strategic management, and operations management. Students in this area may conduct research on topics such as effectiveness of health care organizations; improving the organization and management of health delivery processes; measuring performance and productivity of health care organizations; examining the relative influence of mission, culture, and financial incentives in hospitals and health organizations; and management of professional groups.

Graduates of the health management and organization focus area should find employment in academic and research organizations, integrated delivery systems, and governmental units that are interested in the impact of organizational structures and managerial practices on performance.

The health policy focus area prepares students to undertake health services and policy research aimed at improving care and management of illness and disability and enhancing individual and community health outcomes. Students develop the skills necessary to conduct health services and policy research. They take courses in the basic disciplines that contribute to the fields of public and social policy (e.g., law, political science, public affairs) and courses that focus on the structure and organization of health policy making in the United States. They study the formation and implementation of health policies; the effect of health policies on the organization, financing, and delivery of health services; the effect of health policies on access to, use of, and costs of health services; and approaches to improve access and effectiveness of care for vulnerable populations. Students who complete the health policy focus area are prepared for employment in academic research institutions, policy organizations, and governmental agencies and departments.

The Ph.D. with a major in health services and policy requires the following.

Coursework

Students take coursework in core content areas covering health care systems, health economics, health management and organizations, and health policy and courses in research design and statistical analysis. Credit may be awarded for guided and independent research project work. Students may waive specific courses, depending on their background. For more detailed information about Ph.D. and focus area curricula, see the Ph.D. in Health Services and Policy on the Department of Health Management and Policy website.

Core Courses

Code	Title	Hours
All of these:		
HMP:5450	Health Insurance and Managed Care	3
CPH:6100	Essentials of Public Health	2

Foundation Courses in Focus Areas

Code	Title	Hours
All of these:		
HMP:5005	Introduction to Healthcare Organization and Policy	3
HMP:5410	Health Economics I	3
HMP:5610	Health Policy	3
HMP:5750	Medicare and Medicaid Policy	3
HMP:7250	Organizational Behavior and Theory in Health Care	3
HMP:7550	Cost Effectiveness and Decision Analysis	3
HMP:7930	Ph.D. Independent Research	3

Design and Analysis Courses

Code	Title	Hours
All of these:		
HMP:7940	Primary Data and Mixed Methods	3
HMP:7950	Design Issues in Health Service Research	3
HMP:7960	Analytic Issues in Health Services Research I	3
HMP:7965	Analytic Issues in Health Services Research II	3
HMP:7990	Thesis/Dissertation	8-15
BIOS:4120	Introduction to Biostatistics	3
BIOS:5120	Regression Modeling and ANOVA in the Health Sciences	3
CPH:7270	Principles of Scholarly Integrity: Public Health (must be taken twice; in the first semester for 0 s.h., in the second semester for 1 s.h.)	0-1

Advanced Focus Area Courses

Health Economics

Code	Title	Hours
At least three of these:		
ECON:4140	Labor Economics	3
ECON:5100	Microeconomics I	3
ECON:5115	Fundamentals of Microeconomics	3
ECON:5800	Econometrics	3
ECON:5810	Applied Econometrics	3
ECON:6310	Industrial Organization	3
ECON:6900	Contemporary Topics in Economics	3

Health Management and Organization

Code	Title	Hours
At least three of these:		
MGMT:7340	Group Processes (Ph.D.)	3
MGMT:7350	Leadership (Ph.D.)	3
MGMT:7360	Motivation and Attitudes (Ph.D.)	3
SOC:6610	Complex Organizations	3

Health Policy

Code	Title	Hours
Both of these:		
HMP:5650	Health Policy Analysis	3
HMP:6750	Seminar in Health Policy	3
At least one of these:		
HMP:6710	Federalism and Health Policy	3
POLI:5100	American Politics	4
POLI:7202	Public Opinion and Electoral Behavior	4
SOC:6810	Social Stratification	3

Electives

Students take elective coursework so that they are exposed to other areas or to gain greater depth within their area of focus.

Examinations

Students must pass a preliminary examination that tests mastery of core material covered during the first year in the department, including American health systems, health services research methods, and foundation courses in their focus area.

Students take the comprehensive examination at or near the end of their formal coursework. The comprehensive exam focuses on a student's specific area of research and theoretical interest.

Dissertation

Doctoral candidates prepare dissertations based on original research that tests, extends, or applies concepts or principles to a health care problem related to their chosen focus area. Students may complete a traditional dissertation or a dissertation based on three publishable papers.

Admission

Applicants must apply through the Schools of Public Health Application Service (SOPHAS). All applicants also must submit the supplement University of Iowa application fee. For detailed application information, visit HMP Degree Programs on the Department of Health Management and Policy website.

Applicants must meet the admission requirements of the Graduate College; see the Manual of Rules and Regulations of the Graduate College on the Graduate College website.

Students begin the program in fall semester. Personal interviews are required before admission; the admissions committee conducts Skype interviews with applicants.

Financial Support

A variety of financial assistance is available, including scholarships and awards, student loans, and graduate research assistantships. Every effort is made to provide financial support to students who demonstrate need and maintain satisfactory academic standards. Some awards are offered in recognition of outstanding academic performance and experience, regardless of need.

Graduate research assistantships generally are awarded on the basis of student merit and the department's need. Assistantships afford valuable experience in health services research and management projects. Graduate research assistants work 10-20 hours per week and must apply for reappointment each year. Assistantships provide a stipend, some tuition assistance, and entitle students to the resident tuition rate.

Opportunities also exist for part-time employment both on and off campus. For information and financial aid application forms, contact the University's Office of Student Financial Aid.

Career Advancement

The program prepares students for careers in health services research, education, and policy leadership in universities, government agencies, and health organizations.