

UNIVERSITY of **HOUSTON** | HEALTH AND HUMAN PERFORMANCE

## **Graduate Student Handbook**

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## **Ph.D. in Kinesiology**

The Doctor of Philosophy in Kinesiology program currently focuses on four broad areas of kinesiology, namely motor behavior, exercise physiology, sport and fitness administration, and obesity studies.

It should be noted that the guiding philosophy of the program is that the student and advisor should work closely together to develop a course of study which appropriately meets the student's professional goals. Acceptance of a student into the Ph.D. (Kinesiology) program is determined by a number of factors, one of which is a clearly identified area of study and a Faculty advisor/mentor within the program who will support their admission. As part of the application process, prospective students will identify the potential professor/ professors with whom they share common scientific interests.

### **Emphasis Areas**

Ph.D. in Kinesiology with an emphasis in motor behavior

Ph.D. in Kinesiology with an emphasis in exercise physiology

Ph.D. in Kinesiology with an emphasis in obesity studies

Ph.D. in Kinesiology with an emphasis in sport and fitness administration

### **Program Objectives**

The Doctor of Philosophy (Ph.D.) in Kinesiology is designed to provide doctoral level training to prepare a professional with the cognitive and research skills needed to be a productive scholar.

The primary objectives of the PhD in Kinesiology are to train scholars to...

- 1) Understand, conduct, disseminate, and critically evaluate research in kinesiology and related fields.
- 2) Deeply understand content in one's chosen field
- 3) Promote the learning of others through strong written and oral communication.
- 4) Prepare program development and research proposals.

The target time for completion of the Ph.D. (Kinesiology) program is six years or less.

### **Ph.D. in Kinesiology with an emphasis in Motor Behavior**

This emphasis provides students with the experimental, theoretical, and analytical tools necessary to investigate the basic processes and mechanisms underlying motor control and learning. The results will provide improved training and rehabilitation for special needs populations, including athletes, astronauts, performing artists, patients coping with movement disorders or recovering from traumatic injuries, and normal individuals adjusting to the functional consequences of aging. Graduates of the program will have an expertise in biomechanics, kinesiology, sensorimotor physiology, movement disorders and rehabilitation;

and will be qualified to pursue research careers in academia, medical research institutes, government laboratories or corporate research and development centers

The Ph.D. in Kinesiology with an emphasis in motor behavior program is designed for students interested in:

- Adaptive sensorimotor control
- Biomechanics and energetics of posture and gait
- Basic and translational research models
- Elite and at-risk populations
- Research careers in academia, rehabilitation, space, etc.

## **Ph.D. in Kinesiology with an emphasis in Exercise Physiology**

This emphasis provides students with the experimental, theoretical and analytical tools necessary to investigate the basic processes and mechanisms in exercise physiology.

The Ph.D. in Kinesiology with an emphasis in exercise physiology program is designed for students interested in:

- Skeletal muscle physiology
- The impact of exercise and other stressors on the immune system, healthy aging, and/or cardiovascular disease
- Mechanistic links between obesity, accelerated biological aging, and immunological dysfunction
- Research careers in academia, industry, foundations, or government.

## **Ph.D. in Kinesiology with an emphasis in Obesity Studies**

Obesity has been recognized as an epidemic by scholars, and lay audiences. It is arguably the single most pressing public health challenge facing the United States today. HHP uses a multilevel approach to the Ph.D. in Kinesiology with emphasis in obesity studies. The track includes faculty with research expertise spanning from the cell to society - including biological, behavioral, sociocultural, psychological and environmental perspectives, while also identifying and understanding the precursors, correlates, effective interventions and consequences of obesity. The translational obesity studies curriculum offers a unique, comprehensive approach to the public health issue particularly germane to our times.

The Ph.D. in Kinesiology with an emphasis in obesity studies program is designed for:

- Administrators or scientists in public health environments (CDC, NIH, WHO)
- Advisors or employees in government agencies (state boards of health or education, urban planning boards)
- Neighborhood, city, regional state or national program or center directors
- Basic and translational scientists in physiology, exercise physiology, psychology, and medicine
- Educators at all levels
- Faculty researchers.

## **Ph.D. in Kinesiology with an emphasis in Sports and Fitness Administration**

The sport industry is growing in size and sophistication. Domestically and internationally, diversity spans sports in the professional, collegiate, community, fitness, and recreational programming capacities. To better serve its clients and provide outstanding services, this industry demands cutting-edge research and well-trained professionals. Aligned with these trends, the Health and Human Performance Department at the University of Houston uses a multilevel approach for the Ph.D. in Kinesiology with an emphasis in sports and fitness administration. This doctoral program is designed for the following candidates:

- Future faculty researchers who will conduct theoretical and applied studies
- Future industry leaders in the areas of professional sports, event management, fitness and recreational management, and collegiate athletic administration
- Educators at all levels.

## **Ph.D. (Kinesiology) Application Process**

Graduate Admission Counseling: Prospective graduate students are strongly encouraged to contact the Academic Program Director for more information regarding application to our graduate programs.

Please visit the University of Houston Graduate School website for instructions on how to apply.

After applying, the following required supporting materials need to be submitted by January 15:

- Official transcripts from all institutions previously attended
- Official GRE and TOEFL (if applicable) scores sent to Institution Code 6870
- Three letters of recommendation from professional or academic mentors
  - Your recommenders will be contacted automatically and asked to evaluate you through an online system. They should be encouraged to provide comments and/or upload a signed letter as well.
- Current resume or curriculum vitae
- Statement of professional goals and research interests
- Sample of academic writing

Prospective students are highly encouraged to identify and contact potential faculty advisors with whom they share common scientific interests. The Academic Program Directors can assist in matching students to specific advisors. "Matching" with a faculty advisor is a requirement for admission to the Ph.D. program.

## **Ph.D. (Kinesiology) Admissions Criteria**

Acceptance into the Doctor of Philosophy (Ph.D.) in Kinesiology program is by vote of the departmental Graduate Research Degrees (GRD) committee. The GRD committee is responsible for final determination of a graduate application for entry to the Ph.D. (Kinesiology) program. Final acceptance into the program remains pending until an official written notification of

acceptance is received by the student from the College of Liberal Arts and Social Sciences Graduate Studies Office.

Admittance to the program will be based on a series of criteria that includes:

- Undergraduate Grade Point Average (GPA) - most admitted students have a GPA above 3.5
- Graduate Record Exam (GRE): most admitted students score above the 60th percentile on the Quantitative and Verbal Reasoning sections and at least 3.5 on the Analytical Writing section.
- Letter of Research Interests with Statement of Professional Goals
- Writing Sample (examples: thesis, journal articles, professional reports, etc.)
- Personal Interview with a potential faculty advisor (note: when possible, this should be an in-person interview; when travel distance is a concern, this may be a telephone or video conference interview)

All decisions concerning admissions to the Ph.D. (Kinesiology) program are made by the GRD committee in the department and are arrived at on a competitive applicant pool basis.

## **Transfer of Academic Credit into the Ph.D. (Kinesiology) program**

Please contact the University of Houston Graduate School for current university transfer policies.

Such external transfer hours must satisfy the following criteria to be considered for approval for transfer by the GRD committee:

- *The course syllabus must be reviewed by advisor and/or qualified HHP faculty member to assess suitability for doctoral academic credit*
- *Student must submit a transfer of credit form along with supporting documentation from advisor requesting transfer of said hours.*
- *Transfer hours cannot be substituted for completion of any class that appears in either the departmental or discipline core*
- *Course must have received a grade of "B" or higher*

Final approval for inclusion of such transfer hours in a doctoral degree plan lies with the University's Dean for Graduate and Professional Studies.

The University of Houston does not accept experiential learning for graduate or professional transfer credit. In addition, the University of Houston does not accept non-credit work for transfer credit.

See the UH Graduate School Catalog for more information on transferred courses.

## **Faculty Advisors & Student Rights**

### **Potential Faculty Advisors**

Acceptance into the Doctor of Philosophy (Ph.D.) in Kinesiology program is by vote of the departmental Graduate Research Degrees (GRD) committee. The GRD committee is responsible for final determination of a graduate application for entry to the Ph.D. (Kinesiology) program housed in the Department of Health and Human Performance. Final acceptance into the program remains pending until an official written notification of acceptance is received by the student from the Graduate School.

### **Graduate Student Rights and Responsibilities**

Graduate students at the University of Houston have many rights and responsibilities, including time and coursework limits within which they must complete their degree. These can be found at: <http://www.uh.edu/gs/index.php>

## **Degree Requirements and Program Details**

### **General Degree Requirements**

The Ph.D. in Kinesiology requires a minimum of 66 hours, including 6 hours of required doctoral dissertation hours.

These hours are comprised of the required courses below, HHP Journal Club, course hours for preparing the required PhD Candidacy Project, and designated electives that are pertinent to a student's course of study. These are to be taken under the direction and approval of the student's advisor. These electives can be drawn from the designated elective course list and include classes (both scheduled and Special Topics classes) offered within the department, classes offered in other departments within the University of Houston, or classes offered in support areas at other academic institutions. The approved electives will provide the student with an academic foundation in the particular discipline of study within the Ph.D. program.

In addition, each student will be required to participate in on-going research projects, develop independent research projects, generate research results that form the basis of their candidacy paper and attend research seminars and thesis/dissertation defenses within both the department and the wider scientific research community.

The cap-stone experience within the Ph.D. (Kinesiology) program is completion of a dissertation research project and dissertation document.

## **Academic Core Requirements**

### **Department Core: (12-15 hours)**

PEP 8314 – Research Design and Methods (3 hours)

PEP 8306 – Scientific Inquiry (3 hours)

PEP 8323 – Programming and Proposal Writing (3 hours)

PEP 8350 – Candidacy Project (3 hours)

PEP 8350 – Candidacy Project (second semester if needed)

### **Analytical Methods (9 hours)**

Students must complete 9 hours of analytical methods courses approved by their faculty advisory committee

### **Emphasis Area: (12 hours)**

Students must complete 12 credits from their emphasis area approved by their faculty advisory committee. Typically, students will fulfill this requirement through PEP 8304 – Journal Club, however the faculty advisory committee may approve additional courses.

### **Elective Courses: (18-27 hours)**

Graduate level courses offered inside or outside departments that are not used to meet previous requirements. Elective courses must be approved by the student's faculty advisory committee. Additionally, students may take an additional 6 hours of PEP 8350 – Candidacy Project hours.

### **Dissertation Hours: (6-12 hours)**

PEP 8399

PEP 8699

PEP 8999

## **Residency Requirements**

All Ph.D. (Kinesiology) students are required to register for residency during their first full academic year of entering the program (Fall and Spring semesters).

During this residency period, a student must be registered as a full-time student (i.e. 9 hours of academic classes per semester) for both the Fall and Spring semesters of their residency period.

During the Fall semester, each student in residency shall register and successfully complete the

designated departmental residency class, Principles of Scientific Inquiry.

During their residency period students will be introduced to “professional activities” including research experiences, journal club, seminar attendance, attendance at thesis/dissertation defenses, and other experiences that are applicable to continual professional development.

## **DESIGNATED ELECTIVES**

All designated electives must be considered applicable for a doctoral course of study and normally be at the 6000/7000/8000 academic level. These courses are to be taken under the direction and approval of the student’s advisor.

Elective classes can be taken within the department, other departments within the University of Houston and other universities that UH has inter-institutional agreements with (for more information contact your advisor and the registration office).

Elective classes in support areas can be taken at the University of Houston and other universities that UH has inter-institutional agreements with (for more information contact your advisor and the registration office). These classes **MUST** be approved by the advisor and normally be at the 6000/7000/8000 level. If a class is not at the 6000/7000/8000 level then it must be approved by the GRD committee following the guide-lines listed above.

## **Ph.D. (Kinesiology) Qualifying Exam**

At the end of the first academic year a student is enrolled in the Ph.D. (Kinesiology) program (i.e. at the end of the Spring Semester) and successfully completes the first year’s coursework, each student will be required to take a Qualifying Exam. This assessment will consist of a written examination administered within the department based on a book and/or a number of short essays. These readings will be communicated to the student at the beginning of the semester in which they sit the examination.

This examination is designed to assess the critical thinking and critical writing skills of the student, skills that the student will develop as part of the educational experience of the first year doctoral coursework and continue to self-develop during the period they have to review the reading(s).

The questions posed in the examination are based on general conceptual themes identified by the departmental GRD committee and external examiner. The examination will be evaluated by the external examiner and the GRD will determine a PASS/FAIL decision.

A student must receive a PASS grade in their Qualifying Exam to continue in the doctoral program.

Any student that does not receive a PASS grade on the first attempt will be given the opportunity to retake the qualifying examination in the summer semester after being supplied an additional reading. The second examination attempt will be administered in the same manner as the initial attempt. A student that receives a FAIL grade on their second attempt of the Qualifying Exam will be immediately dismissed from the doctoral program.

## **Student Annual Review Process**

Annual reviews are formative and are performed annually.

Reviews are performed by the advisor in partnership with the student and may include:

- Review of academic performance in class
- Details of involvement in research projects
- Student feed-back on their perception of the progress they are making in the program.
- Advisor's assessment of the student's progress.
- Advisor-generated decision on whether or not the student is making "adequate progress" towards completion of the degree.

The information generated is then reviewed by the departmental GRD Committee for a final decision on whether or not a student is making adequate progress towards the degree.

After review of the information supplied by the advisor and student by the GRD committee, there are four potential outcomes of the annual review process.

These are:

- Adequate progress (student continues in the program)
- Adequate progress with warning
- Academic probation (student continues in the program with remedial action determined by the GRD committee)
- Termination from the program (failure to satisfy remediation plan set during probationary period)

## **Graduate Student Advisor Change**

A student wishing to transfer advisors within the graduate program must submit a General Petition for "change of advisor" to the GRD committee for approval. An advisor who wishes to terminate her or his service as a student's advisor without the student's consent must explain the decision to the GRD committee. The student will have one semester to work with the GRD to find a new advisor. Should no other faculty members agree to serve as their advisor, the student will be terminated from the program.

## **Candidacy Paper Requirements**

Each doctoral student is required to complete a candidacy paper, which is a scientific article based on a study designed and carried out by the student while enrolled in the doctoral program under the guidance of a member of the GRD committee. The article will be submitted to a peer-reviewed journal following recommendation of the candidacy paper committee. The student's advisor serves as the candidacy paper committee chair, and is responsible for identifying two or more independent readers for the student's candidacy paper committee. Readers need not be members of the GRD, but non-members must be approved by vote of the GRD committee. Fulfillment of candidacy paper requirement consists of providing evidence of the manuscript's submission to a peer-reviewed journal and that the student has first

authorship. This evidence will be submitted to the committee by the student's advisor. The advisor and two independent readers will examine the candidacy paper. A decision on whether or not a candidacy paper fulfills the requirements for acceptance is ultimately the responsibility of the GRD committee who will vote on the issue once a recommendation has been communicated to the GRD committee by the student's advisor.

A student may begin work on the research that will form the basis of their candidacy paper immediately upon entry to the Ph.D. (Kinesiology) program, and is eligible to submit their candidacy paper to the GRD committee after passing the Qualifying Examination.

## **Doctoral Comprehensive Examinations**

A student is eligible to sit for comprehensive examinations after the candidacy paper has been submitted and at least 36 hours of coursework including all of the core courses have been completed. Each doctoral student is required to pass a comprehensive examination, which is a written exam representing the knowledge and skills in their area of specialization and practical knowledge as an independent researcher. A student's advisor will be responsible for the process of collecting questions from each faculty member tasked with writing comprehensive examination questions, collecting the graded examination, compiling the final grade for the examination and communicating this grade to GRD committee. The GRD committee (based on the information supplied by the advisor) will have final authority to recommend a PASS or FAIL grade on the exam.

A student's advisor will be responsible for the process of collecting questions from each faculty member tasked with writing comprehensive examination questions, collecting the graded examination, compiling the final grade for the examination and communicating this grade to GRD committee. The GRD committee (based on the information supplied by the advisor) will have final authority to recommend a PASS or FAIL grade on the exam.

PASS/FAIL decisions on all comprehensive exams are ultimately the decision of the GRD committee. The Chair of the GRD committee will formally notify the student of the outcome in writing. The student's advisor is authorized to informally notify the student of the outcome following the GRD committee vote.

If a student fails the comprehensive doctoral examination, then the advisor must submit a remediation plan for that student for approval by the GRD committee. The contents of this plan are the responsibility of the advisor. Once approved, the advisor must document that the student has reviewed and understood the remedial course of action. If a student fails to complete the remedial plan within its specified time frame or fails the second attempt at the comprehensive examination, the student will be considered ineligible for a Doctor of Philosophy in Kinesiology at the University of Houston and be immediately dismissed from the program.

## **Advancement to Candidacy**

To be eligible for advancement to candidacy, students must have completed the candidacy project, successfully defended their candidacy paper, passed the comprehensive examination.

## **Formation of Doctoral Dissertation Committee**

A student is eligible to form a Doctoral Dissertation Committee after the student has passed the comprehensive exams

A student's faculty advisor will serve as the Chair of Doctoral Dissertation Committee. The Chair will be responsible for identifying Committee members for their student's dissertation committee. The student is encouraged to plan the composition of the student's research committee with the Chair of the Dissertation Committee.

Approval of the composition of the Doctoral Dissertation Committee by both the GRD committee and the Associate Dean of Graduate Studies in the College of Liberal Arts and Social Sciences and requires the presence of expertise in the substantive area and in the necessary methodology for the proposed dissertation.

The Dissertation committee should be composed of at least four members which must include:

1. The Chair of the Dissertation Committee;
2. At least two additional faculty members from the Department of Health and Human Performance;
3. A committee member who is outside of the department who can be either a full-time or adjunct faculty member at the University of Houston, or can be an individual who does not hold faculty status at the University of Houston.

If a dissertation committee member is not a full-time/adjunct faculty member of the University of Houston, the Dissertation Committee Chair will require the potential member's C.V. and approval from the GRD Committee for that individual to serve as a dissertation committee member.

Notification of any changes to the composition of committee (i.e. reconstitution or resignation) should be made in writing to the GRD committee and the Associate Dean of Graduate Studies. All changes to the composition of committee once formally approved should be approved by the GRD committee and the Associate Dean of Graduate Studies in the College of Liberal Arts and Social Sciences.

## **Development of a Research Proposal**

A student is encouraged to begin the development of their dissertation research area in conjunction with their advisor as early in their doctoral education as possible.

A dissertation proposal defense cannot be scheduled until after the student's Doctoral Dissertation Committee has been approved by the GRD.

The student is responsible for developing a dissertation proposal document under the supervision of their advisor and with the assistance of the dissertation committee members.

## **Dissertation Proposal Defense**

In collaboration with their advisor, a student is responsible for preparing an abstract of their dissertation proposal of not more than two pages, securing the signatures of all dissertation committee members on the abstract, and distributing the abstract electronically to the faculty of the Department of Health and Human Performance. Instructions for electronic distribution of the dissertation proposal abstract can be obtained by contacting the Chair of the GRD Committee.

At least ten (10) working days must elapse between the electronic distribution of the abstract and the student's oral defense of the dissertation proposal.

In consultation with the advisor, the student must notify the faculty of the Department of Health and Human Performance of the date, time and location of the oral defense at least ten (10) working days prior to the defense.

Students are required to provide a complete copy of the dissertation proposal to committee members at least ten (10) working days prior to the proposal defense.

The dissertation proposal may not be approved if more than one member of the committee is absent at the time of the student's oral defense.

The committee may approve the proposal as is, suggest changes, or disapprove the dissertation proposal. For the project to move forward, all committee members must approve the dissertation proposal and must indicate their approval by signature on the proposal document face page.

## **Dissertation Defense**

The student is responsible for ensuring that the dissertation document is prepared correctly with regard to type setting, format, and paper requirements prior to submission of the dissertation. The College of Liberal Arts and Social Sciences maintains guidelines for dissertation formatting.

In conjunction with their advisor, a student is responsible preparing an abstract of their final dissertation document and distributing the abstract electronically to the faculty of the Department of Health and Human Services before the oral defense. Instructions for electronic distribution of the final dissertation abstract can be obtained by contacting the Chair of the GRD Committee.

At least ten (10) working days must elapse between the electronic distribution of the final dissertation abstract and the student's oral defense of the dissertation.

In conjunction with their advisor, a student is responsible for scheduling a room for the final defense in a public forum.

In consultation with the advisor, the student must notify the GRD Committee and Associate Dean of Graduate Studies of the College of Liberal Arts and Social Sciences of the date, time, and location of the final defense of the dissertation at least ten (10) working days prior to the defense.

Students are required to provide a complete copy of the final dissertation to committee members at least ten (10) working days prior to the final dissertation defense.

The oral defense of the dissertation may not take place if more than one member of the committee is absent at the time of the student's defense. The quality of both the dissertation document and the candidate's oral defense will be evaluated. The dissertation must be approved by the dissertation committee with no more than one dissenting member and this member's name shall not appear on the final dissertation face page.

If approved, the student is responsible for securing the signatures of all committee members and the Dean of the College of Liberal Arts and Social Sciences on at least one copy of the dissertation signature page and delivering at least one copy of the completed and bound dissertation to the Department of Health and Human Performance.

## **Dissertation Hours**

Students are required to complete a minimum of 6 hours of dissertation credit. Students may not enroll in dissertation credit hours until they have advanced to candidacy for the Ph.D. degree.

Once enrolled in dissertation hours, students are required to maintain continuous enrollment (i.e. a minimum of 3 hours per semester) until completion of their degree. The student must enroll in summer semesters if working on the dissertation utilizing faculty time or university facilities during the summer.

If a student has completed a minimum of 6 hours of dissertation credit, successfully completed their dissertation proposal defense in a semester in which they were enrolled for 6 hours of dissertation credit, but will conduct their dissertation defense within 10 days of the beginning of the following semester, they will be required to register for only 1 hour of dissertation credit in the semester they graduate.

## **Use of this Handbook**

This handbook is to supplement student rights, responsibilities, and policies provided by the College of Liberal Arts and Social Sciences, Graduate School, and University.