

### Registry

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## BACKGROUND INFORMATION FOR EXAMINERS OF THE DRPH THESIS

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### 1. SUMMARY

1.1 The purpose of the DrPH research project and thesis is to help the student to learn about the role of research in public health practice. Like a PhD thesis, the DrPH thesis must constitute an original and high quality piece of research. However, **the volume of work required for the DrPH thesis is about half that of a PhD thesis**. This is because DrPH candidates are required to complete two additional doctoral components (compulsory taught modules and an Organizational and Policy Analysis project) before moving on to their thesis research. **A full-time DrPH candidate typically spends around 18 months on the research thesis component of their degree programme, while PhD candidates will normally spend between three and four years on their thesis**. The DrPH thesis also has a formal word limit of 50,000 words, making it shorter than most if not all PhD theses.

### 2. OVERVIEW OF THE DrPH PROGRAMME OF STUDY

2.1 The DrPH is a professional doctorate that provides training in the skills crucial for leadership roles in public health. The intellectual and academic standards of the DrPH are as high as those of the PhD. The PhD programme, however, is intended for those who foresee a future dedicated to research, while the DrPH programme is meant for those whose career plans involve a broader range of public health activities. DrPH graduates might work in international health organisations, national ministries of health, private sector providers, not-for-profit organisations, aid agencies, consulting groups, major companies, foundations and other donors, as well as research institutions.

2.2 The awarding of the DrPH degree requires successful completion of three components: one taught element and two research outputs:

- (1) A taught course component must be successfully passed. This consists of two compulsory modules which cover research methods and paradigms, the management of effective communications in public health practice and policy and leadership skills in public health. The taught component is delivered in Term 1 of the first year of the DrPH. The modules are specific and exclusive to the DrPH programme and are delivered and assessed at doctoral level.
- (2) An Organizational and Policy Analysis (OPA) project must be successfully passed. The OPA is a research project that provides DrPH students with the opportunity to observe and analyse the workings of a public health organisation in its policy environment and to gain a better understanding of how to develop effective public health organisations and policy. The OPA project usually involves 3-6 months 'fieldwork' within a host organisation of the student's choice. The project is assessed on the basis of a written report not exceeding 12,000 words. Progression to the OPA project component is subject to successful completion of the two compulsory core modules and the OPA project report is submitted before commencing the research thesis phase of the DrPH programme.
- 3) A research thesis of no more than 50,000 words presenting original, high quality research must be passed by examiners. The thesis incorporates an integrating statement of not more than 1,500 words summarising the student's learning over the course of the DrPH programme.

2.3 **DrPH thesis examiners will only see, and are only asked to examine, the thesis with integrating statement. All other DrPH elements will have been successfully passed (and relevant grades ratified by the DrPH Board of Examiners) before the thesis is submitted to examiners.**

### 3 EXPECTATIONS FOR THE DRPH THESIS

3.1 The topic for the DrPH thesis may be from any LSHTM academic discipline and subject area, from life sciences to social sciences. DrPH thesis topics are not restricted to public health medicine alone and are not necessarily related in any way to the core taught component subjects or the topic of the

student's OPA project report.

- 3.2 The duration of the research and the length of the thesis are both shorter for the DrPH than the PhD, but the process is the same. For the thesis component of the degree, DrPH students will have conducted a literature review, prepared a research protocol and plan, received approval of their plan from a Review (the equivalent of an Upgrading) Committee. Following the Committee's approval they will have conducted data collection/field work/lab work, analysed their results and prepared the thesis. As with PhD students, DrPH students have a Supervisor and an Advisory Committee.
- 3.3 As a result of the shorter time allocated to the thesis research and the word limit, a DrPH thesis will necessarily be both shorter in length and more limited in scope than a PhD thesis. However, in terms of originality, conceptual 'depth' and intellectual rigour a DrPH thesis is expected to meet the same standards as a PhD thesis. Specifically, a DrPH thesis must:
- Consist of the candidate's own account of their investigations and indicate how they advance the study/knowledge of the subject.
  - Form a distinct contribution to the knowledge of the subject and afford evidence of originality shown by the discovery of new facts and/or the exercise of independent critical power.
  - Be an integrated whole and present a coherent argument.
  - Give a critical assessment of the relevant literature, describe the method of research and its findings, include a discussion on those findings, and indicate in what respects they appear to the candidate to advance the study/knowledge of the subject.
  - Be written in English with satisfactory literary presentation.
  - Include a full reference list.
  - Be not more than 50,000 words, exclusive of references and appendices.
  - Include a 1,500 word "Integrating Statement" summarising the student's learning over the three components of the degree and highlight any links between the components.
- 3.4 DrPH theses can be presented in the familiar "book" style or, alternatively, in a "research papers" style. Permissible thesis styles are set out in detail in the [Research Degree Examiners Guidance and Checklist](#).

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