Entrance requirements, program descriptions, degree requirements & other program policies for the Doctoral Program in Biostatistics at Harvard.

www.hsph.harvard.edu/biostatistics
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1 INTRODUCTION

This handbook describes the academic programs for the Doctor of Philosophy (Ph.D.) offered by the Department of Biostatistics at Harvard University. The Department offers courses of study leading to the Doctor of Philosophy and Master of Science degrees. Both the Ph.D. and SM programs provide rigorous training in theory and practical experience in statistical and bioinformatics methods used in the biomedical sciences. The Department’s programs are designed to prepare students for careers in the theory and practice of biostatistics and bioinformatics, especially as applied to the biomedical and health sciences. The programs include training in the application and development of methodology, consulting, teaching, and collaboration on a broad spectrum of health-related problems. All students work with faculty on ongoing projects in methodological research and scientific collaboration. About sixty faculty participate in these programs.

The sections of this handbook include information and Departmental regulations concerning entrance requirements, program descriptions, degree requirements, and other Departmental policies. The Ph.D. Program is overseen by the Graduate School of Arts and Sciences, whereas the SM degree is governed by the School of Public Health. Policies and official requirements of the Graduate School of Arts and Sciences are set forth in the Graduate School of Arts and Sciences Handbook (https://handbook.gsas.harvard.edu/gsas-handbook). Policies and official requirements of the School of Public Health are set forth in the Harvard T. H. Chan School of Public Health Student Handbook (https://www.hsph.harvard.edu/student-handbook/). Each graduate student is responsible for general knowledge of, and adherence to, the policies and requirements of the degree program in which the student is enrolled. Additional departmental information is available at https://www.hsph.harvard.edu/biostatistics/. Vitally important for our community is that all members demonstrate respect for each other and our discipline. For all members of the community, respect is demonstrated by attending all scheduled classes or meetings, and arriving on time, fully prepared, and ready to participate.

This handbook was prepared by the Director of Graduate Studies for the Ph.D. program and approved by the Faculty of the Department of Biostatistics. The Director is responsible for reviewing the student’s program of study, and has the authority to consider exceptions to the rules and regulations established by the Department. Recommendations of the Director are forwarded to the Chair of the Degree Program Committee for final approval. Both the Director and the Department Chair welcome suggestions and comments.
2 THE DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY PROGRAM

The Ph.D. program in Biostatistics trains students in the areas of probabilistic and statistical theory, bio-statistical and bioinformatics methods, statistical computation and algorithm development, the ability to collaborate and communicate effectively with scientists in related disciplines, and the ability to teach biostatistics and bioinformatics effectively to general or specialized audiences. The Ph.D. program includes training in the development of methodology, consulting, teaching, and collaboration on a broad spectrum of health-related problems.

All Ph.D. students work with faculty on ongoing projects in methodological research and scientific collaboration. Faculty and students conduct methodologic research in Bayesian inference, bioinformatics, causal inference, clinical trials, computational biology, data analysis, decision sciences, experimental design, health policy, multivariate and longitudinal studies, quantitative genomics, sequential methods, spatial statistics, statistical computing, statistical genetics, stochastic processes, and survival analysis, among other areas. Areas of application include big data, biology, cancer, clinical research, computational biology, the environment, epidemiology, genetics, health disparities, HIV/AIDS, infectious diseases, neurology, and psychiatry, among other areas. Collaborative activities include coordination of national and international clinical trials, participation in studies of potential environmental hazards, collaboration on novel genetic and genomic studies, design of health surveys, evaluation of health interventions and medical technologies, and consultation with federal, state, and local agencies.

The Department of Biostatistics offers the Ph.D. in Biostatistics with two areas of interest: Biostatistics and Bioinformatics. Students select the area of interest most appropriate to their background and interests, and satisfy the degree program requirements listed below for their area of interest. Some Ph.D. requirements are common to both areas of interest, while others are specific to the area of interest selected. The decision regarding which area of interest a student is pursuing (Biostatistics or Bioinformatics) can be indicated at the time of application to the program, or can be made in the 2nd year at the time of submission of the final doctoral program.

The Ph.D. program in Biostatistics prepares students in the following five specific competencies:

1. Applying innovative probabilistic and statistical theory and computing methods to the development of new biostatistical or bioinformatics methodology, publishing of original methodological research, and the solution of public health problems.

2. Providing scientific and biostatistical or bioinformatics leadership in the design, conduct, and analysis of collaborative research studies in medicine and public health.

3. Applying modern statistical and computational methods to effectively analyze complex medical and public health data, including the development of new software for non-standard problems and simulation methods.

4. Collaborating and communicating effectively with research scientists in related disciplines.

5. Teaching biostatistics or bioinformatics effectively to health professionals, research scientists, and graduate students.

2.1 Admissions Procedures and Requirements

2.1.1 Graduate School of Arts and Sciences Requirements

For information on general requirements for admission, see the Graduate School of Arts and Sciences website (https://gsas.harvard.edu/admissions) or contact the Admissions Office by phone (617/496-6100).
2.1.2 Departmental Requirements

All candidates for admission to the Ph.D. program should have successfully completed calculus through multivariable integration and one semester of linear algebra. Knowledge of a programming language is also required. Evidence that these requirements have been fulfilled should form part of the application. In addition, all applicants are strongly encouraged to have completed two semesters of calculus-based probability and statistics, two semesters of advanced calculus or real analysis, and a course in numerical analysis. Students with interests in bioinformatics are also encouraged to have completed courses in biology, computational biology, and genetics. Practical knowledge of a statistical computing package such as SAS, Splus, R, Stata, or SPSS is also desirable. Students with interests in bioinformatics should also have knowledge of a scripting language such as Python or Perl and some familiarity with relational databases. In addition, the Department Summer Program, which is held in August for admitted students, is designed to review basic concepts of probability, statistics, advanced mathematics, and statistical computing prior to the first semester in the Ph.D. program.

2.2 Advising and Degree Program Approval

2.2.1 Academic Advisor

The Department has a Student Advising Committee which provides guidance and assistance to students. In addition, all entering students are assigned an academic advisor to help plan course loads and explain Departmental requirements. At the earliest possible date, the student and the academic advisor will develop a program of study. Should a student wish to change his/her academic advisor, he or she is encouraged to discuss this with the Director of Graduate Studies. In addition, the Department and GSAS/SPH provide services for all students with clinically documented learning and/or physical disabilities.

2.2.2 Dissertation Advisor

After the written qualifying examination has been successfully completed, and usually in the fourth semester of study, the doctoral candidate will identify an area of research and a dissertation advisor from among the faculty in the Department. The dissertation advisor assumes the responsibilities of the academic advisor and directs the student’s doctoral research. In some situations, students may choose to have co-advisors, but at least one of these must be a faculty member of the Biostatistics Department.

2.2.3 Oral / Dissertation Committee

By October 15 after choosing a dissertation advisor, the student, in consultation with the dissertation advisor, nominates a Dissertation Committee to oversee the student’s progress. Students must submit a Oral / Dissertation Committee Nomination Form, which requires approval by the Director of Graduate Studies. The Dissertation Committee ordinarily consists of the dissertation advisor, who serves as the chairperson, and at least two other faculty members. At least two of the committee members must be faculty members from the Department of Biostatistics or the Faculty of Arts and Sciences. The chair should be a faculty member of the Department of Biostatistics. In some cases, a student could have two co-chairs of the Dissertation Committee. The student is responsible for arranging periodic meetings with the Dissertation Committee, and for submitting Dissertation Progress Report forms (Appendix B) at six month intervals (November 15 and May 15). Students must meet with their dissertation committee at least once every six months; students in their final year of the program are encouraged to meet even more frequently to support completion of their dissertation. A Dissertation Committee Meeting form must be submitted to the Biostatistics Manager of Academic Services after each committee meeting, summarizing the progress of the student and evaluation of timeline. Changes or additions to the Dissertation Committee may be made by submitting a separate form, with approval of the Director of Graduate Studies.
2.2.4 Departmental Approval of Program

The final doctoral program plan must be submitted to the Department for approval, on the doctoral Degree Program form provided by the Department (Appendix B). This program must be approved by the student’s faculty advisor and the Director of Graduate Studies. This plan should be submitted by May 1 of the second year. At this time the student may not have completed all required courses; any subsequent changes to the final program plan must be submitted to and approved by the Director of Graduate Studies.

2.3 Degree Requirements

The Ph.D. Program in Biostatistics trains students in probabilistic and statistical theory; the use of biostatistical and bioinformatics methods in formulating problems, planning studies, conducting analyses, and writing reports; conducting independent methodologic research; providing scientific leadership in collaboration with scientists in related disciplines; and the ability to teach and consult effectively through oral and written communications.

Ph.D. students are expected to take progressively more advanced courses, to prepare for the qualifying exams, and to choose a dissertation advisor and research topic. The student is also expected to participate in the Working Group seminars offered by the Department. These seminars provide background for choosing a dissertation topic, as well as general knowledge of contemporary biostatistical and bioinformatics research.

A detailed presentation of the GSAS’s regulations for doctoral students is found at https://gsas.harvard.edu/. All doctoral students and their advisors should make sure that GSAS and Departmental requirements are met according to schedule.

Full-time students must register for the equivalent of at least (16 credits), or the equivalent in TIME, each semester.

2.3.1 Residency

The Graduate School of Arts and Sciences requires that each student have a minimum of two years of full-time study in residence.

2.3.2 Course Requirements

The requirements listed below are minimal requirements for the Ph.D. program in Biostatistics. Each student should, in consultation with his/her advisor, select an area of interest and develop a program of study to best meet his/her individual needs and goals. Each student’s program is reviewed individually, and the final doctoral program must be approved by the Director of Graduate Studies.

The Ph.D. Program in Biostatistics builds on a ordinarily graded core curriculum consisting of the following four courses, generally taken in the first year of the program:

- BIST 230 Probability Theory and Applications I
- BIST 231 Statistical Inference I
- BIST 232 Methods I
- BIST 233 Methods II

In addition, the equivalent of 7 full semester courses (generally 28 credits) of ordinarily graded Biostatistics courses (https://content.sph.harvard.edu/biostats/courses/course.html) must be taken from the advanced doctoral core. Students with an area of interest in Biostatistics are required to take at least 4 of these 7 courses (16 credits) from among BIST 234, 235, 240, 241, 244, 245, and 249. Students with an area of interest in Bioinformatics are required to take BIST 282, and must complete at least four of the remaining courses from among BIST 234, 235, 240, 241, 245, 249, 290, and EPI 511.
The advanced doctoral core, and specific recommendations by area of interest, includes:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Course #</th>
<th>Course Title</th>
<th>Biostatistics</th>
<th>Bioinformatics</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>BIST 234</td>
<td>Introduction to Data Structures &amp; Algorithms</td>
<td>SR</td>
<td>SR</td>
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<tr>
<td>BIST 235</td>
<td>Advanced Regression &amp; Statistical Learning</td>
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<td>SR</td>
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<tr>
<td>BIST 238</td>
<td>Advanced Topics in Clinical Trials</td>
<td>SR</td>
<td>SR</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BIST 240</td>
<td>Probability Theory and Applications II</td>
<td>SR</td>
<td>SR</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>or STAT 212</td>
<td>Probability II</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>BIST 241</td>
<td>Statistical Inference II</td>
<td>SR</td>
<td>SR</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>or STAT 213</td>
<td>Inference II</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>BIST 244</td>
<td>Analysis of Failure Time Data</td>
<td>SR</td>
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<tr>
<td>BIST 245</td>
<td>Analysis of Multivariate &amp; Longitudinal Data</td>
<td>SR</td>
<td>SR</td>
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<tr>
<td>or STAT 230</td>
<td>Multivariate Statistical Analysis</td>
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<tr>
<td>BIST 249</td>
<td>Bayesian Methods in Biostatistics</td>
<td>SR</td>
<td>SR</td>
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<tr>
<td>or STAT 220</td>
<td>Bayesian Data Analysis</td>
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<tr>
<td>BIST 256</td>
<td>Theory &amp; Methods for Causality I</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>BIST 257</td>
<td>Theory &amp; Methods for Causality II</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>BIST 254 Sec 2</td>
<td>Design &amp; Monitoring of Adaptive Clinical Trials</td>
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<td>BIST 254 Sec 3</td>
<td>Measurement Error &amp; Misclassification</td>
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<tr>
<td>BIST 282</td>
<td>Introduction to Computational Biology &amp; Bioinformatics</td>
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<tr>
<td>BIST 290</td>
<td>Advanced Computational Biology &amp; Bioinformatics</td>
<td>SR</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>EPI 511</td>
<td>Advanced Population &amp; Medical Genetics</td>
<td>SR</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ID 542</td>
<td>Methods for Mediation &amp; Interaction</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>APMTH 203</td>
<td>Introduction to Disordered Systems &amp; Stochastic Processes</td>
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<tr>
<td>APMTH 207</td>
<td>Advanced Scientific Computing: Stochastic Methods for Data Analysis</td>
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<tr>
<td>CS 205</td>
<td>Computing Foundations for Computational Science</td>
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<tr>
<td>CS 281</td>
<td>Advanced Machine Learning</td>
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<tr>
<td>CS 282R</td>
<td>Topics in Machine Learning</td>
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<tr>
<td>STAT 225</td>
<td>Spatial Statistics</td>
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<td>STAT 240</td>
<td>Matched Sampling &amp; Study Design</td>
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<tr>
<td>STAT 260</td>
<td>Design and Analysis of Sample Surveys</td>
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<tr>
<td>STAT 286</td>
<td>Causal Inference &amp; Program Evaluation</td>
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\(^1R=\text{required}, \ SR=\text{strongly recommended}\)

Other advanced courses in Biostatistics, including many of the special topics courses, and courses at MIT (including MIT 6.255, 6.867, 6.881, 6.882, and 9.520, when offered) and the Faculty of Arts and Sciences (FAS) that are offered at an advanced level, may also be acceptable. Students are advised to consult with the Director of Graduate Studies to check prior to enrolling in the courses in question. All students must obtain approval for their selection of advanced coursework from the Director of Graduate Studies at the time of submitting their final doctoral program.

All advanced doctoral core courses contributing to the final program must be taken for an ordinal grade (cannot be taken as pass/fail; also see Section 2.4). Ordinarily, students will complete all course requirements by the end of the sixth semester. By May 15 after passing the written qualifying exam the final doctoral program should be filed with the Department. At this point, students should indicate whether they are pursuing an area of interest in bioinformatics or biostatistics.
In addition, the Department requires that all students take EPI 201, and as part of SPH-wide accreditation, all Ph.D. students must take a course on the History of Public Health (ID 222, or other designated course). A student may choose to take EPI 202 and include this course as part of his/her cognate field, if appropriate (see 2.3.3).

2.3.3 Cognate Requirement

The Department requires students to explore in some depth a selected cognate field, a non-quantitative field outside of biostatistics or statistics. Examples of cognate fields include the biology of AIDS or cancer; biophysics; environmental health; epidemiology (e.g., chronic disease epidemiology, environmental and occupational epidemiology, infectious disease epidemiology, molecular epidemiology, psychiatric epidemiology, psychosocial epidemiology); genetics; health policy and management; human development; molecular biology; society and health; or other non-quantitative fields. The cognate field should be complementary to the student’s area of interest in biostatistics or bioinformatics; certain training grants may also have specific requirements for the cognate courses. The courses used to satisfy the cognate requirement should form a coherent set of courses related to the cognate field selected, and should primarily be substantive, rather than quantitative, in nature.

Students must complete 8-10 (e.g., the equivalent of two full semester courses) credits of ordinal graded courses in the cognate field. Provided that the inclusion of such courses contributes to the selection of a coherent cognate field, a maximum of one full semester course among BST 227, BIST 267, RDS 280, RDS 282, RDS 285, EPI 202, EPI 203, EPI 204, EPI 207, EPI 288, EPI 289, or other semi-quantitative courses in epidemiology or other fields will be allowed to count towards the fulfillment of this requirement. Students are advised to consult with the Director of Graduate Studies to check whether certain combinations of courses are appropriate for cognate consideration prior to enrolling in the courses in question. Note that courses cannot typically be approved individually as part of the cognate, since the combination of courses within a certain theme or field needs to be evaluated.

All cognate field courses contributing to the final program must be completed with a grade of B or better. The selection of courses for the cognate field must be approved by the Director of Graduate Studies, as well as the relevant Training Grant Director (when applicable). Ordinarily, students will complete the cognate requirement by their sixth semester.

2.3.4 Consulting Requirement

Students must acquire experience in the planning of experiments and establishing a collaborative interaction with an investigator. To meet this requirement students must take the consulting seminar (BST 312). A project outside the consulting seminar may be substituted only if approval is obtained from the Director of Graduate Studies. Ordinarily, students will complete the consulting requirement in their sixth semester, unless they pass their written qualifying exams in their first year.

2.3.5 Teaching Requirement

Students must acquire extensive experience in teaching biostatistics or bioinformatics, since this is one of the key competencies of the biostatistics doctoral program. To meet this requirement, students will not TA during the first year (according to GSAS rules), but are expected to TA a total of 4 full semester (or 8 half semester) courses over their next three years in the program (for example, one course in year 2, two in year 3, and one in year 4). Students who continue in the program for a 5th year may be required to TA for an additional course. Students who volunteer to TA additional courses beyond these requirements will receive extra compensation. Students who acquire external funding through individualized training grants (for example, from NSF, NIH F31, or NDSEG) will be exempted from serving as a TA for a total of one course (typically in their third year). In addition, students who are funded by collaborative research grants may be exempted from serving as a TA during the semesters for which they are conducting such collaborative work; however, every student must serve as a TA for at least two full semester courses (or their
equivalent) during the doctoral program to meet the teaching competency. Students funded from faculty research grants to conduct their dissertation research will be considered as equivalent to those funded by departmental NIH training grants with regard to TA requirements.

2.3.6 Employment Outside of the Training/Research Program

It is the policy of both GSAS and the Department to limit outside employment, as the doctoral program requires a full-time commitment to your training and research. Many of the funding sources, such as NIH training grants, also have requirements that students not have outside employment. The Department Chair, your advisor, training grant director, and the Director of Graduate Studies must review and approve in advance, and in writing, any requests to take on any additional employment, including extra paid TAing at SPH or elsewhere, summer TAing, and tutoring. In order to be considered, the proposed employment must be of limited duration and scope.

2.3.7 Summer Internships

In view of the full-time commitment to training and research in the doctoral program noted above, students are generally discouraged from applying to or participating in summer internships outside the department. However, in rare cases when the internship will directly relate to the students’ doctoral training, those in the second or third year may be allowed to participate with the same approvals required as for any outside employment as noted in Section 2.3.6. To request permission to apply for a summer internship, students must submit a Summer Internship Proposal form by April 1 prior to the start of the internship. Note that students must obtain permission in advance before pursuing any summer internship. Students beyond the third year in the program are strongly recommended against summer internships. Students should be aware that reappointment on NIH training grants may not always be possible after return from a summer internship.

2.3.8 Research Ethics Requirement

Students must satisfy a research ethics requirement by completing a course in responsible conduct of research (currently HPM 548) during the first semester in the program. Students may also be required to complete further training or courses in both research ethics and reproducible research.

2.3.9 TIME and Research Credits

In addition to regular coursework, Ph.D. students may register for TIME as a means of indicating that appropriate independent work is replacing numbered courses. TIME is undertaken with a faculty advisor who must sign the study card. One unit of TIME is a maximum of 4 credits. Units of TIME are ungraded. TIME-C is used for course-related work; TIME-R for research-related work; and TIME-T, for teaching-related work. Students may register for TIME-C when independent work is being undertaken that is not specifically indicated in a numbered course. TIME-R may be used to indicate that research work is being undertaken that is not directly related to the student’s dissertation work, or that a student has received a research assistant appointment. TIME-T may be used to indicate that a student has received a teaching assistant appointment.

BIST 350 should be used by Ph.D. candidates who have passed their written qualifying examination and who are working on their dissertation research. Students may register for a maximum of 4 units of BIST 350 per semester, as needed, to maintain full-time status.

2.3.10 Transfer of Coursework

The Department of Biostatistics does not allow courses taken elsewhere to count towards the residency requirement. However, students may occasionally be permitted to use graduate level courses in Biostatistics or related areas taken at other universities to satisfy some Departmental requirements for the Ph.D. degree (e.g., core courses, epidemiology requirement, consulting requirement). Generally, when core courses are waived, it is not necessary to make up the credit in other biostatistics courses. In addition, students funded
on certain training grants which require laboratory rotations may be able to request exemption from one or more rotations based on their prior rotations of a similar duration and nature conducted at other universities prior to admission.

To request a waiver of Departmental requirements on the basis of prior coursework, the student must petition the Director of Graduate Studies for approval and complete the required form provided on the GSAS website. Students who have completed courses through the Harvard Tuition Assistance Program (TAP) or been classified as a Harvard Special Student complete one form, while those completing graduate coursework elsewhere complete a different form found on the GSAS website (https://handbook.gfas.harvard.edu/credit-graduate-work-done-elsewhere, click on “online” link at end of first paragraph, and then choose the GSAS tab). For students completing graduate work outside of Harvard, the petition should contain a course description and syllabus. An official transcript indicating the grade received must be on file, or submitted with the petition. Each request is considered on an individual basis. All waivers of departmental requirements must be approved by the Director of Graduate Studies.

2.3.11 Examination Requirements

Students must take and pass two qualifying examinations: a written examination and an oral examination.

The Written Examination The written examination is given annually following the fall semester. Students will take the exam for the first time during or before their second year in the doctoral program. Students may be allowed to retake the examination at most once, with Departmental approval.

The exam consists of two parts which are administered in two sessions on different days. Material relevant to the exam is covered in the doctoral core courses of the Biostatistics program (see Section 2.3.2). The exam tests the student’s understanding of probability, statistical inference, and statistical methods. Copies of past examinations are available on request from the Manager of Academic Services.

The written qualifying examination is evaluated by the Qualifying Exam and Academic Standing Committees, who establish the passing score. Students whose scores fall below the passing score are further evaluated based on their performance in coursework, summer projects, and performance as research/teaching assistants. On the basis of this further evaluation, a student whose qualifying exam score is below the passing score may nonetheless be determined to pass the qualifying exam. Students who are taking the qualifying exam for the first time but who do not pass the exam may, on the basis of this further evaluation, be permitted to retake the exam.

The Oral Examination The oral examination assesses the student’s potential to perform research in a chosen field, and examines the student’s knowledge of biostatistics or bioinformatics. Successful completion of the written examination is a prerequisite for taking the oral examination. The oral examination should be scheduled by March 31 in the year after passing the written examination or by October 15 in the seventh semester, whichever comes first. In preparation for the oral examination, the student must decide on a specialized topic on which he/she wishes to be examined. In most cases, this specialized topic will be related to the student’s chosen dissertation research area.

Students should prepare an oral exam proposal in the format of an individual training grant (F31) application, which includes a 6-page research proposal section as well as an individual training and mentoring plan. The research proposal will summarize the literature and indicate their proposed specific aims for their dissertation (usually two or three aims): at the time of the oral exam it is expected that students will have completed substantial work for their first dissertation paper, with some preliminary results, and have general ideas and possible directions for their second and third papers. [Note that students admitted to the doctoral program prior to 2017 who have not yet completed their oral exam also have the option of using their first dissertation paper or an extensive literature review as the basis of their oral exam report under the previous guidelines.]

This research proposal must be given to the Oral / Dissertation Committee at least two weeks prior to the examination, and the oral scheduling form must also be submitted to the department at least 2 weeks
in advance (see Appendix B). The Dissertation Committee ordinarily consists of the dissertation advisor, who serves as the chairperson, and at least two other faculty members (see Section 2.2.3). At least two of the Dissertation Committee members must be either members of the Faculty of Arts and Sciences, or of the Department of Biostatistics. The chair should be a faculty member of the Department of Biostatistics. In some cases, a student could have two co-chairs of the Dissertation Committee. At the oral examination, students will be required to make a short presentation of their chosen topic, typically 30 to 45 minutes long, and will then be examined on the topic by the Committee; students should allow for up to two hours for scheduling the exam. This examination may include questions regarding the cognate area, as well as in the biostatistics or bioinformatics area of proposed research.

### 2.3.12 Doctoral Dissertation

The dissertation should be an original contribution to scientific knowledge. It can contribute to a subject matter field through innovative application of existing methodology, can make an original methodologic contribution, or be a combination of the two. Most dissertations consist of material sufficient for three publications, and are often written such that each chapter reflects a paper considered publishable in a high quality peer-reviewed journal. The dissertation topic should be complementary to the student’s area of interest in biostatistics or bioinformatics.

Acceptance of the dissertation is the responsibility of the student’s Dissertation Committee, the Department, and GSAS. When the dissertation is complete, the student defends it to the Dissertation Committee at a public presentation. The defense must be openly publicized and scheduled at least three weeks in advance. A Dissertation Defense Scheduling Form must also be submitted three weeks in advance (see Appendix B). Copies of the dissertation must be given to the members of the Dissertation Committee and the Department Chair at least two weeks before the defense.

The defense should be scheduled as a two-hour block consisting of a 45 to 60 minute long presentation followed by a question-and-answer period. The defense presentation should cover the main material presented in the dissertation. The question-and-answer period will first include questions from the Dissertation Committee, then from other faculty members in the Biostatistics department, and finally from the general audience. Following the presentation and question-and-answer period, the committee will privately discuss whether the candidate has sufficiently completed the requirements for a doctorate. If the candidate has passed, the Dissertation Committee will sign the Dissertation Acceptance Certificate which the candidate must include when submitting their dissertation to GSAS.

Note that GSAS has specific requirements on formatting, submission, publishing, and distributing the Ph.D. dissertation, which can be found at [https://gsas.harvard.edu/academics/dissertations](https://gsas.harvard.edu/academics/dissertations) in the GSAS Student Handbook. Students submit their dissertations electronically through Harvard’s electronic thesis and dissertation submission system. Timelines and submission deadlines are noted in the degree calendar section of the GSAS Student handbook.

### 2.4 Satisfactory Progress Requirements

A doctoral student’s academic standing will be assessed by the Department on a regular basis to ensure that he/she is progressing at an appropriate rate. The Department adheres to the general satisfactory progress requirements as established by the Graduate School of Arts and Sciences and described in Section VI of the GSAS Handbook. Our Department will use the following additional criteria in establishing satisfactory progress.

1. Students in the first year of the Biostatistics doctoral program are expected to complete four core courses (BIST 230, BIST 231, BIST 232, and BIST 233) with a minimum average of B+ and no grade below B.

2. No more than one grade below B in any academic year; satisfactory performance on summer projects and as teaching assistants, research assistants, and/or computing assistants; maintain full time status
of 4 full semester courses (16 credits) minimum per semester. According to the GSAS handbook, in each of the first two years a student must have achieved the minimum grade-point average required by this faculty, a B average (3.0).

3. Students will complete their written qualifying examination by the beginning of the fourth semester. The written exam must be passed by the beginning of the sixth semester.

4. Students will complete their oral examination by March 31 in the year after passing the written examination or by October 15 in the seventh semester, whichever comes first.

5. Ordinarily, students will complete all course, cognate, and consulting requirements by the end of the sixth semester.


Ordinarily, a student will complete their degree within 3 to 5 years after entering the program.

2.5 Master of Arts

No one is admitted as a candidate for the Master of Arts (AM), only for the Ph.D. Nevertheless, the requirements for the Master of Arts degree must be satisfied by all students as they move toward the Ph.D. and are ordinarily expected to be completed by the end of the fourth semester. The AM degree may be granted when these requirements are fulfilled. In addition, the Department may confer a terminal AM degree on students who will not be completing the requirements for the Ph.D. In order to satisfy the AM requirements, at least 10 full semester or 20 half semester (equivalent to 50 SPH credits) ordinarily graded courses are required from the doctoral core, the advanced doctoral core, or the two-year Master of Science in Biostatistics degree core (described in the Biostatistics Masters Handbook). Upon fulfilling these requirements, students should submit an application for the AM degree to GSAS.

2.6 Joint SD Program

In certain cases, the Department may entertain applications for a joint SD program in Biostatistics from students already enrolled in another SPH SD program. The student would be required to fulfill the Ph.D. requirements described above, but would follow SPH doctoral student guidelines. Joint doctoral degrees are not recognized or possible for students in Harvard Ph.D. programs. Further information is available from the Director of Graduate Studies.
A ADMINISTRATIVE REQUIREMENTS FOR DOCTORAL PROGRAM

Detailed requirements and deadlines are given at the Graduate School of Arts and Sciences webpage. All forms linked below are also located on last page of this Graduate Student Handbook.

- **Year One**
  - **First Semester**
    - Complete Research Ethics requirement (HPM 548).
    - Ask for waivers of fall core courses (BIST 230 and BIST 232) that you intend to waive by emailing the Manager of Academic Studies with details about the course(s) taken or experience that you have that may qualify you for a waiver.
    - May begin taking courses to count toward completion of cognate.
    - Turn in Wintersession plan by December 15.
  - **Second Semester**
    - Complete or waive spring core courses (BIST 231 and BIST 233).
    - Start to take advanced core courses if applicable.
    - Continue completion of cognate-related courses.
    - Search for summer project. Turn in proposal form about summer project to the Manager of Academic Services by May 1.
  - **Summer**
    - Complete ten-week summer project.
    - Present summer project in orientation week (late August).
    - Attend TA training sessions in orientation week (late August).

- **Year Two**
  - **Third Semester**
    - Take advanced core courses.
    - Continue completion of cognate-related courses.
    - Study for qualifying exam to be taken in mid-January.
  - **Fourth Semester**
    - Take written qualifying exam in mid-January.
    - Take advanced core courses.
    - Continue completion of cognate-related courses.
    - If requesting permission to apply for a summer internship, submit a Summer Internship Proposal form by April 1 prior to the start of the internship.
    - If written qualifying exam passed, choose dissertation advisor. Notify Manager of Academic Studies of your choice by April 15.
    - Turn in your PhD Degree Form by May 1.
- AM degree “along the way” should be completed, and all paperwork filed for degree application by GSAS deadlines.

- **Year Three**
  - Fifth Semester
    - Take advanced core courses.
    - Continue completion of cognate-related courses.
    - If written qualifying exam passed, turn in the Oral / Dissertation Committee nomination form by October 15.
    - A Dissertation Committee Meeting form must be submitted within a week of all dissertation committee meetings.
    - If written qualifying exam passed, turn in your first Dissertation Progress Report (due twice a year) by November 15.
  - Sixth Semester
    - Complete advanced core courses.
    - Complete cognate-related courses.
    - Complete (or waive) the consulting course, BIST 312.
    - A Dissertation Committee Meeting form must be submitted within a week of all dissertation committee meetings.
    - Turn in Dissertation Progress Report by May 15.
    - Schedule and complete Oral Qualifying Exam by March 31 (if written qualifying exam was passed on 1st attempt).
      - Circulate the written report for the Oral Qualifying Exam to the Dissertation Committee two weeks before the exam takes place.
    - If qualifying exam passed on 2nd attempt, choose dissertation advisor. Notify Manager of Academic Studies of your choice by February 15.
    - Turn in the Oral / Dissertation Committee nomination form within three months of choosing a dissertation advisor (by May 15 if written qualifying exam was passed on 2nd attempt).

- **Year Four**
  - Seventh Semester
    - Turn in Dissertation Progress Report by November 15.
    - Schedule and complete Oral Qualifying Exam by October 15 (if written qualifying exam was passed on 2nd attempt).
      - Circulate the written report for the Oral Qualifying Exam to the Dissertation Committee two weeks before the exam takes place.
    - A Dissertation Committee Meeting form must be submitted within a week of all dissertation committee meetings.
  - Eighth Semester
    - A Dissertation Committee Meeting form must be submitted within a week of all dissertation committee meetings.
☐ Turn in Dissertation Progress Report by May 15.

☐ Apply for degree by deadline (http://www.registrar.fas.harvard.edu/registration-enrollment-degrees/graduation-diplomas—make sure to click on GSAS Graduation tab). GSAS requires that Ph.D. applicants file an Application for Degree by the dates listed on their academic calendar. (NOTE: The application deadlines are several months before graduation.) Turn in all paperwork associated with degree (http://www.registrar.fas.harvard.edu/registration-enrollment-degrees/graduation-diplomas/phd-dissertation-submission).

☐ Schedule your dissertation defense. Submit a Dissertation Defense Scheduling Form to the Department at least three weeks prior to the dissertation defense. Copies of the dissertation should be provided to the Dissertation Committee and to the Manager of Academic Services at least two weeks prior to the defense. A Dissertation Acceptance Certificate will be completed by the Department before the dissertation defense and signed by the Dissertation Committee after the student’s defense.
B DOCTORAL DEGREE FORMS

- Biostatistics PhD Degree Program Form
  https://content.sph.harvard.edu/biostats/publications/handbook/PHD_Degree_Form.pdf

- Oral Examination Scheduling Form
  https://content.sph.harvard.edu/biostats/publications/handbook/Orals_Exam_Scheduling_Form.pdf

- Summer Internship Proposal Form
  https://content.sph.harvard.edu/biostats/publications/handbook/Summer_Internship_Proposal_Form.pdf

- Oral / Dissertation Committee Nomination Form

- Dissertation Committee Nomination Change Form

- Dissertation Committee Meeting Form
  https://content.sph.harvard.edu/biostats/publications/handbook/Dissertation_Committee_Meeting_Form.pdf

- Dissertation Progress Report Form

- Dissertation Defense Scheduling Form