



Rehabilitation Science PhD Program

UNIVERSITY OF COLORADO
ANSCHUTZ MEDICAL CAMPUS

STUDENT HANDBOOK

Updated July 2026

www.RehabSciencePhD.com

Table of Contents

Program Guidelines Disclaimer	3
Program Overview	3
University commitment to training graduate students	3
Program Director's Welcome.....	4
Contact Information.....	5
Rehabilitation Science Curriculum Overview.....	6
Program Events and Activities	9
Examinations and Evaluations	10
PRELIMINARY EXAMINATION.....	10
COMPREHENSIVE EXAM.....	10
Thesis Preparation and Defense	12
Policies and procedures – Leave policy.....	13
Financial support and expectations	14
Academic standing and disciplinary actions	17
Appendices.....	18
Appendix 1: First year student appendix	18
Appendix 2: Contact Information Appendix	19
Appendix 3: Curriculum and course options appendix.....	19
Appendix 4: RHSC Program Requirements Checklist.....	21
Appendix 5: Preliminary Examinations Study Resources.....	23
Appendix 6: Comprehensive Examination checklist and resources appendix.....	24
Appendix 7: Thesis preparation and examination appendix	27

Program Guidelines Disclaimer

As a member of the Rehabilitation Science PhD Program, you are expected to adhere to all established policies and procedures of the University, the Office of Research Education, the Graduate School and this PhD Program.

CU Anschutz – University Policies <https://catalog.ucdenver.edu/cu-anschutz/university-policies/>
Office of Research Education <https://medschool.cuanschutz.edu/ore/forms-and-resources>
Graduate School <https://graduateschool.cuanschutz.edu/forms-resources/resources>

Program Overview

Mission: The mission of the University of Colorado Rehabilitation Science PhD program is to discover and apply knowledge that improves health and well-being. The mission is fulfilled through developing national leaders in rehabilitation research who advance evidence-based practice.

Vision: The University of Colorado Rehabilitation Science PhD Program will be a premier training program in rehabilitation research with a reputation for excellence in innovation, research, teaching, and community engagement to advance clinical care.

Who We Are: CU Rehabilitation Science is comprised of core and associated faculty, postdoctoral fellows, students and research assistants with a broad background, including physical therapy, occupational therapy, medicine, psychology, engineering, and public health, all working together to improve the lives of people who live with disabilities.

University commitment to training graduate students

The Graduate School at the University of Colorado Anschutz Medical Campus is committed to cultivating a world-class educational and training experience by ensuring equitable standards and serving as the advocate and central resource for graduate students and postdoctoral scholars. We strive to ensure an environment where early-career scientists thrive while building the foundation for impactful contributions to society.

In addition to instituting policy and serving as a resource for our research scholars, we follow the guidelines outlined in the [Appropriate Treatment of Research Trainees \(AToRT\) document](#) published in October 2021 by the Association of American Medical Colleges Working Group on Research, Education, and Training (AAMC GREAT).

Program Director's Welcome

Rehabilitation Science is an interdisciplinary field of study that integrates knowledge from the basic and clinical sciences to improve our understanding of human movement, physical function, and disability across the lifespan. The goal of the Rehabilitation Science (RHSC) Program at the University of Colorado is to prepare future generations of researchers to advance the science and practice of physical rehabilitation. We offer a flexible and interdisciplinary curriculum, with a wide range of courses in the basic and clinical sciences across three University of Colorado campuses. As a student in our program, you will have opportunities for individualized mentorship from nationally recognized scientists representing a variety of specialized disciplines within the broader field of Rehabilitation Science. Examples include Bioengineering, Clinical Science, Data Informatics, Exercise Science, Geriatrics, Health Services, Implementation Science, Integrative Physiology, Internal Medicine, Neurology, Nutrition, Orthopedics, Pediatrics, Physical & Occupational Therapy, and Pulmonary Sciences. This interdisciplinary approach will prepare you to lead collaborative research teams by integrating knowledge from multiple perspectives ranging from the molecular to the systems level to solve complex problems of physical disablement.

In 1990, the National Center for Medical Rehabilitation Research was established at the National Institutes of Health (NIH) to help coordinate a focus on medical rehabilitation research. The Institute of Medicine, a component of the National Academy of Sciences that serves as an advisor for national science policy, established a committee to evaluate the role of Rehabilitation Science and engineering in healthcare. Their 1997 report concluded that “research in the separate health, health professional, and engineering disciplines, although complementary, is not optimally interfaced or balanced... [there is] a need to enhance the federal effort in rehabilitation science and engineering by expanding research, raising visibility, and improving coordination”. In 2005, the Director of the NIH met with six organizations representing a coalition of more than 30 rehabilitation providers and patient groups in a roundtable discussion of strategies to expand the role of Rehabilitation Science within the NIH. Recently, an American Physical Therapy Association task force stated that “a sufficient number of doctoral prepared people with strong research backgrounds is not available to increase the body of knowledge in physical therapy, to meet the standards for academic credibility and institutions of higher education, and to educate the entry-level practitioner of the future. Furthermore, the number of graduate students currently enrolled in doctoral education programs is far below the number necessary to meet future needs.” These are just a few examples of the emerging national focus on rehabilitation research that will demand the skills of our graduates well into the future.

RHSC Program faculty are committed to providing a highly collaborative training environment that will satisfy your scientific curiosity and help you achieve your professional goals. On behalf of the faculty, I would like to welcome you to the University of Colorado and thank you for choosing our program. We look forward to working together!

Sincerely,



Jennifer Stevens Lapsley, PT, Ph.D.
Program Director

Contact Information

REHABILITATION SCIENCE PROGRAM STAFF

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ORE STUDENT COUNCIL

The Rehabilitation Science Program has two rotating members on student council who serve as representatives for the program on Office of Research Education affairs

FACULTY CONTACTS

Research interests and contact information for current RHSC faculty can be found at:
<https://www.cuanschutz.edu/graduate-programs/rehabilitation-science>

If you identify a researcher at the University of Colorado who is not currently affiliated with our program, please contact us for assistance in developing this new collaboration. You can explore research opportunities available on the Anschutz Medical Campus by searching individual departmental websites in your specific field of interest.

Links to all University of Colorado School of Medicine Departments can be found at:
<https://medschool.cuanschutz.edu/departments-centers-institutes>

Additional University contact information can be found in the Contact Information Appendix

Rehabilitation Science Curriculum Overview

REGISTRATION

- [Academic Calendars](#) (see The Graduate School calendar)
- [Register for Classes](#) (see The Graduate School)

The paying of tuition, fees and student health insurance occurs the week **following** the deadline for semester add/drop period, which can be found on the [academic calendar](#). The Program Administrator will complete the process of submitting the appropriate form to the Bursar's Office. For those students receiving financial aid, please work with the Program Administrator to avoid any disruption in aid awarding.

- Minimum registration requirement for full-time graduate students is **5 credits**. Anything above 5 credits must be approved by faculty mentor
- The exception is the summer semester, in which students **may enroll for only 1 credit of RHSC 8990**
- If a student is defending between semester dates as defined by the Academic Calendar, the student must register for 5 credits of RHSC 8990, in the **proceeding semester of the scheduled defense date**

COURSEWORK

The program recommends that students complete at least 30 credit hours of coursework (core, elective, practical, and seminar courses) before taking the comprehensive examination. In addition, the Graduate School requires a minimum of 30 credit hours of thesis/research prior to the thesis examination. All work undertaken as a graduate student must follow the academic Code of Honor institution (refer to the UCD | AMC Graduate Student Handbook available from the Graduate School web site).

The RHSC graduate curriculum includes didactic core and elective courses, research practicum experiences, and a seminar series. All coursework is completed in the first two years of the program and includes foundational instruction in Rehabilitation Science (10 cr), research design, statistical methods, and data management (8-10 cr), scientific writing (1-2 cr), research ethics (1 cr), professional skills (2 cr), and advanced electives pertinent to the student's primary area of specialization within the broader field of rehabilitation (5-8 cr).

Detailed course descriptions and additional resources can be found in the Curriculum Appendix

PROGRAM GOALS

Upon completion of the Rehabilitation Science PhD Program, students will be able to:

- Critically analyze and integrate research findings from specialized disciplines to address complex problems of physical disablement
- Design and implement rigorous, innovative, and ethical research that will advance theoretical and/or applied principles of clinical practice in rehabilitation
- Disseminate findings of original research using standard scientific oral and written formats
- Compete for funding from national agencies to support interdisciplinary research and

educational initiatives in rehabilitation

- Teach graduate level courses in a selected area of specialization within the field of rehabilitation
- Effectively communicate with clinicians, research scientists, and students in the field of rehabilitation and its affiliated disciplines using the common language of disablement
- Serve in leadership roles for professional activities that will advance the science and practice of rehabilitation medicine

RESEARCH PRACTICUM IN REHABILITATION SCIENCE/ FIRST YEAR LAB ROTATIONS

Research practicum rotations are designed to introduce students to a variety of research methodologies, teach approaches to scientific problem solving, and provide an opportunity to explore compatibility with various faculty as potential thesis advisors. Research rotations also provide students with the opportunity to accumulate a variety of different research experiences. Students should approach the research rotations with the primary goal of identifying their future thesis advisors.

Rotations must be completed with RHSC-affiliated faculty, unless special permission is granted by the Graduate Training Committee. Students typically complete two rotations in their first two semesters, with an optional third summer rotation approved in special instances. Rotations may be completed with the same or different mentors.

- [ORE Milestone Rotation Request form](#) can be used when first year students have identified their rotation mentor. Please follow Program specific guidelines, including the submission deadline. Three forms will be submitted throughout the academic year.
- If you need a Third Rotation (with Program Director approval), you must request approval from your Program Director. The Program Administrator and Program Director will work with the Office of Research Education accordingly.
- Students identify potential mentors using resources on the RHSC website and must obtain Program Director approval before contacting faculty. Rotations are arranged in consultation with the Program Director. Students are responsible for scheduling and conducting rotations in a timely manner.
- Each rotation requires submission of a brief (1–2 page) project description, signed by the faculty mentor. Students are expected to commit 6–10 hours per week to research in the lab, typically during normal work hours when not attending classes.
- Each rotation receives a letter grade assigned initially by the faculty advisor, which may be adjusted by the Course Coordinator based on additional input by up to half a grade.

ELECTIVE COURSEWORK

Elective coursework should be selected by the student after consultation with the faculty mentor, the Program Director, and the GTC. **Please note that courses from clinical degree programs (e.g., MD, PhD, DDS, RN, etc.) cannot be counted toward the Ph.D. degree.** Students may select elective courses offered on the University of Colorado Anschutz Medical Campus, the Boulder campus, and/or the Denver campus.

FIRST YEAR SAMPLE SCHEDULE:

Fall semester		
Course number	Course Title	Credits
RHSC 7000	Foundations in Rehabilitation Science	2
RHSC 7001	Rehabilitation Science Seminar I	1
RHSC 7910	Research Practicum in Rehabilitation Science I	3
<i>See options in course offerings appendix and RHSC Teams page</i>	Biostatistics I	3-4
Spring semester		
RHSC 7911	Research Practicum in Rehabilitation Science II	3
<i>See options in course offerings appendix and RHSC Teams page</i>	Biostatistics II	3-4
<i>See options in course offerings appendix and RHSC Teams page</i>	Ethics – <i>Can be taken in year 2</i>	1
RHSC 7002	Professional Skills in Academia – <i>offered alternating Spring semester (odd years)</i>	2
Summer semester		
RHSC 8990	Doctoral thesis	1
	<i>Additional course offerings for summer semester in course offerings appendix and Teams page</i>	

SECOND YEAR SAMPLE SCHEDULE:

Fall semester		
Course number	Course Title	Credits
RHSC 7001	Rehabilitation Science Seminar II	1
<i>See options in course offerings appendix and RHSC Teams page</i>	Statistics elective or data management elective – <i>can also be taken in spring semester</i>	2-3
<i>see options in course offerings appendix and RHSC Teams page</i>	Scientific writing – <i>can also be taken spring semester</i>	1-2
Spring semester		
<i>See options in course offerings appendix and RHSC Teams page</i>	Ethics – <i>Can be taken in year 1</i>	1
RHSC 7002	Professional Skills in Academia – <i>offered alternating Spring semester (odd years)</i>	2
<i>See options in course offerings appendix and RHSC Teams page</i>	Electives	

Summer semester		
RHSC 8990	Doctoral thesis	1
	<i>See options in course offerings appendix and Teams page</i>	

THIRD YEAR + SAMPLE SCHEDULE:

Fall semester		
Course number	Course Title	Credits
RHSC 8990	Doctoral thesis	5
Spring semester		
RHSC 8990	Doctoral thesis	5
Summer semester		
RHSC 8990	Doctoral thesis	1

Program Events and Activities

WORKS/RESEARCH IN PROGRESS PRESENTATIONS

First and Second year RHSC students are required to give an oral presentation on their current research. These “Works/Research in Progress” talks will be scheduled during the RHSC Seminar series in the fall. Presentations must include rationale, methods, and results (or anticipated results) from ongoing or planned study. The impact of study results (actual or anticipated) on rehabilitation practice and future research directions should also be discussed. Presentations typically last fifteen to twenty minutes, with five minutes devoted to questions from the audience. These presentations provide students with an opportunity to practice communicating their research clearly and receive feedback from faculty and peers.

Third year and advanced students are not required to enroll in RHSC 7001; however attendance at the fall Works in Progress talks is mandatory. This requirement ensures continued engagement with current research, maintains connection to program activities, and provides support to peers presenting their research.

REHABILITATION SYMPOSIUM

All students are required to attend the Annual Rehabilitation Science Symposium. The symposium features a keynote speaker, providing an opportunity to learn from a leading expert in the field. Dedicated time is built in for students to connect directly with the speaker, ask questions, and network. The symposium also includes a student poster session, and all students are encouraged to present posters if they have research or projects to share. This event is an important opportunity for professional development, networking, and showcasing student research within the program.

Examinations and Evaluations

PRELIMINARY EXAMINATION

OVERVIEW

Every first-year student takes the Preliminary Qualifying Exam at the end of the first year of graduate school. The Preliminary Examination is a key milestone in the PhD program that evaluates a student's readiness to advance to independent dissertation research. The examination is designed to assess the student's depth of knowledge in their field, critical thinking skills, ability to integrate and evaluate scientific literature, and potential for independent research. Successful completion of the Preliminary Examination is required for advancement to doctoral candidacy.

TIMING

First-year students take the Preliminary Examination in May/June. It is both written and oral, administered by the Graduate Training Committee (GTC). After reviewing both portions, the Graduate Training Committee assigns an overall grade of **Pass, Fail, or Pass with Conditions**.

Pass – majority affirmative votes from Graduate Training Committee

Pass with Conditions – additional work required, to be completed within four months

Fail – may result in dismissal; one retake allowed at the Program's discretion within four months

WRITTEN EXAMINATION

The written portion of the Preliminary Examination will be administered on a program computer. Students will be given 3 hours to read and critically evaluate a published research article by providing written responses to questions in 1) Rehabilitation Frameworks and 2) Research design and statistics. It is strongly recommended that students review **RHSC 7000, BIOS 6601/11 and BIOS 6602/12**.

Additional resources can be found in the Preliminary Examination appendix

ORAL EXAMINATION

Following the written portion, the GTC administers a one-hour oral exam to clarify written responses, evaluate critical thinking, and assess mastery of fundamental concepts.

COMPREHENSIVE EXAM

OVERVIEW

Administered by the Comprehensive Examination Committee (CEC) no later than January 15 of the third year. Students must be enrolled in at least five thesis credit hours during the semester of the examination. The program also recommends completing 30 didactic credit hours before taking the comprehensive examination.

Once a date has been set with your CEC, you must contact your Program Administrator to initiate forms. You will also discuss room bookings at this time. All forms must be submitted to the Program

Administrator at least a month prior to the exam date.

1. [App Candidacy form](#)
2. [Exam request form](#)

As you prepare for your Comprehensive Exam, please ensure that all your committee members have a faculty appointment listed in [the Graduate School Faculty Directory](#).

All forms are found at the Graduate School website under the "Forms" section. [Graduate School - Resources & Forms - CU Anschutz](#)

Additional resources and checklists can be found under the Comprehensive Examination Appendix

COMMITTEE COMPOSITION

The CEC includes five members, at least three RHSC faculty (including the thesis advisor if desired), and at least one external member. The **Chair must be RHSC faculty but cannot be the thesis advisor** and should have prior committee experience. Committee may be revised if research focus changes.

RHSC defines an outside committee member as:

1. An individual without an appointment in the program.
Example: A student in the Rehabilitation Science Program adds a committee member who holds only a Molecular Biology appointment.

or

2. An external affiliate granted a special appointment in the program.
Example: A student in the Rehabilitation Science Program adds a committee member who is faculty at CSU.

EXAMINATION PROCEDURES

- **Written Component:**
 - NIH NRSA-style proposal (Specific Aims + Research Strategy)
 - seven single-spaced pages
 - Submitted **two weeks before oral exam**
 - Must be independently prepared. See [NRSA Proposal Instructions](#)
- **Oral Component:**
 - 30–40 minute public presentation
 - Followed by closed-session questioning by the CEC
 - Exam requires ~3 hours total
- **Examination Results:**
 - **Pass** – majority affirmative votes
 - **Pass with Conditions** – additional work required, to be completed within four months
 - **Fail** – may result in dismissal; one retake allowed within four months
- **Post-Examination Course Registration:** Register for Doctoral Thesis hours (8990) continuously until thesis defense. Minimum 30 thesis hours required

Thesis Preparation and Defense

OVERVIEW

Thesis advisors provide individualized mentorship and training for graduate students while completing their dissertation research. The selection of a thesis advisor is one of the most important decisions students will make during their graduate career. At the very least, **students should select a thesis advisor no later than the date of the Preliminary Examination; however, a thesis advisor may be selected at any time during the first year.**

COMMITTEE FORMATION

Within one month of passing the Comprehensive Exam, form a Thesis Advisory Committee (TAC) with your thesis advisor, Program Director, and Graduate Training Committee. The TAC must include three UCD | AMC graduate faculty (including your advisor); the chair must be RHSC faculty and not your primary advisor.

THESIS PREPARATION

The thesis should include 3–5 chapters and at least one accepted publication. Follow Graduate School formatting guidelines and schedule a thesis pre-check at least two weeks before defense. Provide the final draft to TAC members two weeks before the defense.

For additional information and program specific guidelines see Thesis Preparation Appendix

COURSE REGISTRATION

- Register for five thesis credit hours in the defense semester and submit all required forms at least four weeks in advance
- If defending **after the semester ends you must register for 5 credits of 8990 in the proceeding semester**
- Thesis defenses must be tied to the end of the semester deadlines dates

FORMS AND GUIDELINES

All forms are found on the Graduate School website under the "Forms" section. [Graduate School - Resources & Forms - CU Anschutz](#)

- [Biosketch Form](#)
 - This is a graduate school form, not the NIH form
- [Exam request form](#)
- [Thesis Approval form](#)
- ProQuest [General Information for Submitting Dissertation & Thesis](#) page 13 on Graduate School
- [Watch](#) how to prepare the correct forms and upload your dissertation
- [Thesis & Dissertation/ProQuest Format & Guidelines](#)

THESIS DEFENSE

- The defense consists of a 45-minute public presentation with Q&A
- Followed by a 2–3 hour closed session with the TAC

Defense results:

- **Pass** – Majority affirmative votes
- **Pass with Conditions** – Revisions due within 60 days
- **Fail** – Dismissal from the Graduate School

Policies and procedures – Leave policy

If student funding is obtained from a source other than the NIH, the other funding institution may provide leave guidelines which differ from those outlined above. In such cases, the guidelines from the relevant funding institution shall apply.

Please view the graduate school vacation and leave policy which aligns with the NIH via https://graduateschool.cuanschutz.edu/docs/librariesprovider138/denver-anschutz-graduate-school/resources/gs-phd-leave-policy_final_061625.pdf

GRADUATE SCHOOL POLICY FOR PHD STUDENT VACATION AND LEAVE

The Graduate School at the University of Colorado Anschutz Medical Campus (CU Anschutz) has established the following leave policy for PhD students who receive full-support stipends from CU Anschutz PhD programs (hereafter referred to as “graduate students”). Full-time graduate students (as defined in the Graduate School Policies and Procedures) in these programs are eligible for campus holidays, vacation, sick leave, and parental leave. Detailed below are the amounts of leave time allowable for students to maintain full-time student status, as well as leave reporting requirements.

LEAVE TYPES AND AMOUNTS

Vacation and Holidays. Graduate students shall receive all CU Anschutz campus holidays and may receive an additional 10 weekdays (excluding weekends) of vacation per academic year, with no year-to-year accrual. Graduate students shall continue to receive stipends during vacations and holidays. Graduate students taking courses are expected to attend all classes and take all exams as scheduled. The times between academic terms and the summers are all considered active parts of the training period and leave must be taken in accordance with this policy. Graduate students supported via extramurally funded projects or training grants must comply with sponsor requirements regarding effort.

Sick Leave. Graduate students may continue to receive stipends for 11 weekdays (excluding weekends and campus holidays) of sick leave per academic year, with no year-to-year accrual. Under exceptional circumstances, additional sick days may be granted following a written request from the student and approval by the student's thesis advisor (if determined) and graduate program director. Sick leave may be used for medical needs related to pregnancy and childbirth. Absences needed to address chronic health conditions and/or disabilities as part of an Office of Disability, Access, and Inclusion (ODAI) formal accommodation plan may be treated separately from sick leave. Graduate students supported via extramurally funded projects or training grants must comply with sponsor requirements regarding effort.

Parental Leave. Graduate students may continue to receive stipends for 8 work weeks (excluding

weekends and campus holidays) of parental leave per academic year for the adoption or the birth of a child. Either or both parents are eligible for parental leave. Graduate students must provide advance notification to their thesis advisor (if determined) and graduate program director prior to taking parental leave. Sick leave may supplement parental leave under the circumstances noted above. Graduate students supported via extramurally funded projects or training grants must comply with sponsor requirements regarding effort.

Bereavement Leave. Graduate Students may receive up to five weekdays of paid leave for each death event in accordance with the University bereavement leave policy for faculty and staff.

Unpaid Leave. Individuals requiring more than 11 weekdays (excluding weekends and campus holidays) of sick leave or more than 8 work weeks (excluding weekends and campus holidays) of parental leave per academic year must seek approval from their thesis advisor and their graduate program director for an unpaid leave of absence. A leave of absence must be requested by the student and approved by their thesis advisor (if known) and program in advance of taking the leave of absence. The leave period and conditions must be documented at the times of leave and of re-entry into the program. A copy of this agreement must be submitted to the Graduate School in advance of the leave of absence. Graduate students supported via extramurally funded projects or training grants must comply with sponsor requirements regarding effort.

Unused Leave at Termination. Upon graduation or termination, a graduate student forfeits all unused vacation, sick, and parental leave; there is no payout for remaining leave balances. Remaining leave balances cannot be transferred to other positions within the University of Colorado system.

LEAVE REQUESTS AND REPORTING

Graduate students are required to report leave requests (vacation, sick, and parental leave) in accordance with program-defined reporting processes. Reporting processes may include reporting requests to 1) their thesis advisor, 2) the program in which they reside, and/or 3) their thesis advisor's home department or unit. It is the graduate student's responsibility to identify the process for reporting leave.

LEAVE DISPUTES

All leave disputes between graduate students and their thesis advisor and/or program must be resolved by graduate program leadership and/or the program's home school/college.

Financial support and expectations

FINANCIAL SUPPORT AND CONCURRENT EMPLOYMENT POLICIES

Faculty in the Rehabilitation Science Program are committed to ensuring that students complete their graduate studies within a maximum of five years and maintain a level of productivity that will allow them to successfully compete for grants and employment opportunities upon graduation. To achieve these goals, the faculty has adopted the following policies regarding research funding and supplementary teaching and clinical responsibilities for students enrolled in the Rehabilitation Science Program. Please note that financial support is only available to US citizens who are eligible to apply for federal grants while enrolled in the Program.

All students will maintain full-time enrollment status (≥ 5 cr/sem); the Rehabilitation Science Program does not accept part-time students. Students seeking part-time graduate studies are encouraged to contact the Clinical Science Program at the University of Colorado Anschutz Medical Campus for additional information.

All students will receive an annual cost of living stipend, at a rate determined annually by the Graduate School. The standard stipend rate cannot be supplemented by additional monies paid directly to the student from the University or University Hospitals for any teaching or clinical responsibilities performed while enrolled in the Program. Students will also receive a full tuition waiver and health (medical and dental) insurance benefits. Students who can demonstrate evidence of comparable coverage may elect to waive healthcare benefits. For more information about benefit coverage and waivers, contact Payroll and Benefits Services at 303-860-4200.

The first two semesters of training costs including stipend, tuition, health insurance, and student fees will be funded by the Graduate School. Beginning in summer of the first year, these expenses will be supported by a combination of faculty grants, training grants, Doctor of Physical Therapy (DPT) Program teaching assistantships, internal/external clinical revenue, and/or individual student scholarships. Limited Program funds *may* be available to support students who have not yet identified a faculty mentor in their second year, or who are affected by a temporary lapse in faculty grant funds. In such cases, supplemental teaching and/or clinical responsibilities will be negotiated between the faculty mentor, student, and Directors of the RHSC and DPT Programs. Funding decisions involving supplemental Program support will be made by the Rehabilitation Science Advisory Committee.

All students supported by a cost-of-living stipend are expected to work in an affiliated research laboratory during normal working hours when not attending classes or teaching. This policy applies year-round (i.e., including summer semester), with the exception of official University holidays. Beginning in the second year, students are also expected to teach in the entry-level DPT Program as negotiated with the student's faculty mentor. Teaching assignments may include, but are not limited to: guest lectures, grading, office hours, lab assisting, and/or tutoring. Students will be assigned to assist with courses that are best matched to their academic and/or clinical experience. Specific teaching hours and assignments will vary depending on the needs of the course coordinator, who will provide mentorship in instructional methods, but often target 80-100hrs/year. Teaching revenues generated by the student will be used to offset training costs incurred by the faculty mentor, with no direct payments made to students. Faculty mentors may elect to buy out of requisite teaching responsibilities by funding a student at the full stipend rate.

During the first year of enrollment, students may not schedule clinic hours during normal working hours (M-F, 8AM - 5PM). As an alternative to teaching in years 2-5, students may elect to work part time in the clinic to maintain their clinical skills. In such cases, clinical revenues generated by the student during normal working hours will be used to help offset training costs incurred by the faculty mentor (i.e., stipend, tuition, health insurance, student fees). Clinic hours must be negotiated with and approved by both the faculty mentor and the Rehabilitation Science Advisory Committee on an annual basis and may be discontinued at any time if the student fails to make satisfactory progress toward the completion of his or her degree. Concurrent clinic and teaching responsibilities are strongly discouraged and may only be granted in special circumstances by petition to the Advisory Committee.

Students who are awarded individual grants or scholarships in excess of the standard stipend rate are expected to use a portion of their award to help offset training and research project costs incurred by the faculty mentor, which may include but are not limited to their stipend, tuition, health insurance, student fees, conference travel, and project related expenses. The portion of individual student awards to be applied toward training and research project costs must be negotiated in writing between the faculty mentor and student prior to submission of the grant or scholarship application and may be adjusted by mutual agreement at the time of award. It is the student's responsibility to ensure a written agreement is finalized and sent to the program director. All students are strongly encouraged to apply for individual grants and scholarships to establish a strong record of grantsmanship and independent funding.

ADMINISTRATION OF FINANCIAL SUPPORT

Continuation of support is predicated at all times on satisfactory academic progress, as determined by the mentor, the thesis advisory committee, and the RHSC Graduate Training Committee. The financial obligation for a student does not rest with the RHSC Program. Each student is responsible for his or her own books, housing, and any other expenses not specifically outlined above.

Each student is personally responsible for late fees and fines, so it is critical that registration is completed prior to University deadlines and that if there is additional requested paperwork is provided to the Administrator in a timely fashion. Students who register after the semester registration deadline set by the Office of Admissions & Records will be assessed a late registration fee, which must then be paid by the student according to policies enforced by the Assistant Dean of the Graduate School.

Financial support will be provided by the sources detailed above as long as the following conditions are met:

1. Maintain satisfactory academic progress.
2. Achieve eligibility for in-state tuition after the first year. Students who fail to qualify for in-state residency will be responsible for the difference between in-state and out-of-state tuition.
3. Pass the Preliminary Examination at the end of the first year.
4. Pass the Comprehensive Examination near the end of the second or beginning of the 3rd academic year.
5. Student's thesis advisor remains able and willing to provide support during the candidacy phase of the Program.
6. Schedule the Thesis Defense within approximately four to five years of entering the Program.
7. Graduate School rules require that a student defend their thesis within seven years of matriculation. Otherwise, the student may be required to repeat their preliminary exam.
8. The NIH generally limits pre-doctoral support to seven years total. Completion of the Ph.D. within five years of matriculation is strongly preferred for continuation of training grants.

Academic standing and disciplinary actions

The University of Colorado Anschutz Medical Campus, consistent with most other educational institutions, has a student honor code (<https://www.ucdenver.edu/docs/librariesprovider138/denver-anschutz-graduate-school/resources/honor-code-20240213.pdf>). The Rehabilitation Science Ph.D. Training Program endorses and enforces this honor code. A student who violates the honor code will be called before the RHSC Graduate Training Committee. The committee will review each case and may assign disciplinary action, up to and including dismissal from the program.

Each student is expected to maintain satisfactory academic progress. A student whose grade point average drops below a 3.0 is placed on academic probation. Only in **exceptional** circumstances may less than a "B-" in a required course be acceptable, as determined by petition to the Graduate Training Committee. Required courses completed with a grade of below "B-" may not be counted towards Ph.D. requirements, if deemed unacceptable by the GTC. To be removed from academic probation, a student must achieve a GPA of 3.0 or above for the academic semester following the semester for which the student was placed on probation and must achieve a cumulative GPA of 3.0 or above within two semesters of being placed on probation. A student who fails to be removed from academic probation within two semesters will be dismissed from the program.

A graduate student who receives an unsatisfactory grade in a course may repeat that course once, upon written recommendation from the Graduate Training Committee and approval by the Graduate School (provided the course has not been previously applied toward a degree). The two grades received will be averaged in calculating the grade point average, and all grades received will appear on the student's transcript. The course may be counted only once toward satisfying the unit requirement for the degree.

The student requirements described in this handbook must be met by the deadlines stated. The RHSC Graduate Training Committee (GTC) monitors the progress of each student. If the GTC concludes that a student is not meeting the program's requirements in a timely manner, they may request a meeting with that student. After review, the GTC may take any actions deemed appropriate, including placing conditions on the student's continuance in the program or dismissing the student from the program.

If a student is in jeopardy of missing a deadline or believes he or she is not achieving acceptable progress, the student should contact the Program Director immediately. Failure to notify the Program Director of problems in completing requirements can result in dismissal from the program.

Appendices

Appendix 1: First year student appendix

PRIORITIES/EXPECTATIONS FOR FIRST YEAR STUDENTS

Both the Office of Research Education and the Rehabilitation Science Program schedule orientation sessions to assist students during their first few days on campus. Within the first few weeks, new students should schedule a meeting with the Program Director. The purpose of this meeting is to provide an opportunity for students to express any concerns or difficulties they might experience and ask any questions that have not been addressed in orientation.

FIRST YEAR STUDENT TO-DO LIST

1. Establish a checking account as soon as possible. The University issues all paychecks, including student stipends, as automatic deposits. Students must have a voided check available when filling out payroll forms. Each student is required to produce a driver's license (or state ID) and a social security card for payroll purposes.
2. Out-of-state residents must obtain documentation to support the Petition for State Residency as soon as possible. First-year students must make collecting this documentation a priority. Funding will be available, assuming satisfactory academic progress, only if the student qualifies for in-state residency after the first year of study. Refer to the following website for specific details:
<https://www.cuanschultz.edu/registrar/residency>
3. Each person on campus must carry a picture ID. This ID serves many purposes, such as enabling access to offices and laboratories, library, and parking facilities. After arriving on campus, student identification photographs will be taken. If you arrive prior to orientation, the Program badging official and/or the Graduate School Administrator will assist you in arranging an appointment with the ID Access Office.
4. Announcements/Communications. Email is the primary form of written communication both within the Program and the University as a whole. Please check your university email daily.

Appendix 2: Contact Information Appendix

Emergency-Police or Fire	911 from Campus landline
Campus Emergency (<i>using cell phone</i>)	303-724-4444
Campus Police (<i>non-emergency/land line</i>)	303-724-4444 from Campus
Car Escort:	303-724-2000
Admissions and Records:	303-724-8059
Bookstore:	303-724-2665
Bursar's Office:	303-724-8032
Counseling:	303-556-4372
Dental Clinic:	303-704-6900
Diversity Office:	303-724-8003
E-mail Support:	303-724-2129
Financial Aid:	303-556-2886
Health Insurance:	303-724-7674
ID Cards:	303-724-0399
Library:	303-724-2139
Ombudsman Office:	303-724-2950
Parking Office:	303-724-2555
Student Health Office:	303-724-4674
Student Assistance Office:	303-724-7686
CU Pharmacy:	720-848-1020

Appendix 3: Curriculum and course options appendix

TRANSFER CREDITS AND INDEPENDENT STUDY

Transfer Credit

Transfer credit is defined as any graduate level credit (5000 level or above in an MS, MA, or PhD program) earned at another accredited institution, or credits earned as a non-degree student within the CU system. Please note that students are permitted to take graduate coursework at Colorado educational institutions outside of the CU System (e.g. Colorado State University) while enrolled in the RHSC Program; however, students will be charged the host institution tuition rate and must petition to have their credits transferred in accordance with the guidelines below. Graduate level coursework taken for a Master's degree may be applied toward a doctoral degree with Program approval. Please note that courses taken toward completion of a clinical degree (e.g., MD, DPT, OT, RN, etc.) are not eligible for transfer. The maximum amount of work that may be transferred toward a PhD degree at the University of Colorado is 30 semester hours. All work accepted for transfer must have been completed within a seven-year time limit or be validated by special examination. Transfer of coursework must be approved prior the term of the Comprehensive Examination. Before courses can be considered for transfer, students must have an overall grade point average of 3.00 in all courses taken at the University of Colorado in the Graduate School and must have completed at least one term in residence after matriculation. Courses eligible for transfer must have a grade of "B" or higher and must not have been previously applied toward an undergraduate degree or another graduate degree on the same level (e.g., M.A. to M.S.). All requests for credit transfer must be approved by the RHSC Program Director and GTC prior to submission to the Graduate School.

Independent Study

Students seeking advanced instruction in a specialized area of study that is not currently offered as an elective course may propose an individualized plan of study, taken as an Independent Study elective (RHSC 8900). Credit hours will vary with the scope of the proposal, which must be approved by the Program Director and GTC prior to enrolling in the course. Independent Study proposals (1-2 page max) should include Goals, Objectives, and Assessment Criteria for the course, a summary of educational methods that will be used to achieve those goals, the suggested number of credits hours (~20 contact hours/credit), and the name and contact information for the faculty advisor who will oversee and evaluate the student's performance in the course. A maximum of 6 Independent Study credit hours can be applied toward the PhD degree.

REQUIRED COURSEWORK

1. **BIOS 6601/6602 or 6611/6612, Biostatistics:** A sequence of two lecture based courses in applied biostatistical methods including descriptive and statistical inference, odds ratio and relative risk, probability theory, parameter estimation, tests for comparing statistics of two or more groups, correlation and linear regression, univariate linear modeling and multiple regression, and statistics to modeling more complex relationships using linear regression, logistic regression, and Cox regression. The statistical software package SAS is used extensively. The 6611/6612 sequence requires a strong quantitative background in matrix algebra and calculus.
2. **Advanced Elective in Statistics or Data Management:** Students are required to complete at least one advanced elective course in statistics, database management, or programming to supplement analytic skills acquired in the BIOS 6601/6602 or 6611/6612 sequence. Refer to the AMC School of Public Health Course book for available options. Students with an interest in clinical trials should refer to the AMC Clinical Science Program Course book for additional options in clinical trials research design and analysis.
3. **Ethical Conduct of Research:** In compliance with NIH policy, all graduate students are required to complete a course in the ethical conduct of research. Options include **CLSC 7151** (Lectures in Ethics and Regulations in Human Subjects Review) which focuses on IRB processes for human subjects research, or **PHCL 7605** (Research Ethics) which provides a more general overview of research ethics applicable to all biomedical sciences.
4. **Scientific Writing:** An applied writing and peer review course that prepares students to write research grant submissions. Topics include writing the various sections of grant applications: background, specific aims, hypotheses, methods, analysis, potential problems, and the summary. Options include **CLSC 7101** (Grant Writing I) which requires students to complete a full grant application on their thesis topic, or **IDPT 7200** (Scientific Writing for Doctoral Students). Students with a specialization in sensorimotor control may also select **NRSC 7661** (Grant Proposal Writing Workshop) which includes preparation of an NRSA fellowship application and mock NIH review panel.

5. **RHSC 7000, Foundations of Rehabilitation Science:** A lecture and small-group discussion course that provides an overview of the field of rehabilitation science and an introduction to disablement frameworks with an emphasis on biopsychosocial models of the enabling-disabling process across the life span. Topics include definitions and domains of rehabilitation science, and the application of disablement models to contemporary problems within the field.
6. **RHSC 7002, Professional Skills in Academia:** A lecture and small-group discussion course that provides an overview of instructional methods and professional skills for academic educators and scientists. Topics include instructional methods for graduate education, and development of professional skills in communication, management, networking, and promotion for academic careers in Rehabilitation Science. Students participate in doctoral seminars with their peers and faculty to explore professional aspects of their future careers (e.g., publishing, manuscript review, grant review, project management). Mentorship and professional development activities are emphasized.
7. **RHSC 7001, Rehabilitation Science Seminar:** Two research seminar courses taken within the first two years of enrollment expose students to the breadth of research being conducted by local and national leaders in Rehabilitation Science. Students attend regular seminars by invited speakers, followed by discussion sections in which students assess the implications of each seminar topic on the full spectrum of disablement constructs ranging from pathophysiology to community participation.
8. **RHSC 7910/7911, Research Practicum in Rehabilitation Science I/II:** Two practical research experiences taken within the first two semesters of enrollment expose students to a variety of experimental tools and techniques available to Rehabilitation scientists. Research rotations are selected by each student with the permission of an affiliated faculty mentor. Each research experience concludes with an oral presentation (post-rotation talk) in which students discuss their research activities and suggest ideas for future research in related areas of the disablement framework.

Appendix 4: RHSC Program Requirements Checklist

Required Core Coursework (minimum 30cr)		Suggested Sem/YR	Course #	Cr.	■ Completed Sem/YR
RHSC 7000	Foundations in Rehabilitation Science (2cr)	Fall 1or 2			☐
RHSC 7001	Rehabilitation Science Seminar I (1 cr)	Fall 1			☐
RHSC 7001	Rehabilitation Science Seminar II (1cr)	Fall 2			☐
RHSC 7910	Research Practicum in Rehabilitation Science I (3cr)	Fall 1			☐
RHSC 7911	Research Practicum in Rehabilitation Science II (3cr)	Spr 1			☐
see options	Biostatistics I (3-4cr)	Fall 1			☐
see options	Biostatistics II (3-4cr)	Spr 1			☐
see options	Statistics/Data Management Elective (min 1cr)	Spr 2			☐
see options	Scientific Writing (1-2cr)	Spr 2			☐
see options	Research Ethics (1cr)	Fall or Spr 1			☐ ☐
RHSC 7002	Professional Skills in Academia (2cr)	Spring 1or 2			
see options	Specialization Electives (5-8cr)	Fall 2			☐

		Spr 2			☐
					☐
Required Core Coursework (≥ 30cr)		TOTAL			☐

Required Doctoral Thesis Credit (minimum 30 cr) * NOTE: Full time enrollment requires min. 5 cr. Fall/Spr + 1cr. Sum		Year	Cr.	■ Completed Year
RHSC 8990	Doctoral Thesis in Rehabilitation Science (variable cr)	1		☐
RHSC 8990	Doctoral Thesis in Rehabilitation Science (variable cr)	2		☐
RHSC 8990	Doctoral Thesis in Rehabilitation Science (variable cr)	3		☐
RHSC 8990	Doctoral Thesis in Rehabilitation Science (variable cr)	4		☐
RHSC 8990	Doctoral Thesis in Rehabilitation Science (variable cr)	5		☐
Required Doctoral Thesis Credit (≥30 sch)		TOTAL		☐

Program Benchmarks	Required Sem/YR	■ Completed Date
Preliminary Examination (June 15 Deadline)	Sum 1	☐
Comprehensive Examination(Oct 1 Deadline) * NOTE: Concurrent enrollment in RHSC 8990 (min 5cr) required Must petition for examination min. 4 weeks prior to exam See requirements for Comprehensive Exam Committee (pg. 20)	Sum 2 or Fall 3	☐
Thesis Examination * NOTE: Concurrent enrollment in RHSC 8990 (min 5cr) required Must petition for examination min. 4 weeks prior to exam See requirements for Thesis Exam Committee (pg. 22)	No later than Sum 5	☐

Annual Committee Review	Status Summary	■ Completed Date
Graduate Training Committee Academic Review – Yr 1		☐
Graduate Training Committee Academic Review – Yr 2		☐
Thesis Proposal Meeting with Thesis Advisory Committee (within 6 mo. of passing Comps)		☐
Thesis Progress Meeting with TAC (annually)		☐
Thesis Progress Meeting with TAC (annually)		☐

Appendix 5: Preliminary Examinations Study Resources

Mastery of conceptual frameworks in rehabilitation is a requisite for graduation from the RHSC program. It is highly recommended that students review the following supplementary study resources. All students will be required to demonstrate their ability to apply established conceptual frameworks and appropriate measures of impairment, activity limitations, and participation in the design and analysis of research hypotheses.

1. Online course: "The International Classification of Functioning, Disability, and Health: Overview (No CEUs)"

Go to <http://www.apta.org/>

Members and non-members go to the top right of the screen to login/logout

*Members login and proceed using your member number.

*Non-members scroll down to new customers. Register here and complete all of information, including valid email address to allow technical support. Also choose a login and password for yourself. Close out, then login again using new login and password

All users:

Go to the Learning Center <http://learningcenter.apta.org/Default.aspx>

Scroll down to "Online: The International Classification of Functioning, Disability, and Health: Overview (No CEUs)"

Click "Purchase Now" and go through the process of purchasing this course. The process is the same whether there is a cost or no cost. This course is available at no cost.

If you have trouble accessing the course, please contact APTA at 1-800-999-APTA.

2. Beginner's Guide to ICF at:

<http://www.who.int/classifications/icf/training/icfbeginnersguide.pdf>

3. Jette and Schenkman articles at:

<http://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pubmed/16649895>

<http://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pubmed/17138846>

4. December 2011 issue of *Physical Therapy* at: <http://ptjournal.apta.org/content/91/12.toc>

Appendix 6: Comprehensive Examination checklist and resources appendix

RHSC COMPREHENSIVE EXAM PREPARATION CHECKLIST

3–6 Months Before Exam

- Outline your project and discuss with your mentor:
 - Aims (3 independent, stand-alone aims)
 - Methods (data source, studies)
 - Analysis/Approach (quantitative or qualitative, stats plan)
 - Timeline (data collection, analysis start, defense month/year)
 - Potential committee members (needed expertise)
- Organize your committee:
 - RHSC requires a minimum number of faculty (e.g., advisor + chair)
 - Additional members may need unofficial RHSC appointments (Program Administrator can assist with paperwork)

2 Months Before Exam

- Send draft to mentor for early feedback
- Schedule an all-committee run-through:
 - Prepare slides (aims, approach, timeline)
 - Gather feedback to avoid surprises later
- Set the official exam date during this meeting
- Verify committee appointments:
 - Check the [Graduate Faculty Directory](#)
 - Confirm each committee member has a regular or special appointment in RHSC (primary or additional)
 - If anyone is missing an appointment, email the Program Administrator to start the process

1 Month Before Exam

- Optional: Send updated draft to committee for feedback
- Begin presentation prep:
 - Plan ~45 min talk (+ 5–10 min on background, motivations, future timeline)
- Complete required forms (at least 2 weeks before exam):
 - Application for Candidacy
 - Exam Request Form
 - Both forms can be found on the Graduate School Resources page → [Forms link](#)
- Complete flyer request form with headshot, proposal title, date/time/location (including Zoom info) for Program Administrator → [Flyer Request Form](#)
- Book exam room → [Room scheduler link](#)
 - Can also contact the Program Administrator to request that they schedule a room for you

2 Weeks Before Exam

- Final comps document sent to committee (**2 weeks before oral exam!**)
- Practice presentation with peers or a small student group

Students are required to pass a comprehensive examination to advance to candidacy for the Ph.D. The Comprehensive Examination Committee (CEC) will administer the student's comprehensive examination **no later than Jan 15 in the third year of enrollment**. The program recommends that students complete 30 didactic credit hours prior to obtaining approval to schedule the Comprehensive Examination. Students must have completed or be enrolled in all required and elective coursework before receiving approval to schedule the examination. Additionally, students must be registered for at least five thesis credit hours during the semester in which the examination is taken (this includes exams taken in the summer semester). Students defending between semesters must register for the subsequent semester.

COMPREHENSIVE EXAMINATION COMMITTEE

Shortly following the preliminary exam and no more than six months after selecting a thesis advisor and project, the student and advisor must provide a list of recommended faculty members for the Comprehensive Exam Committee (CEC) and Chair to the Program Director and GTC for approval. The CEC is composed of five members, at least three of whom must be RHSC Program faculty (this may include the thesis advisor), and at least one who must be external to the RHSC Program. The Chair of the Committee must be from the RHSC Program faculty but cannot be the thesis advisor and should have served on at least one previous committee. The student must also complete a Ph.D. Application for Candidacy form and Request to Schedule Exam from the Graduate School (<https://graduateschool.cuanschutz.edu/forms-resources/resources>) which must be submitted to the RHSC Program Director and Administrator **four weeks** prior to the exam date. Once approved by the GTC, the Graduate School requires that the Program Administrator submit these forms no less than **two weeks** prior to the comprehensive examination date in order to assure Graduate School approval in time for the examination date. This committee may be revised if the focus of research substantially changes.

COMPREHENSIVE EXAMINATION PROCEDURES

The comprehensive examination comprises a written and an oral component. The comprehensive exam topic must be directly related to the anticipated thesis topic, with a scope of work that is feasible to complete in 2-3 years. Students must obtain prior approval of their topic from the Program Director, as well as all members of their committee.

For the written component, the student must prepare a thesis proposal written in the format of the Specific Aims (Section B.2) and Research Strategy (Section B.3-5) sections of an NIH National Research Service Award (NRSA) grant proposal. The proposal should be seven single-spaced, type written pages, exclusive of citations. The written proposal must be submitted by the student to all members of the CEC at least **two weeks** prior to the oral examination. Please refer to the following website for specific instructions regarding the NRSA format:

http://grants.nih.gov/grants/funding/424/SF424_RR_Guide_Fellowship_VerB.pdf

The thesis proposal must be prepared independently by the student, without substantial input from the thesis advisor or other affiliated faculty. Although the topic of the proposal is intended to become the proposal for the student's thesis project pending minor modification, it is understood that the proposal is the product of the student, not the advisor. It is not appropriate for students to “cut and

paste” from their advisor's R01 or other grant applications/manuscripts to obtain a basis for their own grant proposal. Students may discuss ideas, aims, and approaches with their advisor; however, the intent is for students to compose and defend a unique, independent, and defensible product. Students will need to spend a significant period of time reading the primary literature related to the topic and be able to discuss its relevance to their own proposal.

For the oral component, the student must prepare a 30-40minute, oral summary of the proposal in a public forum. This presentation is an opportunity for the student to provide a concise overview of the proposal, and to clarify any changes in thinking between submission of the written proposal and the oral examination. Following the student's presentation and questions from the audience, the CEC will question the student in a closed session. Students should schedule 3 hours for the combined elements of the comprehensive exam. The written proposal serves as a foundation to test the student’s knowledge of a specific research topic, as well as his or her broader understanding of other topics covered in graduate course work up to that point. The student will be expected to answer general knowledge questions on topics both related and unrelated to their proposal. At the conclusion of questioning, the student will be dismissed and the Committee will discuss and evaluate performance on the examination in a private session. The student will then be summoned back into the room and informed of the examination results.

After passing the Comprehensive Examination, students must register for Doctoral Thesis hours (8990). Students must have a continuous registration for a minimum of five (5) semester hours each Fall and Spring Semester and one (1) semester hour each Summer Semester until the Thesis Defense is passed. The minimum number of thesis hours necessary for the Ph.D. degree is 30 semester hours.

COMPREHENSIVE EXAMINATION RESULTS

PASS

Requires affirmative votes from a majority of CEC members

PASS WITH CONDITIONS

The committee may feel that, although a student has passed the examination, additional work must be completed to remediate specific areas of weakness. This may be in the form of rewriting submitted work, completing additional coursework, etc. All conditions and associated deadlines will be provided in writing to the student by the CEC Chair no later than one week after the date of examination. The conditions must be satisfied within four months of taking the comprehensive examination, and the student will be considered to have "Passed" when all conditions are met. Failure to meet the conditions within the specified timeframe will result in failure of the examination.

FAIL

In the event that a student fails the examination, s/he is subject to immediate dismissal from the Graduate School. At the discretion of the RHSC Program, students may be allowed to retake the examination once. The remedial exam will be in a form designated by the committee and must be completed within four months.

Appendix 7: Thesis preparation and examination appendix

THESIS ADVISORY AND EXAMINATION COMMITTEES

Within one month of the passing the Comprehensive Examination, the student must select a Thesis Advisory Committee (TAC) in consultation with the thesis advisor, Program Director, and GTC. The TAC must consist of three UCD|AMC faculty members (including the thesis advisor) who are members of the RHSC Program Faculty with graduate faculty status. The inclusion of additional Committee members with special expertise from outside UCD|AMC is encouraged if appropriate. The TAC Chair must be an RHSC faculty member and cannot be the primary thesis advisor. Members of the Comprehensive Examination Committee may be invited to serve on the Thesis Advisory Committee. The TAC must be approved by the Program Director. It is recommended that the Thesis Advisory Committee be the same as the Comprehensive Examination Committee.

The TAC is required to meet as a group with the student at least once each year and will provide formal permission to write the dissertation once sufficient data have been collected and analyzed. Records of the meetings and of student progress will be kept in a file in the RHSC Program office. These records will include the meeting time, date, place, attendees, overview of material discussed, and recommendations to student. Each record must be signed by the student and TAC Chair prior to submission to the RHSC administrator. Students must take the initiative in scheduling all TAC meetings. If a student fails to have a TAC meeting in the preceding 12 months, s/he will not be permitted to register for subsequent academic terms. Once the student is in compliance with this rule, s/he will be permitted to register.

Although it is recommended that the Thesis Advisory Committee be the same as the Thesis Examination Committee, the two need not be identical. The Thesis Examination Committee will attend the student's public thesis defense and will subsequently administer a final oral examination based on both the written thesis and the public defense.

THESIS ADVISORY COMMITTEE (TAC) MEETINGS

No more than six months after the comprehensive exam, each student will schedule a closed Thesis Proposal Meeting with the TAC outlining the rationale for and method of approach to the student's proposed thesis research project, along with a timeline for completion. The meeting provides both the student and the advisor with an opportunity to receive ideas and constructive criticism from a broad spectrum of individuals, ensuring that the proposed project is both suitable and feasible. Subsequent to the Thesis Proposal Meeting, students must schedule Thesis Progress Update Meetings with the TAC at least once a year. These meetings allow the student to obtain feedback on their progress and results to date, and to inform the committee of any changes to the initial thesis aims, approach, or timeline. The TAC may request a greater frequency of thesis progress meetings at any time it is deemed necessary.

Research in Progress seminars provide an opportunity for the TAC to review the student's progress and to invite input from faculty and peers, as well as afford the student opportunities to practice their presentation skills. The Research in Progress seminar cannot be used as a substitute for mandatory annual, closed-door meetings with the TAC.

THE DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY THESIS

A student must present his or her research results and plans to the TAC at annual meetings after advancing to candidacy. The Program Director, upon recommendation from the TAC Chair, must approve the thesis prior to the defense. Once approved, the student is responsible for scheduling the Thesis Defense. The student must be registered for five thesis credit hours in the semester of the thesis defense and must fill out required forms for scheduling an examination at least 4 weeks before the Thesis Defense date. Students defending between semesters must register for the subsequent semester. Instructions and Requests to Schedule the PhD Thesis Defense can be obtained from the Graduate School Office or [website](#).

The Ph.D. thesis will follow the rules of the University of Colorado. All Ph.D. theses **must** conform to Graduate School formatting specifications. Consult the Thesis Specifications at the [Graduate School](#) website under Format Guide for Theses and Dissertations for specific instructions. Students must also schedule a mandatory thesis pre-check with the Graduate School no later than 2 weeks prior to the Thesis Defense. Students should call 303-724-2915 to schedule a pre-check appointment. One or two formally approved, laser printed copy(ies) of the thesis, plus one additional copy of the title page and abstract, must be submitted to the Graduate School office at least two weeks before the date on which the degree is to be conferred. This date is different than the Thesis Defense date and can be obtained by contacting the Graduate School regarding the specific date for each graduation period. Regardless of the thesis submission deadline date for any graduation period, the final thesis must be submitted to the Graduate School no later than 60 days after the thesis defense. Students who fail to meet this deadline may be asked to re-defend their thesis. Information regarding electronic submission, fees, and required forms is provided on the [Graduate School website](#). All questions regarding the electronic thesis submission process should be directed to the Graduate School at 303-724-2915.

The thesis is partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy and is based on original research demonstrating mature scholarship, critical judgment, and familiarity with the methods of research. The quality of the work is to be that upheld by peer-reviewed journals in the field. Students must provide each member of the TAC a finalized draft of the thesis at least two weeks before the Thesis Defense date.

The RHSC Program has adopted the following standard format for the written thesis, which may be modified only with prior permission from the Program Director and GTC. Aside from Graduate School formatting specifications (see above), there are no specific formatting requirements or page limitations for the written thesis. Students are encouraged to contact the Program Director to review a variety of theses submitted by RHSC graduates for examples.

Chapter I: Introduction and Specific Aims. Includes a concise overview of the broad conceptual model used to formulate the specific aims of each study included in the thesis project. Specific aims and hypothesis must be explicitly stated, in addition to the projected long-term impact on the field.

Chapter II: Background. Includes an exhaustive review and critical analysis of existing literature in the field (e.g. theoretical constructs, experimental approaches, current state of knowledge, etc.), with the goal of demonstrating a comprehensive knowledge of the field and identifying gaps in existing

knowledge that will be addressed by the thesis project.

Chapters III-.... Each chapter includes the Abstract, Background, Methods, Results, and Discussion for a single study included in the thesis project. All studies included in the thesis should relate to a common conceptual model, as presented in the Introduction. The contents of each chapter should be consistent with that required for submission of a peer-reviewed manuscript. It is expected that at least one chapter will have been accepted for publication prior to the Thesis Defense, and that all chapters will ultimately be submitted for publication (preferably before the date of graduation). Three to five chapters/studies are generally recommended, although this will depend on the scope of each study included in the thesis project.

Final Chapter: Conclusion. Includes a concise summary and integration of novel findings from the thesis project. Major findings from each study should be highlighted and discussed in the context of a common conceptual model. Implications for the field of study and future research directions should be included.

For the public Thesis Defense, the student must prepare a 45-minute oral presentation summarizing the Rationale, Specific Aims and Hypotheses, Experimental Approach, Results, and Conclusions for all studies included in the thesis project. Following the public presentation and questions from the audience, the Thesis Examination Committee will question the student in a closed session. The presentation and oral defense will last approximately 2-3 hours. At the conclusion of questioning, the student will be dismissed, and the Committee will discuss and evaluate performance on the examination in a private session. The student will then be summoned back into the room and informed of the examination results.

THESIS EXAMINATION RESULTS

PASS

Requires affirmative votes from a majority of Thesis Examination Committee members

PASS WITH CONDITIONS

The committee may feel that, although a student has passed the examination, s/he should complete additional work on the thesis. These conditions will be specified in writing by the Committee and must be satisfied within 60 days of the defense.

FAIL

A student who fails the examination will be immediately dismissed from the Graduate School.