Timeline for Degree Completion for Epidemiology PhD Students

The target time for completing the PhD in Epidemiology is approximately 5 years, though the precise time will depend upon the details of the selected research project and the performance of the student. Beyond the comprehensive exam at the end of the second year of study, it is expected that most students will dedicate 100% of their effort towards research, completing all remaining courses and requirements of the degree program, and professional development.

Year 1
- Core and elective coursework
- Seminars and activities required by program and/or funding source
- Receive 1st year evaluation (rubric) from the Faculty Advisor
- Annual evaluation, due each academic year no later than June 30 [form link]
- Attend relevant professional development seminars

Year 2
- Core and elective coursework
- Teaching Assistantship (TA)
- Seminars and activities required by program and/or funding source
- Explore possible research topics with Faculty Advisor
- Comprehensive Examination by June 1
- Annual evaluation, due each academic year no later than June 30 [form link]
- Attend relevant professional development seminars

Years 3-4
- Complete any remaining coursework
- Research Assistantship (RA)
- Teaching Assistantship (TA)
- Selection of dissertation topic and research advisor by the end of Fall of Year 3
- Present research progress seminar in Spring of Year 3 (Epidemiology Seminar Series)
- Select dissertation committee by the end of Spring of Year 3
- At least one committee meeting prior to the Qualifying Examination (two or more are recommended)
- Qualifying Examination (i.e. pass dissertation proposal to advance to candidacy) by October of Year 4
- Proceed with dissertation research if Qualifying Examination is passed
- Seminars and activities required by program and/or funding source
- Annual committee meetings
- Annual evaluation from dissertation advisor/committee, due each academic year no later than June 30 [form link]
- Submit academic research papers for publication as first author or co-author
- Attend and present research at scientific conferences
- Attend relevant professional development seminars
• Write a fellowship or dissertation grant application

**Year 5**

• Conclude data collection and analysis and write thesis
• Research Assistantship (RA)
• Seminars and activities required by program and/or funding source
• Attend relevant professional development seminars
• Annual committee meetings
• Annual evaluation from dissertation advisor/committee, due each academic year no later than June 30 [form link](#)
• Submit academic research papers for publication as first author or co-author
• Attend and present research at scientific conferences
• Search and interview for postdoc/employment
• At least two committee meetings to discuss dissertation findings and interpretation
• Complete dissertation and final oral defense by end of Year 5
• Graduate with PhD

**Related Policies and Standards**

*Time to Degree Standard*

The School of Medicine and Dentistry Committee on Graduate Studies has adopted a 5-6 year time-to-degree standard for PhD degree completion to ensure that students make timely progress toward completion of their degree objectives. The stipend is not guaranteed beyond the end of the 6th year of study (starting with the incoming class of 2015).

*Grades*

The University of Rochester School of Medicine and Dentistry requires satisfactory academic performance and accomplishment in research and coursework for all students. This satisfactory performance is mandatory for continuation in good academic standing in the graduate program.

[link to C or Below Grade Policy](#)

*Selection of Advisor*

All students are strongly encouraged to select a permanent dissertation research advisor by December 1 of the third academic year.

*Selection of Dissertation Committee*

All students are required to select a dissertation committee, following University and SMD guidelines for the composition of members, no later than the end of Spring of Year 3. The full dissertation committee has to be established and at least one committee meeting needs to be held prior to scheduling the Qualifying Examination (i.e. dissertation proposal).

*Annual Evaluation*

Annual evaluations are required for all PhD students in the School of Medicine and Dentistry. Evaluations are due to the Senior Associate Dean for Graduate Education no later than June 30 of each academic year.
Publication Expectations
All students are expected to be the primary author on a peer-reviewed journal article submitted for publication prior to defending their PhD research.

Qualifying Examination Requirement
All students are required to pass a Comprehensive Examination and subsequent Qualifying Examination to advance to doctoral candidacy. Students are strongly encouraged to schedule their Qualifying Examination no later than October of Year 4. Students should refer to their program-specific advancement to doctoral candidacy requirements in program handbooks published each admission year.

Teaching Assistant Requirement
The teaching requirement is to be fulfilled by serving for at least two semesters as a Teaching Assistant (TA). The duties of a TA may include, but are not limited to tutoring students, conducting problem solving sessions, preparing and supervising laboratory sessions, giving lectures, and grading homework assignments and examinations.

Performance Standard on Required Milestones and Exams
If a student fails to pass a comprehensive examination or qualifying examination, cannot find a thesis advisor, cannot form a thesis committee, or fails to meet other program, SMD or University standards, the Graduate Program Director may recommend academic probation or academic dismissal to the Senior Associate Dean for Graduate Education.

When considering academic probation or academic dismissal, the Senior Associate Dean for Graduate Education expects documentation indicating that the student received substantial written feedback regarding his or her specific deficiencies. Students must be provided with sufficient opportunities to fulfill the unmet standard(s).