Doctorate in Professional Studies (DPS) in Bioethics
With a Concentration in Health Ethics and Policy

Qualifying Exams

General Description
In order for a student to begin work on the final Research Project for the doctoral degree, she/he must first demonstrate proficiency in knowledge of, and familiarity with, health ethics and policy as evidenced by successful completion of required core courses (AMBI 606, 615, 617 and 721) plus 3 elective courses. A cumulative grade point average of 3.0 must be achieved prior to undertaking the research project (AMBI 800). Students may not register for AMBI 800 without successfully passing the qualifying exams.

The Oral Qualifying Exam in Health Ethics and Policy (herein referred to as the oral exam) will consist of 2 parts: 1) A discussion of one health ethics and one health policy case, and 2) A discussion and defense of a DPS Research Project proposal. Students will discuss both the cases and the project proposal at the oral exam (20 min each for the health ethics, case, health policy case, and project proposal) and must be able to answer questions and defend their arguments with the Examination Committee. The oral exam will be conducted via teleconference or possibly by video conferencing.

Examination Committee: The Examination Committee will consist at a minimum of two faculty including the student’s first reader and another faculty member.

1) Discussing Health Ethics and Policy Cases at the Oral Exam
The oral exam will cover a health ethics case and a health policy case based on general content covered in the core and elective courses. Students will be required to demonstrate an advanced understanding of the value conflicts in particular areas of health ethics and policy as well as an advance understanding for ethical and policy analysis. Students are expected to articulate and expand on both the ethical and policy dimensions of each case and critically evaluate arguments for and against different points. They should be able to make appropriate ethical distinctions and observations; understand the proper role of the bioethicist as a health and policy analyst and the points at which professional boundaries might be crossed; engage in self-reflection and self-assessment and the ways in which one’s own objectivity may be limited; and the characteristics that lend themselves to being a successful bioethicist (knowledge, tolerance, compassion, honesty, humility, creativity, etc.). The oral exam will be structured to assess each student’s knowledge of the areas of health ethics and policy and her/his ability to analyze, discuss and offer constructive insight into health ethics and policy. Please note that while the ethics and policy cases have precise questions and limited readings, the faculty may move beyond the actual case.

The health ethics and health policy cases will be chosen by the faculty examiners comprising the Examination Committee. The two case descriptions will be emailed to the student 24 hours prior to the time of the exam and the student will need to confirm by email receipt of the cases. The student will be given 24 hours to review the cases and will then comprehensively discuss and answer questions with the examiners on the date of the oral exam.

2) Discussing the Research Project Proposal at the Oral Exam
Within the oral exam, the student will also be asked questions surrounding their Research Project Proposal. The purpose of discussing the Research Project Proposal is to allow the student to demonstrate her/his readiness to begin work on the AMBI 800 Research Project. The student must work with their Research Project first reader on an outline of the project. This should not involve any other faculty other than the first reader. Once the outline of
the Research Project is satisfactory to both the supervisor and the student, the student must email the proposal 2 days prior to the oral exam date to all members comprising the Examination Committee.

**Type:** The research project can be either a theoretical (conceptual) or an empirical research study, or some combination of both and is to be agreed upon by the student and the supervisor. The outcome of the research project can be in one of the following formats: 1) two journal style articles, or 2) extended scholarly paper or 3) applied project in the student’s professional work environment (see the AMBI 800 course description for details).

**Format:** The format of the proposal will include: 1) the title of the project, 2) a background section and a brief rationale of why the topic is important to health ethics and policy, 3) a problem statement and the very precise research question(s) that will be addressed, 4) the method/approach that will be used to explore and analyze the proposed topic, 5) the expected results or conclusions that could be drawn, and 6) an appropriate bibliography for the proposed topic that will be updated as the research progresses.

**Note:** The proposal should be about 750-1000 words (excluding references) and must be written clearly and precisely with the above sections of the format clearly labeled. And only after the supervisor and the student have come to a reasonable outline should the oral exam be scheduled. We advise that the students work on an outline with their supervisor prior to scheduling an oral exam date.

The Examination Committee will determine whether the student demonstrates a clear and thoughtful plan for moving the proposal forward including a thorough literature search, identification of a viable research question or practical need, and a timeframe for completion.

**Upon Completion of the Oral Exam**
The student will be notified of her/his grade within 3 days upon completion of the oral exam. If the student fails one or both cases, or the research project proposal has flaws, or the student inadequately defends it, the student will be given two weeks to remediate one or more portions of the oral exam. Once the student has successfully completed the oral exam, she/he will be able to register for AMBI 800.

**Timeline for DPS in Bioethics with a Concentration in Health Ethics and Policy**
1. The student has completed the minimal course requirements and has declared an interest to undertake Oral Qualifying Exam.
2. An Examination Committee consisting of a minimum of two faculty and must include the Research Project first reader will be developed.
3. If the Research Project Proposal is suitable by both the first reader and student, an appointment is scheduled for the Oral Qualifying Exam.
4. The student is emailed two health ethics and policy cases 24 hours prior to the oral examination date and must acknowledge receipt.
5. The student must send the Research Project Proposal 2 days prior to the oral exam date and the Examination Committee must acknowledge receipt.
6. After the oral exam is completed, a pass/fail grade will be provided to the student within 3 days.
7. If the student receives a failing grade for either the health ethics or policy cases, or the Research Project Proposal, the student must remediate one or more components within 2 weeks.
8. Once the student has successfully passed the oral exam, they may register for AMBI 800 and begin work.

There is a 7 year limit for obtaining a degree according to Albany Medical College guidelines.