

Social & Behavioural Health Sciences PhD Program

Open House

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SBHS Vision & Mission

Vision

- Our vision is to enhance the flourishing of people, communities and the planet through understanding, supporting or transforming the social-political structures, policies, processes and practices to create and sustain well-being and health equity.

Mission

- Our collective mission is the pursuit of well-being, health equity, social and environmental justice through engagement in mutual learning with multiple communities and ways of knowing, teaching, research and advocacy using a critical social science lens.

Objectives

(1) Reciprocal Learning & Mentorship

- Builds on diverse knowledges and lived experience
- Expands horizons and multiple ways of knowing
- Fosters critical reflexivity about power, privilege & positionality
- Connects theory and practice

(2) Advancing Research

- Co-produced with affected communities & frontline staff
- Deepens understanding of social, political, economic & ecological determinants of health
- Identifies pathways for inclusive systems change

(3) Service & Advocacy

- Contributes to academic, professional & community networks
- Mobilizes diverse knowledges for social, public & planetary health
- Speaks truth to power to advance progressive change

Key Commitments

The division fosters:

- **Multidisciplinary Scholarship** grounded in a broad array of theoretical and disciplinary perspectives and research methods;
- **Critical approaches** with attention to underlying assumptions, power relations, social, political and economic factors;
 - This includes the use **of critical social science perspectives**;
- **Active Engagement** with current and future public health practitioners, policymakers, educators and researchers;
- **Collaboration** with community organizations, scholarly institutions, government and non-governmental organizations locally, nationally and internationally;
- **Knowledge exchange** that influences policy and practice.

SBHS faculty – core/paid

1. Amaya Perez-Brumer (sabbatical)
2. Angela Mashford Pringle
3. Billie-Jo Hardie
4. Carol Strike
5. Daniel Grace
6. Erica Di Ruggiero
7. Francisco Ibanez-Carrasco
8. Kazumi Tsuchiya
9. Lisa Forman
10. Lori Ross

11. Melanie Jeffrey
12. Roberta Timothy (sabbatical)
13. Sandra Newton
14. Sarah Elton
15. Ethsi (Suzanne) Stewart

Budgetary Cross appointees:

- Andrea Cortinois
- 11 Nonbudgetary cross appointees
- 101 Status only/adjunct/emeritus

Examples of SBHS Division scholarship

- Development of innovative **quantitative & qualitative research approaches**;
- Application of **social science theories** to public health scholarship;
- Use of **historical and critical approaches** to understand the context and factors influencing public health and health care policy;
- Improvement of **public health policy and practice** through research and health promotion;
- Examination of the **impact of social inequities on health across life course**;
- Exploration of the role of **social determinants of health** in preventing disease and improving well-being;
- Current examples of foci include ***the social determinants of health, smoke-free policies, gambling, addictions and mental health, HIV and STI treatment and prevention, environmental health justice, social movements, use of AI in public health, housing, global health policy, gender and health, Indigenous health, youth, occupational health and safety, 2S/LGBTQ+ health equity...***

SBHS Program Requirements

Courses (6)

Qualifying Exam

Proposal Defense

Thesis

Thesis Defense

Dalla Lana
School of Public Health

Overview of 4-year Timeline

Year 1

- **Intake meeting with Program Director, student, and supervisor(s)** (no later than **November 15**).
- Student applies for **competitive awards**, **Research Assistant** positions, and **Teaching Assistant** positions for which they are eligible.
- Establish **supervisory committee** (no later than **May 15**).
- Complete **4 Required Courses**: 2.0/3.0 FCE (no later than **August 30**); *additional elective courses may also be taken*.
- Complete **Qualifying Examination (QE)** (writing period **May 15-June 30**; submitted by **June 30**).
- **Foundational dissertation and proposal work** (e.g., literature review, developing objectives/research questions).
- Have **at least one full committee meeting** to discuss key program milestones (no later than **August 30**).

Timeline for fulltime students
(not flextime)

Key Milestones & Activities

Year 2

- Student applies for **competitive awards**, **Research Assistant** positions, and **Teaching Assistant** positions for which they are eligible (**ongoing Y2-Y4**).
- Complete **SBHS proposal development course** (**September-December** - *starting September 2026*) - *optional but highly recommended*.
- **Complete coursework** if have any remaining (no later than **August 30**)
- Complete **student activity report** (**October/November**).
- **Draft and revise dissertation proposal** (submit defense version of the proposal to committee and external reviewer no later than **January 31**; schedule and hold proposal defense with committee no later than **February 28**).
- **Submit ethics application to REB** (submit no later than **March 31**); revise as needed to **receive REB approval**.
- **Begin intensive dissertation work** (e.g., data collection, preliminary analysis).
- Have **at least two full committee meetings**.

Key Milestones & Activities

Year 3

- Student applies for **competitive awards**, **Research Assistant** positions, and **Teaching Assistant** positions for which they are eligible (**ongoing Y3-Y4**).
- Complete **student activity report (October/November)**.
- Continued **intensive dissertation work** (e.g., data collection, analysis, and writing).
- Additional coursework to support analysis and writing (*optional*).
- Have **at least two full committee meetings**.

Key Milestones & Activities

Year 4

- Student applies for **competitive awards**, **Research Assistant** positions, and **Teaching Assistant** positions for which they are eligible.
- **Complete dissertation writing** (e.g., writing and revisions based on committee feedback).
- Complete **student activity report (October/November)**.
- Have **full committee meetings** as needed.
- Student will outline a **timeline for degree completion with the committee**, to help ensure the final writing, revision, and defense milestones are reached.
- Consider applications for **Postdoctoral Fellowships**.
- Schedule, prepare, and complete **Departmental Defense** (*optional*).
- **Schedule and prepare for Final Oral Examination (FOE)**.
- **Complete FOE** (no later than **August 30**).
- **Submit final revisions** to dissertation (*as required*; no later than **September 15**).
- ***Celebrate the completion of your doctorate!***

Key Milestones & Activities

6 Required Courses

2 Theory Courses

- CHL5101H: *Social and Behavioural Theory and Health*
- CHL5102H: *Social & Political Forces in Health*

2 Research Methods Courses

- Recommend proficiency in either quantitative or qualitative and working knowledge of other

2 Electives (from DLSPH or beyond)

Qualifying Exam (QE)

- Overseen by PhD Program Director
- Purpose - evaluate suitability to continue in the doctoral program
- Focus on **capacity to understand and apply theoretical traditions covered in required theory courses**
- Evaluated on a paper written **May-June of the first year**
- Graded by supervisor and another SBHS faculty member

Proposal Defense

- **Purpose: help ensure proposed research will lead to successful PhD dissertation**
- 10-15 pages (single-spaced) proposal evaluated by committee and external assessor
- Defense is with committee at meeting scheduled expressly for this purpose
- Committee approves proposal considering feedback from external assessor
- Completed in the second year
- ***Optional Proposal course to support writing (new fall 2026)***

Achieving Candidacy



Dissertation

Format – governed by the School of Graduate Studies

Option a: Monograph

Option b: 3 manuscripts published of publishable quality + introduction, conclusion and additional chapters as required*

**The most popular approach*

Recent Thesis Titles

Bordering in Canadian health care: How the "birth tourism" discourse determines deservingness of health coverage and undermines the right to health
Complex MAiD Bereavement Stories: A Critical Narrative Analysis of Family Members' Discordance, Pain, Dignity, and Wisdom
Continuity and Coordination of Cancer Care: A Mixed Methods Study of a Web-Based Communication System
The sexual subjectivity of youth with physical disabilities: An arts-based study in Ontario, Canada.
An Investigation of the Decision-Making Process for Psychedelic Self-Treatment of Depression and Anxiety in Online Communities
Policy Stakeholder Framings of the Canadian Overdose Crisis: Implications for Public Health, the Opioid Industry, and Framing Coalitions
Understanding how the lives and experiences of South Asian women living in Ontario shape their decisions around getting screened for cervical cancer: a concept mapping study.
A Reparative Analysis of Dating App Use and Wellbeing Among Queer Adults in Canada: A Mixed Methods Study
Safe Supply, Housing, and Social Services as Gendered Phenomena: Implications on the Ontological Security of Women who use Drugs
Child sex trafficking identification and response in Ontario pediatric emergency departments: An intersectional mixed methods study
A Critical Narrative Inquiry into the Experiences of Queer, Trans and Nonbinary Midwifery Service-users in Ontario
Advancing Queer Reproductive Justice: Examining Access to Assisted Reproductive Technologies and Family Expansion for 2SLGBTQ+ Black, Indigenous, and People of Colour
Feeling Climate Change: Experiences of Ecological Emotions on Urban Farms
Opioid agonist therapy during pregnancy: A feminist community-engaged mixed methods study

Research Centres & Institutes

- Centre for Critical Qualitative Health Research
- Waakebiness Institute for Indigenous Health
- Institute for Pandemics
- Centre for Vaccine Preventable Diseases
- Joint Centre for Bioethics
- Ontario Tobacco Research Unit (OTRU)
- Centre for Global Health
- RISE Centre for Queer and Trans Health Research

Funding Policy & Applying for External Funding

- For students, notifications about award opportunities and procedures will come from the Graduate Office
- Questions about the funding package and logistics: contact Ellen Sokoloff
 - Ellen.Sokoloff@utoronto.ca
- Please see the **funding policy here (applies to Full time PhD students)**:
<https://www.dlsph.utoronto.ca/academic-policies/phd-funding-policy-for-phs-students-2025-26/>
 - Check out the **GradHUB**:
<https://www.sgs.utoronto.ca/gradhub/>
 - Academic support
 - Supervision support
 - Professional development



Full-Time and Flex-Time Status

- All Doctoral students are required to be continuously registered in every session, including summers.
- **Full-time** Doctoral students pay FT fees for the duration of their program (during the normal time limit for degree completion).
- The PhD program does not have a Part-time option. Instead, students are admitted to **Flexible-time** studies. The Flexible-time program is designed for PhD students who are “practicing professionals” actively engaged in work activities. These students are registered as full-time, and pay full-time fees, for four years after which they may transfer to part-time attendance status. *It is highly recommended that PhD Flexible-time students speak with their Program Director and thesis supervisor to map out their program in order to achieve milestones in a timely manner. **Also see Funding Policy.***

Sample of Faculty who may be accepting full time (or flextime) PhD students in 2026/27*

- ☐ Arif Jetha
- ☐ Jillian Kohler
- ☐ Daisy R. Singla
- ☐ Melanie Barwick
- ☐ Clara Juando-Prats
- ☐ Sarah Elton
- ☐ Daniel Grace

Reaching out to possible supervisors early (prior to applying) is a good idea, but is not required.

You don't need to have a confirmed supervisor at the time of application, but identifying one or more supervisors you are interested in working with is always encouraged.

*** Currently have full or partial funding to support students**

Note: Some (many) faculty may not be able to accept fulltime students due to funding, but may be open to flextime students. If you are considering the flextime option (e.g., you are working full time during your degree), you may want to note this when reaching out to prospective supervisors. Also please see Funding Policy for further details and to be sure if this option is right for you.

Identifying Supervisors & Searching the DLSPH faculty database

- <https://www.dlsph.utoronto.ca/faculty-profile/>
- **You can filter by:**
 - Name
 - Research Interest
 - Division
 - SGS Status (Supervisors must have *Full membership* to be able to supervise students)
 - Accepting students (useful tool, but not always up-to-date).
- **Click on name for more info**

	
Faculty Member	
Arif Jetha	
PhD	
Email Address(es)	AJetha@tlwh.on.ca
Office Phone	416-927-2027 ext 2229
Office Address	Institute for Work Health 400 University Ave Suite 1800 Toronto, ON M5G 1S5
Website(s)	Institute for Work & Health
Division(s)/Institute(s)	Institute for Pandemics Social & Behavioural Health Sciences Division
Position	Associate Professor
SGS Status	Full Member
Appointment Status	Affiliated Scientist - Status Only
Admin Faculty Appointment	Social & Behavioural Health Science
Currently Accepting Doctoral Students?	Yes
Research Interests	
• Future of work and its impact on vulnerable workers • Artificial intelligence and changing working conditions • Intersection between the work environment and health and social inequities	

Important dates

- **Applications due** – November 21, 2025
 - * \$125 application fee
- **Offer of Admission** – February/March 2026
- **Start of Academic Year** – September 2026 (in-person)

What is evaluated to determine acceptance

Documents:

- Letter of intent
- Resume/curriculum vitae
- Academic transcripts
- Letters of reference

Attention to equity, diversity, and inclusion (EDI) across all components of application

- Proactively seeking to increase the already rich diversity within our student body
- We particularly welcome students who can demonstrate a commitment to anti-racism/EDI work and/or knowledge (including from lived experience) about EDI
- We aim to be attentive to how systemic oppressions impact on an individual candidate's opportunities to achieve traditional academic metrics (e.g., volunteer experience, mentorship opportunities)

Criteria for Evaluating Applications

Minimum criteria for doctoral studies at DLSPH

- Master's degree in a public health science-related discipline, with a minimum A- standing
- Demonstrated educational and/or professional experience that indicates a capacity to undertake research-oriented doctoral studies

SBHS specific

- Is this an exceptional student?
- Is there an excellent fit between what they need and what we can offer?
- How many spots to do we have this year?
- Is there a good supervisor match?

Note: We have a *broad reading* of what Master's degrees are good preparation for an SBHS PhD including but not limited to health science and social science Master's degrees

Criteria for Evaluating Applications

Letter of intent (2 pages)

- Tells the story of your scientific or other inspiration to pursue further study in a particular area of inquiry
- Explain why this area is important – to you, to the field
- Tell us about your background that positions you to do this work (skills, experience – professional and otherwise)
- What do you hope to learn/achieve during your PhD?
- Why is the SBHS PhD ideal for you to do this?
- What faculty members have the necessary expertise to supervise/support you?

Curriculum Vitae

- Appropriateness of academic training/degree for doctoral training in SBHS
- Awards/scholarships
- Scientific publications
- Other publications
- Presentations
- Work experience (paid or otherwise)

Criteria for Evaluating Applications

Academic Transcripts

- Coursework (esp. in social sciences, methodology)
- Grades
- Information on international equivalencies: <https://www.sgs.utoronto.ca/future-students/admission-application-requirements/international-credentials-equivalencies/>

2 Letters of Reference:

- Are the letters from people in a position to assess:
 - academic ability
 - potential contribution of research ideas
- What is the assessment of the referees?
 - Select referees who are most credible, who know your work, and who can write the strongest letters of recommendation

Program & School Contacts

- SBHS Administration Support - Marija Vasilevska: sbhs.dlsph@utoronto.ca
- PhD Program Director– Daniel Grace: daniel.grace@utoronto.ca
- SBHS Division Head and DLSPH Associate Dean – Carol Strike: Carol.strike@utoronto.ca
- DLSPH Graduate Office - Ellen Sokoloff: Ellen.Sokoloff@utoronto.ca
- PHS Graduate Coordinator – Olli Saarela: oli.saarela@utoronto.ca

Please reach out if you have any questions!

Dalla Lana
School of Public Health

Questions?

