

## **HSC PhD Program Policy on First Author Publication Requirement for Graduation (Effective January 2025)**

### **HSC Policy on First-Author Publication for Degree Completion (2024-2025)**

HSC PhD students must have a **minimum of one first-author manuscript related to their dissertation research** accepted, in press, or published before being certified to graduate. This policy applies to all PhD programs within the Schools of Medicine, Nursing, Public Health, and Pharmacy.

While the HSC PhD Program has a minimum first-author publication requirement for graduation, individual graduate programs may have additional authorship requirements. *These additional requirements may be more rigorous but not less so.* Any further publication requirements must be reviewed by the Assistant Vice President for Graduate Education and approved by the Associate Provost for Graduate Academic Affairs. This process ensures transparency and fairness in the academic evaluation process.

### **Degree Certification and Timing of Defense:**

Certification of a student to graduate only takes place when the student has successfully:

- Completed all coursework.
- Completed all program requirements with all documentation present in the student's file (including the first author paper)
- Successfully passed their dissertation defense
- Had their ETD accepted by the library

A student may defend their dissertation before the final acceptance of the first-author paper. *Still, the paper must have been submitted with positive feedback from the journal, indicating likely acceptance.* The individuals making this determination that the defense can proceed before paper acceptance are the graduate program director (in consultation with the student's committee as deemed appropriate) and the Assistant Vice President for Graduate Education. They are to be provided with documentation from the journal for consideration. Their approval is conveyed through their two signatures on the official Request to Schedule Final Defense Form. This allows students to proceed with the defense but does not exempt them from the first-author paper acceptance requirement to graduate.

### **Joint first-author manuscripts:**

In the case of joint first-author manuscripts, the publication can typically only fulfill this requirement for one author. However, there are situations where the body of work is substantial and high impact enough to warrant inclusion in the dissertations of two students. For a joint paper to meet the first-author requirement for two students, both

authors must make very distinct and significant contributions to a large and impactful study that will be included, in part, in both dissertations. The contributions must be clearly independent and distinct, each warranting a unique chapter within the dissertation document. The determination as to whether the published research is “large and impactful” will be determined by the student’s respective dissertation advisory committees. The dissertation advisory committee must unanimously endorse the quality and quantity of the work meeting this requirement. For the final approval of a joint first-author manuscript meeting the graduation requirement for two students, there must be unanimous agreement among the paper’s senior author, the mentor(s) of both PhD students, and the respective graduate program director.

### **6<sup>th</sup> Year (and beyond) Considerations**

In cases where a student is in their 6<sup>th</sup> year of doctoral study or beyond and has completed all other degree requirements except having the final acceptance of a first-author paper related to their dissertation work, certification of the degree may be granted in the following circumstances:

#### Awaiting final acceptance of a promising paper.

- A manuscript submitted to a journal has been returned from peer review, requesting the authors to revise and resubmit. The revision request must not require a significant paper overhaul or new experiments or studies. The primary mentor, dissertation advisory committee, and program director all endorse acceptance as the likely outcome after reviewing journal feedback based on their expertise.
- The student is expected to participate actively in the editing and resubmitting. However, the student will not be delayed in obtaining their degree if the process requires them to enroll in an additional semester, taking them into their seventh year of study. If the student does not fulfill their commitment in the publication resubmission process, their original authorship position may change at the discretion of the senior (corresponding) author.

**Note:** *Students who graduate without all the papers published in their dissertation work are not guaranteed the original authorship position depending on the amount of work and writing required to finalize the publication. This is at the discretion of the senior/corresponding author of the paper and should be discussed and agreed upon before the student finalizing their graduation.*

## **Appeal of First-Author Paper Program Requirement**

If a student has completed their fifth year of study (or third year in the School of Public Health) and all other degree requirements except for the acceptance of a first-author manuscript, **they may appeal the requirement to graduate** if they believe that due process was not followed or that a penalty was imposed unfairly or inconsistently with course, program, and university standards and regulations. This may include their belief that reflects a capricious, arbitrary, or prejudiced evaluation or reflects discrimination based on criteria listed in [BOG Governance Rule 1.6, Section 1.2](#). Examples may include significant delays in response time by coauthors after the planned work for the manuscript has been completed and a manuscript drafted for submission, unusual delays in initiation and management of the review process on the part of the publisher, conflicts among collaborating co-author faculty which significantly delay the submission and review process, lack of access to the financial resources necessary to finalize the publication due to journal fees, failure of the university or other entity to give clearance for publication due to Intellectual Property or other issues not related to the quality and integrity of the research. Other reasons for appeal and the specific appeal process for each program can be found in program-specific handbooks.

Individuals and committees reviewing appeals may convene individual or joint meetings or request additional materials to collect further evidence. The student may be accompanied to meetings concerning appeals by a person of his or her choice from the institution. Such advisors may consult with but may not speak on behalf of their advisees or otherwise participate directly in the proceedings unless they are given specific permission by the individual or committee conducting the appeal.

Students are strongly encouraged (but not required) to discuss with their dissertation advisory committee chair and faculty mentor before filing an appeal.

### **Level 1 Appeal Process for all PhD students: Appeal to PhD Program**

- The student may begin an appeal by submitting a written appeal via WVU e-mail to their primary PhD Program Director (reviewer). The student's appeal must consist of the documentation and evidence forming the basis of their appeal.
- The student's primary mentor, advisory committee chair, or advisory committee members should provide information to the appeal reviewers upon request with a copy of any information they provide given to the student.
- The appeal reviewer(s) assesses the available evidence and consults with those involved in making programmatic decisions to decide about the appeal based on the presented evidence.
  - Note: This appeal review process should be outlined at the program level, based on which individuals or bodies are involved in the decision-making. For example, the reviewer may interface with an affiliated department chair, a scholarship committee, or a program advisory committee.

- Within ten days, the PhD Program Director communicates the decision in writing via WVU e-mail to the student, dissertation advisory committee chair, and the HSC Assistant Vice President for Graduate Education. The reviewer (program director) retains all documentation related to the appeal for five years.
- If the student accepts the Level 1 appeal decision, the appeal is concluded.
- If the student does not accept the Level 1 appeal, they may continue their appeal by appealing to the Graduate Programs-Committee on Academic and Professional Standards (GP-CAPS) if they are a student in the biomedical or clinical and translational sciences umbrella program OR to the respective school dean for students in programs within the Schools of Nursing, Pharmacy, and Public Health.

### **Level 2 Appeal Process for students in the Schools of Nursing and Public Health or the PhD program in Health Services and Outcomes Research**

- If the student does not accept the Level 1 appeal decision, they may continue their appeal by submitting a written appeal to the dean or dean's designee of the respective school within ten working days after the decision at Level 1 is sent.
- The Level 1 appeal reviewer (typically PhD program director) forwards all materials included in the appeal to the Level 2 reviewer on request. The student and other involved parties may provide additional information if they wish.
- The Level 2 appeal reviewer assesses the available evidence and consults with appropriate parties to decide the appeal outcome.
- Within ten working days after the student has submitted the appeal, the Level 2 appeal reviewer communicates the decision in writing via WVU e-mail to the student, the Level 1 appeal reviewer, the dissertation advisory committee chair, and the HSC Assistant Vice President for Graduate Education.
- The reviewer retains all documentation related to the appeal for five years.
- The appeal process is concluded at Level 2. The decision of the dean is final.

### **Level 2 Appeal Process for students in the School of Medicine and PhD program in Pharmaceutical and Pharmacological Sciences**

#### Level 2 Appeal: Appeal to the Graduate Programs Committee on Academic and Professional Standards (GP-CAPS)

- If the student does not accept the Level 1 appeal decision, they may continue their appeal with the Health Sciences Center Graduate Programs Committee on Academic and Professional Standards (GP-CAPS) by submitting a written appeal to the HSC Assistant VP for Graduate Education within ten working days after the decision at Level 1 is sent.
- The HSC Assistant VP for Graduate Education will facilitate the Level 2 review with the GP-CAPS Committee Chair.

- The Level 1 appeal reviewer (typically PhD program director) forwards all materials in the appeal to the HSC Assistant VP for Graduate Education and the GP-CAPS Committee Chair upon request. The student and other involved parties may provide additional information if they wish.
- The GP-CAPS will assess the available evidence and consult with appropriate parties in order to make their decision on the appeal outcome.
- Within ten working days of the student submitting the appeal, the GP-CAPS Chair communicates the Level 2 appeal decision in writing via WVU e-mail to the student, the Level 1 appeal reviewer, the dissertation advisory committee chair, and the HSC Assistant VP for Graduate Education.
- The reviewer retains all documentation related to the appeal for five years.
- If the student accepts the Level 2 appeal decision, the appeal is concluded.

### **Level 3 Appeal Process for students in the School of Medicine and PhD program in Pharmaceutical and Pharmacological Sciences**

- If the student does not accept the Level 2 appeal decision, they may continue their appeal by submitting a written appeal to the dean or dean's designee of the respective school within ten working days after the decision at Level 1 is sent.
- The Level 2 appeal reviewer (GP-CAPS Committee Chair or designee) forwards all materials in the appeal to the Level 3 reviewer when requested. The student and other involved parties may provide additional information if they wish.
- The Level 3 appeal reviewer assesses the available evidence and consults with appropriate parties to decide the appeal outcome.
- Within ten working days after the student has submitted the appeal, the Level 3 appeal reviewer communicates the decision in writing via WVU e-mail to the student, the Level 1 and Level 2 appeal reviewer, the dissertation advisory committee chair, and the HSC Assistant VP for Graduate Education.
- The reviewer retains all documentation related to the appeal for five years.
- The appeal process is concluded at Level 3. The decision of the dean is final.

*The appeal process should be handled with absolute discretion and comply with FERPA guidelines. The Assistant VP for Graduate Education may advise during the process and assist involved parties as needed, but they are not a decision-maker in this process.*