

HEALTH CARE ETHICS, PH.D.

Saint Louis University's Doctor of Philosophy in Health Care Ethics prepares students for a successful career in academic, corporate, research or clinical bioethics settings.

Curriculum Overview

SLU's Ph.D. in health care ethics is offered by the Department of Health Care Ethics (<https://www.slu.edu/arts-and-sciences/bioethics/>). The health care ethics Ph.D. integrates an interdisciplinary curriculum with several practica and offers three concentrations to specialize your doctoral studies further.

All students in the traditional Ph.D. in health care ethics program are required to complete 60 credits of coursework in five categories of courses:

- Foundations of health care ethics (12 credits)
- Context of health care (12 credits)
- Disciplinary lens (12 credits)
- Bioethics content (12 credits)
- Dissertation research (12 credits)

With the approval of the Ph.D. program director, up to 12 credits (in 5000-level courses or higher) from previous graduate coursework may count as advanced standing toward the disciplinary lens or bioethics content elective categories. Students pursuing the J.D./Ph.D., M.D./Ph.D., M.A./Ph.D. or the joint Ph.D. in theology and health care ethics follow a modified curriculum.

You may opt to complete a concentration in one of three areas: Catholic tradition, clinical ethics, empirical research methods.

Catholic Tradition Concentration

Students enrolled in the Ph.D. program in health care ethics may take 15 credits of coursework emphasizing health care ethics in the Catholic tradition and write a dissertation (12 credits) in the Catholic tradition to develop expertise in Catholic health care ethics. To enroll in the concentration in health care ethics in the Catholic tradition, students must already hold a master's degree in theology or religious studies or be enrolled in the M.A./Ph.D. dual-degree program.

Clinical Ethics Concentration

Students enrolled in the Ph.D. program in health care ethics may take 15 credits of coursework with an emphasis on clinical ethics (12 credits). They'll also write a dissertation on a topic relevant to clinical ethics to develop clinical health care ethics expertise.

Empirical Research Concentration

With the approval of the concentration directors and the Ph.D. program director, students enrolled in the Ph.D. in health care ethics may complete this concentration to develop expertise in empirical research methods. This concentration prepares students to incorporate empirical methods into a normative dissertation and future research. The focus of the track will be on qualitative research methods (such as ethnography, interviews, focus groups, public deliberation, etc.), though, in consultation with the directors of the concentration, students can adopt quantitative or mixed methods approaches. Completion of the concentration is meant to indicate special competencies over and above those gained in the Ph.D.

program, specifically those pertaining to qualitative empirical research in bioethics.

Students must elect to pursue this concentration by the end of their first semester at the latest. A concentration director must approve the empirical concentration curriculum plan of each student. The concentration requires at least 12 hours of coursework.

Fieldwork and Research Opportunities

All Ph.D. students take a three-semester, 150-hour clinical practicum to gain experience working in a clinical setting. Students interested in the clinical ethics concentration can complete an additional advanced practicum in which students are placed in active clinical ethics consultation services for 300+ hours. In addition to these fieldwork opportunities, most Ph.D. students graduate with two or more publications.

Careers

Professionals from law, medicine, nursing, public health, philosophy and religious studies have joined SLU's Ph.D. program in health care ethics. Our graduates have been highly successful in finding excellent full-time positions both in education (teaching and conducting research in health care ethics) and in health care systems (as professional ethicists).

Admission Requirements

Students entering the Ph.D. program in health care ethics will have an undergraduate or graduate degree in a relevant field, for instance, philosophy, theology, a clinical field, social sciences or law. Successful applicants usually have a high GPA, high GRE percentiles (especially in the verbal and analytical writing categories), a strong normative writing sample and a demonstration of overall fit with the program's educational objectives.

The Catholic Health Association has recommended that ethicists working in Catholic health care with an interdisciplinary Ph.D. degree should additionally hold an M.A. in theology. It is strongly recommended that students who do not already hold an M.A. in theology complete the dual-degree program, offered in collaboration with the Aquinas Institute of Theology. Alternately, students should plan on completing an M.A. prior to commencing work in Catholic health care.

Application Requirements

- Transcript(s)
- Three letters of recommendation
- Résumé
- Writing sample
- Professional goal statement
- Application deadline Dec. 1

Requirements for International Students

All Saint Louis University admission policies and requirements for domestic students apply to international students. International students applying to SLU must also meet the following additional requirements:

- Demonstrate English language proficiency (<https://catalog.slu.edu/academic-policies/office-admission/undergraduate/english-language-proficiency/>)
- Academic records must include an English translation. Unofficial copies may be accepted in some cases for initial admission review, however official copies must be received prior to enrollment. Course-

by-course transcript evaluations are accepted and are required in some cases.

Students must submit financial documents to be issued an I-20 for their F-1 visa application. Proof of financial support must include:

- A letter of financial support from the person(s) or sponsoring agency funding the student's time at Saint Louis University
- A letter from the sponsor's bank verifying that the funds are available and will be so for the duration of the student's study at the University

Assistantship Deadline

Applicants who are admitted to the Ph.D. program will be invited to submit a separate application for assistantship funding. Contact the Ph.D. program director for more information.

Review Process

Applications are reviewed by a committee of faculty members from the Albert Gnaegi Center for Health Care Ethics.

Tuition

Tuition	Cost Per Credit
Graduate Tuition	\$1,450

Additional charges may apply. Other resources are listed below:

Information on Tuition and Fees (<https://catalog.slu.edu/academic-policies/student-financial-services/tuition/>)

Miscellaneous Fees (<https://catalog.slu.edu/academic-policies/student-financial-services/fees/>)

Information on Summer Tuition (<https://catalog.slu.edu/academic-policies/student-financial-services/tuition-summer-current/>)

Scholarships, Assistantships and Financial Aid

For priority consideration for a graduate assistantship, apply by the program admission deadlines listed. Fellowships and assistantships provide a stipend and may include health insurance and a tuition scholarship for the duration of the award.

Explore Scholarships and Financial Aid Options (<https://www.slu.edu/financial-aid/types-of-aid/>)

Learning Outcomes

1. Graduates will be able to demonstrate a broad knowledge of the foundational disciplines, methods, topics and issues in health care ethics required for the scholarly analysis of issues in the field.
2. Graduates will be able to demonstrate proficiency in formulating original, normative arguments on topics related to health care ethics.
3. Graduates will be able to demonstrate the ability to conceptualize, develop and bring to successful completion an original, sustained and coherent independent research project that contributes to the field (i.e. the dissertation).
4. Graduates will be able to demonstrate an ability to generate appropriate job search materials (i.e. curriculum vitae, teaching portfolio, writing sample, etc.)

Requirements

Code	Title	Credits
Foundations of Health Care Ethics		
HCE 6010	Methods in Philosophical Ethic	3
HCE 6020	Methods in Religious Ethics	3
HCE 6040	Interdisciplinary Research in Health Care Ethics	3
<i>Foundations Elective</i>		3
Select one of the following:		
HCE 6050	Philosophical Foundations	
HCE 6070	Foundations of Catholic Morality	
PUBH 5020	Ethical Issues in Public Health	
Context of Health Care		
HCE 6110	Intro-Medicine for Ethicists	1
HCE 6120	Bioethics and the Law	2
HCE 6130	Clinical Ethics	3
HCE 6150	Practicum, Health Care Ethics	3
HCE 5xxx and above Graduate Course		3
Disciplinary Lens		12
The Disciplinary Lens courses are elective courses that provide students the opportunity to gain a deeper understanding of a primary disciplinary lens (e.g. philosophy, theology, empirical methods, anthropology/sociology), through which topics and arguments in the field might be examined and constructed. The disciplinary lens courses should ideally correspond to the student's intended dissertation method and should ordinarily be clustered in the same discipline. These courses are electives and students are encouraged to take courses in outside departments, with the approval of the PhD Program Director. Up to 9 credit hours of advanced standing from previous graduate coursework may be applied to these 12 credit hours, with the approval of the PhD Program Director.		
Bioethics Content		12
The Bioethics Content courses are elective courses that provide students exposure to a variety of health care ethics-related topics, thinkers and practices. Ideally, at least some of the Bioethics Content courses should correspond to the student's intended dissertation topic. These courses are electives and students are encouraged to take courses in outside departments, with the approval of the PhD Program Director. Up to 9 credit hours of advanced standing from previous graduate coursework may be applied to these 12 credit hours, with the approval of the PhD Program Director.		
Dissertation Research		12
HCE 6990	Dissertation Research (taken over multiple semesters)	
<i>Students may select one of the following optional concentrations:</i>		
Clinical Ethics (p. 3)		
Catholic Tradition (p. 3)		
Empirical Research Methods (p. 3)		
Total Credits		60

Non Course Requirements

Research Tools

These competencies are essential for success in health care ethics. Students may develop these competencies through different mechanisms.

1. Competency in medical terminology
2. Competency in library database skills
3. Competency in reading statistics and study design

Comprehensive Examinations

The comprehensive examinations occur after completing all coursework and practica.

Dissertation Proposal

The student will work closely with the dissertation chair to select a dissertation topic and plan the dissertation proposal in a timely manner. In the dissertation proposal, the student must present substantial evidence of the ability to develop and sustain an extended normative project on a bioethics topic. Once the chair is satisfied with the proposal, it will be sent to the two faculty readers for their comments. It is at this stage that the readers are expected to influence the general outline of the dissertation. The student will then address the comments of the readers and submit a revised proposal to the chair. This process may be repeated until the chair, readers and student are satisfied with the proposal.

Dissertations: Nontraditional Format

Ordinarily, doctoral candidates in the Ph.D. program in health care ethics will follow the traditional guidelines for dissertations. However, when appropriate, a student's dissertation committee may permit the student to write a dissertation using a nontraditional format, the body of which consists of at least three thematically related original article-length manuscripts, at least two of which must be accepted for publication. As is always the case, all dissertation content must receive final approval by the student's dissertation committee. The mere fact that a manuscript has been published or accepted for publication does not guarantee that it can be used toward a nontraditional dissertation. Ordinarily, if a faculty member serves as a co-author on one of the publications, this faculty member would not serve as the student's dissertation chair. The nontraditional dissertation format requires that:

1. The three incorporated articles be preceded by a substantive introduction chapter and followed by a substantive conclusion chapter, which will integrate the three manuscripts into a coherent whole.
2. Ordinarily, the student is the sole or primary author of all three manuscripts.
3. At least two of the three manuscripts must be fully accepted for publication and the third at least under review.
4. Dissertations must satisfy the formatting requirements dictated by the "Policies and Procedures for Thesis, Project, and Dissertation Formatting."
5. All articles incorporated into the dissertation must have been submitted while enrolled in the Ph.D. program.

Oral Defense of the Dissertation

Upon completion of the dissertation, students publicly present and defend their dissertation before their dissertation committee, CHCE faculty and doctoral students.

Continuation Standards

Students must maintain a cumulative grade point average (GPA) of 3.50 in all graduate/professional courses.

Clinical Ethics Concentration

Code	Title	Credits
HCE 6130	Clinical Ethics	3
HCE 6540	Advanced Clinical Ethics Practicum	3
Elective	Additional Course in Clinical Ethics	3
HCE 6150	Practicum, Health Care Ethics (Students will complete portions of their practicum in the area of clinical ethics)	3
HCE 6980	Graduate Independent Study in Health Care Ethics	3
Dissertation on a Clinical Ethics Topic		12
HCE 6990	Dissertation Research	
Total Credits		27

Catholic Tradition Concentration

Code	Title	Credits
HCE 6020	Methods in Religious Ethics	3
HCE 6310	Health Care Ethics: Catholic Tradition	3
Elective	Additional Course in Health Care & Catholic Tradition (usually taken outside of HCE)	3
HCE 6980	Graduate Independent Study in Health Care Ethics	3
HCE 6150	Practicum, Health Care Ethics	3
Dissertation on Health Care Ethics in the Catholic Tradition		12
HCE 6990	Dissertation Research	
Total Credits		27

Empirical Research Methods Concentration

Code	Title	Credits
HCE 6040	Interdisciplinary Research in Health Care Ethics	3
HCE 6520	Quantitative Research in Descriptive Ethics	3
HCE 6150	Practicum, Health Care Ethics (Students will focus on the population the student intends to research in their dissertation)	3
Qualitative Methods Elective		
Two (preferably three) graduate-level level qualitative methods courses, usually outside HCE. The third course can be either a methods course or a course covering the content area of the student's empirical research.		6
Total Credits		15

Roadmap

This roadmap is just one example of a semester-by-semester plan of study for this program. There are other plans students can and do take. The plan of study for each particular student is established in consultation with each student's academic advisor; *this roadmap does not replace academic advising appointments.*

Roadmap notes:

- This Roadmap assumes full-time enrollment unless otherwise noted.
- Courses/Milestones marked with an “!” are critical and must be completed in the semester listed in the Roadmap to ensure a timely graduation.
- Course availability and sequencing are subject to change.

Course	Title	Credits
Year One		
Fall		
HCE 6050 or HCE 6070	Philosophical Foundations ¹ or Foundations of Catholic Morality	3
HCE 6040	Interdisciplinary Research in Health Care Ethics ²	3
HCE 6110	Intro-Medicine for Ethicists ³	1
Library Database Skills ⁴		0
Credits		7
Spring		
HCE 6130	Clinical Ethics	3
LAW 8005	Bioethics and the Law	2
HCE 6150	Practicum, Health Care Ethics ⁵	1
Elective	6xxx-level HCE course or course in a related discipline approved by the PhD Program Director	3
Credits		9
Year Two		
Fall		
HCE 6010	Methods in Philosophical Ethics	3
HCE 6020	Methods in Religious Ethics	3
HCE 6150	Practicum, Health Care Ethics	1
Elective	6xxx-level HCE course or course in a related discipline approved by the PhD Program Director	3
Credits		10
Spring		
HCE 5XXX/6XXX	Graduate Course	3
HCE 6150	Practicum, Health Care Ethics	1
Elective	6xxx-level HCE course or course in a related discipline approved by the PhD Program Director	3
HCE 6980	Graduate Independent Study in Health Care Ethics ⁶	3
Credits		10
Year Three		
Fall		
Comprehensive Exam (Written exam and oral exam)		0
HCE 6990	Dissertation Research	6
Credits		6
Spring		
HCE 6990	Dissertation Research	6
Credits		6

Year Four**Fall**

HCE 6990	Dissertation Research	0
Credits		0

Spring

HCE 6990	Dissertation Research	0
Credits		0

Year Five**Fall**

HCE 6990	Dissertation Research	0
Credits		0

Spring

HCE 6990	Dissertation Research	0
Credits		0
Total Credits		48

¹ Take either course depending on interest and career goals. May take both, with the second acting as an elective.

² Take the “Consuming Empirical Literature” exam the first day of class.

³ Take the “Medical Terminology” exam the first day of class.

⁴ An introduction to graduate-level database and library search skills, taught by library faculty.

⁵ Complete the clinical shadowing eligibility requirements prior to beginning of class.

Program Notes

- Students are encouraged to concentrate elective courses in a primary methodological or content area, versus a broad sampling of courses. Common choices are 6xxx-level courses in theology and philosophy.
- **Concentration in Catholic Tradition:** Electives focus on topics related to Catholic health care ethics, and the dissertation will be written on a Catholic health care topic. One elective will be HCE 6310 Health Care Ethics: Catholic Tradition (3 cr); one elective will be an elective related to health care and the catholic tradition, usually in theology; the elective in the final semester will be a directed reading on Catholic health care ethics, preparing the student’s dissertation prospectus.
- **Concentration in Clinical Ethics:** Electives focus on topics related to clinical ethics, and the dissertation will be written on a clinical ethics topic. One elective will be HCE 6540 Advanced Clinical Ethics Practicum (3 cr); one elective will be a non-HCE elective related to clinical ethics and the elective in the final semester will be a directed reading on clinical ethics, preparing the student’s dissertation prospectus.
- **Concentration in Empirical Research Methods in Ethics:** Electives focus on topics related to empirical research methods, and the dissertation will be written using an empirical research method. Two (preferably three) electives will be graduate-level methods courses taught outside HCE and the elective in the final semester will be HCE 6520 Quantitative Research in Descriptive Ethics (3 cr), preparing the student’s dissertation prospectus.

Contact Us

For questions regarding doctoral study in health care ethics, contact hce_info@slu.edu or call 314-977-1060 and ask for the graduate program coordinator.