

Department of Biochemistry and Molecular Biology

GRADUATE PROGRAM POLICIES & PROCEDURES

(Current Version 9/15/2012)

The Graduate Program in Biochemistry and Molecular Biology will follow, at a minimum, all established policy delineated in the Student Handbook of the College of Graduate Studies.

Below are some policies of particular note excerpted from the Student Handbook. The Department of Biochemistry and Molecular Biology reserves the right to stipulate policies or procedures more rigorous or specific than those in the Student Handbook. **Where they exist, such departmental policies and procedures have been inserted in bold in the appropriate section of this document.**

1. General Academic Regulations

Candidates for the Ph.D. degree in the biomedical sciences function under the general administration of the College of Graduate Studies and the direct supervision of the faculty of this College. Programs must comply with the requirements for an advanced degree set by the Graduate Council and the Graduate Faculty Organization of the College of Graduate Studies.

A total of 90 credit hours are required for the Ph.D. degree. A minimum of 30 credit hours is devoted to research and a minimum of 30 credit hours must be taken in program-approved didactic course work. Changes in curriculum and/or program requirements are at the discretion of the department, as deemed necessary, and may be made without prior notice. **A student's program requirements are deemed to be those in place at the time the student joins the program. The department's Graduate Program Committee and Department Chair are responsible for determining that a student has fulfilled all program requirements. Prior to registering for each semester, graduate students who have been accepted into a department must meet with the department Graduate Program Director (or his designee) to discuss his/her progress and secure a signature on the registration form.**

A minimum course grade of "C" is required for graduate credit. An overall "B" average (3.0 grade point average) must be maintained. **Each student in this program must earn a B grade or above in all Biochemistry and Molecular Biology courses. Remediation is at the discretion of the Graduate Program Committee and Department Chair.** Grades in dissertation research credit hours (designated as the 700 series) are not included in the GPA. Other courses, as approved by the Graduate Council, which are evaluated "satisfactory" or "unsatisfactory" are also not included in the GPA if successfully completed but may be credited towards fulfilling the didactic requirements of a student's degree program. Any student who falls below the required 3.0 cumulative grade point average, in any semester, will automatically be placed on Academic Probation. A student on academic probation has one year to raise his/her cumulative grade point average to 3.0 or higher. Two consecutive semesters with an individual semester grade point average below 3.0 is grounds for dismissal. A student who has successfully completed all remediated didactic and research requirements must be removed from probation by the Graduate Council before he/she is allowed to defend his/her thesis. All notations of academic probation will be removed from the student's

transcript when, having successfully completed all degree requirements, the student is awarded the degree.

A maximum of 4 laboratory rotations are allowed prior to acceptance into the Biochemistry and Molecular Biology Department other than for exceptional circumstances with express permission of the Chair. If a student is unable to match with a lab after 4 rotations, he/she will not be accepted into the Department of Biochemistry and Molecular Biology.

Attendance at all departmental seminars is required for all semesters until graduation for both MS and PhD students. PhD students must present one 30 min departmental seminar per year describing their research progress during the last year, starting in their 3rd year. MD/PhD students may be exempted from presenting during those times they are fulfilling requirements specific to the MD portion of their degree. They must still, however, attend all departmental seminars.

In addition to coursework and passing the Qualifying Exam (detailed below), students in Biochemistry and Molecular Biology are required to submit at least one first-author or co-first author research paper (not a review article) for publication prior to the Dissertation Defense.

Other than for exceptional circumstances as determined and approved by the Graduate Program Committee, department policy does not allow for an off-cycle (spring semester) start for an entering student. This is due to the careful sequencing of required coursework.

2. Residency Requirement and Unscheduled Absence:

For the Doctor of Philosophy degree, at least one year (24 credit hours earned during a single academic year) must be spent in residence at the SUNY Upstate Medical University campus. A student must be registered in the semester which he/she defends his/her thesis.

Any unscheduled absence from the Academic Program of more than two days must be approved by the student's thesis advisor.

Any absence from the Academic Program for more than one week, especially for those traveling overseas, also needs to notify the departmental Administrator (Penny McPhilly) by e.mail for records filing purposes.

3. Ethics & Academic Integrity:

Scientific research must be conducted in accordance with the highest regard for standards of honesty. Misconduct of any nature in research is an anathema to the intrinsic goals of all scientific inquiry and dissemination of knowledge. The academic community cannot tolerate plagiarism, fraud, lying, or other types of malfeasance in the conduct of scientific research. Such activities undermine the foundations of our institutions, the fundamental concepts underlying scientific research, and the public's trust in the personal integrity of biomedical scientists. The faculty and administration of the SUNY Upstate Medical University (Upstate) are committed to preserving

and encouraging an environment of creativity commensurate with the highest ethical standards of scientific research.

It is the responsibility of all graduate students in the Department of Biochemistry and Molecular Biology to familiarize themselves with the institution's research misconduct policies in particular institutional definitions of research misconduct. These policies can be found on the Research Integrity Office web page (under development). Briefly, Upstate Medical University defines research misconduct as including fabrication, falsification, and plagiarism in the recording of research results. However, other types of malfeasance are also considered research misconduct by institutional policies. A full description of research misconduct can be found in the institution's Policy for Responding to Allegations of Research Misconduct.

All graduate students have a responsibility to report observed, suspected, or apparent misconduct in research to the Research Integrity Officer. Allegations of research misconduct can be communicated to the Research Integrity Officer by letter, e-mail, verbally and/or by phone. If an individual is unsure whether a suspected incident falls within the definition of research misconduct, he or she may email the Research Integrity Officer at RIO@upstate.edu or go to the Research Administration Directory for more contact options (<http://www.upstate.edu/researchadmin/directory.php>) to discuss the suspected misconduct informally. At any time, a student may have confidential discussions and consultations about concerns of possible misconduct with the Research Integrity Officer, Department Chairperson, Dean of the College, or Vice President for Research and will be counseled about appropriate procedures for reporting allegations.

It is the Research Integrity Officer's, and the institution's responsibility to protect the anonymity of individuals that make allegations of research misconduct in good faith, and to protect individuals that make allegations of research misconduct in good faith from retaliation. An allegation is not in good faith if made with knowing or reckless disregard for information that would negate the allegation or testimony.

Examples of such violations of the Student Code of Conduct regarding academic dishonesty:

Taking Information

- Copying graded homework.
- Working together on a take home test or homework when specifically prohibited by the professor.
- Looking at another student's paper during an exam.
- Looking at notes when prohibited.
- Buying a term paper.
- Taking an exam out of the classroom whenever prohibited.

Tendering Information

- Giving your work to another to be copied.

- Giving someone answers to exam questions during the exam.
- After taking an exam, informing a person due to take that same exam of questions that appeared on the exam.
- Giving or selling a term paper or class work to another student.

Research Misconduct

- Research misconduct is defined as fabrication, falsification, or plagiarism in proposing, performing, or reviewing research, or in reporting research results.
- Fabricating is making up results and recording or reporting them.
- Falsifying is manipulating research materials, equipment, or processes, or changing or omitting data or results such that the research is not accurately represented in the research record. The research record is defined as the record of data or results that embody the facts resulting from scientific inquiry, including but not limited to laboratory records, both physical and electronic, research proposals, progress reports, abstracts, theses, oral presentations, internal reports and journal articles.
- Plagiarism (as defined below).

Plagiarism

- Appropriation of another person's ideas, processes, results or words, including confidential review of other's research proposals and manuscripts, without giving appropriate credit.
- Copying homework answers from your text and handing them in for a grade.
- Reproducing text or other works on an exam, term paper, homework, thesis, or dissertation without citing the source.
- Handing in a paper purchased from a term paper service.
- Handing in another's paper as your own.
- Taking a paper from an organization's files and handing it in as your own.

Conspiracy

- Planning/helping with one or more students to commit an act of academic dishonesty.
- Giving your term paper to another student who you know will plagiarize it.
- Unauthorized taking of materials (printed, A – V, slides, tapes, carousels, etc.) and intentionally denying fellow students access to those materials.

Misrepresentation

- Having another person do your assignments.
- Lying to a professor to increase your grade.

Bribery

- Offering money, any item, or service to a faculty member or any other person to gain academic advantage for yourself or another.

4. Time Limitation for Completion of Programs

The purpose of this limitation is to avoid undue delay in the completion of the degree requirements and to insure that course work and research is not outdated before the degree is granted. For the doctoral degree, no more than seven years may elapse between initial admission to the College and conferring of the degree. For the master of science degree, no more than five years may elapse between beginning of the program and conferral of the degree. If these time limits are exceeded, the degree is not awarded unless there is permission by petition to the Dean of the College of Graduate Studies. **Faculty mentors are expected to closely monitor student progression and regularly communicate to their students the expectation that they complete their degrees in a timely manner. Student stipends that are supported on departmental funds will not be provided beyond 5 years without extenuating circumstances and express written permission from the department Chair. Student stipends provided via grants, while at the discretion of the PI, are expected to be judiciously managed and to fall within the above time-frame.**

5. Off Campus Limitation for Dissertation/Thesis Completion

Students not in residence must complete their degree requirements within 6 months of leaving the dissertation/thesis research laboratory. If the 6 months is exceeded, the degree is not awarded unless there is permission by petition to the Dean of the College of Graduate Studies.

6. Student Advising, Advising Agreement and Career Development Plan

Once the student has been accepted into the Department of Biochemistry and Molecular Biology, his/her progress will be monitored regularly by the department's Graduate Program Committee as well as by the student's PI/Advisor. Graduate students are encouraged to seek the guidance of the advisor, the department's Program Director, the department Chair, and/or other faculty members as needed.

For effective advising, the student is required to sign the BMB Student Advising Agreement with her/his PI when first joining the lab. The Advising Agreement stipulates the responsibility of both the student and the PI during the course of thesis work. A signed copy of the Advising Agreement will be kept in the departmental Administrator's (Penny McPhilly) office.

During the first year in the lab, the student and her/his PI are required to develop together a Career Development Plan. The Career Development Plan should be updated annually. The updated Plan should be shared with the Thesis Committee (see below) prior to one of the two yearly meetings for discussion at the meeting.

7. Qualifying Examination for Students in Doctoral Programs

The student becomes a candidate for the doctoral degree after passing a qualifying examination administered by a committee of the graduate school.

Prerequisites

Each doctoral program shall define required courses and other prerequisites which must be satisfactorily completed prior to the qualifying examination.

In addition to these minimal requirements, the student's advisor may establish other prerequisites appropriate to the course of study undertaken by the individual student.

Scheduling

The student shall schedule the examination soon after completing the Research Design in BMB (or Grant Writing) course, which is usually in middle of the spring semester of the 2nd year. The student is expected to complete the examination before or at the early fall semester of his/her 3rd year). Exceptions require approval by the Dean.

Committee Composition and Conduct of the Examination

The proposed Qualifying Exam Committee is formed by the graduate student in consultation with the PI/advisor. The committee shall consist of 6 faculty with appointments in The College of Graduate Studies (or the equivalent from sister institutions) with no more than 3 members within the student's department. For Biochemistry and Molecular Biology students doing their thesis research in an adjunct faculty's lab, at least one member of the qualifying exam committee must have a primary appointment in Biochemistry and Molecular Biology.

The proposed committee is submitted for approval to the Dean of Graduate Studies, who will also assign the committee chair (the chair will be an individual outside of the student's department). The dissertation advisor and student, in consultation with all the other committee members, will determine dates and times at which they can all participate in the exam. These dates and times must be communicated by the dissertation advisor, in writing, to each committee member who, in turn, must confirm in writing his/her continued commitment to participate. If a committee member cannot devote the required hours on the dates and times specified, either that committee member must be replaced with another faculty member approved by the Dean or other dates and/or times must be selected which allows all the committee members to fully attend. If a committee member later finds he/she cannot fully participate in the entire exam and it is not feasible to find a replacement, the oral exam can go forth with a few as four committee members, one of which must be the dissertation advisor, provided the remaining committee members and the student agree to do so. The oral exam must occur before the early fall semester of the student's third year of study. If a retest is necessary, it may occur after this deadline consistent with the time limitations noted below.

Nature of Examination

The examination shall cover areas appropriate to the student's training and research interests. The student shall provide a list of his/her undergraduate and graduate courses and

training, and a brief summary of any research undertaken, at the time the request for examination is made.

At the discretion of the candidate's program, the examination will consist of a written examination, and an oral examination.

1) Written Examination

Each graduate program may establish the format of the written part of the examination, subject to approval by the Graduate Council and Dean. Whatever the format, all members of the examining committee shall participate in formulating the tasks set for the student and shall evaluate all written material submitted by the student.

The format for the Biochemistry and Molecular Biology Department is:

a) A research proposal on the candidate's research area. The research proposal will be 12 pages in length (including Figures, but excluding references and the Summary page) and follow a simplified NIH format. To fulfill this requirement, the student may use in part the product from a departmentally sanctioned grant writing course but must include at least one new Specific Aim in addition to or replacing one of the Aims from their previous proposal. Once the exam has begun, the student is allowed to seek assistance ONLY FROM NON-FACULTY, AND ONLY ON ISSUES RELATING TO GRAMMAR.

b) The student will also submit a 10 page written answer to a question agreed upon by the examining committee. As for the grant proposal, after the exam period has begun, the student is allowed to seek assistance ONLY FROM NON-FACULTY, AND ONLY ON ISSUES RELATING TO GRAMMAR.

The student will schedule a time for the examination. The chair will specify the time at which written material (exam question and research proposal) are to be turned in to the examination committee; generally one week prior to the oral exam. The student will return to each examiner for evaluation, the answer to the exam question and a copy of the research proposal. It is expected that all written material will be completed within 5 weeks of the student receiving their question. All parties, and colleagues, are required to report to the chair any suspicion of unethical behavior as outlined above in the section on "Ethics and Academic Integrity" in the preparation of the written documents. This includes any assistance that goes beyond grammatical help in addition to obtaining assistance from faculty. In such cases, disciplinary action will be determined by the Departmental Graduate Committee in consultation with the Departmental Chair and may include dismissal from the department.

2) Oral Examination

The committee shall meet at the call of the chair within two (2) weeks after the completion of the written section at which time the student shall be examined orally. This meeting must take place prior to registration for the second semester of the student's third year in the graduate program. Three days prior to the examination date, all members of the committee must have read and voted on the acceptability of the written components. It is the Chair's responsibility to query the committee members as to their opinion on the written components. At the end of the oral examination, the student shall be evaluated on the basis of his/her performance on both the oral and written sections, and the committee shall take action as outlined below.

Voting Procedures

- 1) Each member of the examining committee, including the chairperson but excluding the faculty advisor, is entitled to one vote. For a committee member's vote to be counted, he/she must have participated in the entire exam and his/her vote must be cast in person. **The faculty advisor is allowed to participate in the exam and the discussion following the exam, but must leave the room for the vote on the motions listed directly below.**
- 2) To reach a decision on any of the motions listed below, more than one-half of the committee members present must approve the motion. The vote shall be by ballot or roll call at the discretion of the chairperson.

Motions:

- a) Approve
- b) Approve with Honors (unanimous decision)
- c) Approved pending completion of recommendation(s)
- d) Delay final action for no more than thirty (30) days for further examination or in order to take other action deemed appropriate by the examining committee. Further examination, may be either written, oral, or both, and may cover all or selected areas. Should the committee delay decision for reexamination or other appropriate action, final decision to approve or disapprove under this section rests with the examining committee.

If none of the above motions receive more than one half of the Committee's votes, the student is failed by the committee.

Additional Policies

- 1) Although the student's program or department may administer a departmental oral or written examination prior to the official graduate school qualifying examination, the results of the departmental examination shall not be considered a part of the graduate school examination.