



**HEALTH SCIENCE CENTER**  
**TEXAS A & M UNIVERSITY**

Procedures and Policies  
for Students Pursuing the Doctor of Philosophy Degree<sup>\*\*</sup>  
in Medical Sciences

Fall 2019

<sup>\*\*</sup>And other associated degree programs MS (thesis option), MS (non-thesis option)

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**Office of Graduate Studies**  
**Medical Research and Education Building (MREB I)**  
**8447 Riverside Parkway, Suite 1000**  
**Bryan, Texas, 77807**  
**Phone: 979-436-0753**  
**E-mail: [com.graduatestudies@tamhsc.edu](mailto:com.graduatestudies@tamhsc.edu)**

### **PROGRAM ADMINISTRATION**

Assistant Dean of Graduate Studies .....[Carol Vargas-Bautista](mailto:Carol.Vargas-Bautista@tamhsc.edu)  
[carolvargasb@tamhsc.edu](mailto:carolvargasb@tamhsc.edu)

Houston Campus Director – MSCI Program .....[David J. Reiner](mailto:David.J.Reiner@tamhsc.edu)  
[dreiner@ib.tamhsc.edu](mailto:dreiner@ib.tamhsc.edu)

Program Coordinator for MSCI Program .....[Marquita Adrian](mailto:Marquita.Adrian@tamhsc.edu)  
[amadrian@tamhsc.edu](mailto:amadrian@tamhsc.edu)

Houston Campus Coordinator – MSCI Program .....[Cindy Lewis](mailto:Cindy.Lewis@tamhsc.edu)  
[clewis@ib.tamhsc.edu](mailto:clewis@ib.tamhsc.edu)

Director - MD/PhD Program .....[Julian Leibowitz](mailto:Julian.Leibowitz@tamhsc.edu)  
[leibowitz@tamhsc.edu](mailto:leibowitz@tamhsc.edu)

Program Coordinator for MD/PhD Program .....[Mary Imran](mailto:Mary.Imran@tamhsc.edu)  
[imran@tamhsc.edu](mailto:imran@tamhsc.edu)

Director – MD+ Program.....[Warren Zimmer](mailto:Warren.Zimmer@tamhsc.edu)  
[wezimmer@tamhsc.edu](mailto:wezimmer@tamhsc.edu)

Program Administrator for Postdoctoral Affairs and MD+  
Program .....[Stacy De Leon](mailto:Stacy.DeLeon@tamhsc.edu)  
[sdeleon@medicine.tamhsc.edu](mailto:sdeleon@medicine.tamhsc.edu)

### **TRACK ADVISORS**

#### **Biochemistry & Structural Biology Track**

Ryang Hwa Lee  
[rllee@medicine.tamhsc.edu](mailto:rllee@medicine.tamhsc.edu)

Margie Moczygemba (Houston Campus)  
[mmoczygemba@medicine.tamhsc.edu](mailto:mmoczygemba@medicine.tamhsc.edu)

Yun (Nancy) Huang (Houston campus)  
[yun.huang@ibt.tamhsc.edu](mailto:yun.huang@ibt.tamhsc.edu)

### **Cardiovascular & Lymphatic Biology Track**

Cindy Meininger  
[cjm@tamu.edu](mailto:cjm@tamu.edu)

Jiang Chang (Houston campus)  
[jchang@ibt.tamhsc.edu](mailto:jchang@ibt.tamhsc.edu)

### **Cellular & Molecular Biology Track**

Andreea Trache  
[Trache@medicine.tamhsc.edu](mailto:Trache@medicine.tamhsc.edu)

David J. Reiner (Houston campus)  
[dreiner@ibt.tamhsc.edu](mailto:dreiner@ibt.tamhsc.edu)

### **Clinical & Translational Science Track**

David Huston (Houston Campus)  
[dhuston@tamu.edu](mailto:dhuston@tamu.edu)

### **Microbial & Molecular Pathogenesis Track**

Robbie Watson  
[robert.watson@medicine.tamhsc.edu](mailto:robert.watson@medicine.tamhsc.edu)

Yi Xu (Houston campus)  
[yxu@ibt.tamhsc.edu](mailto:yxu@ibt.tamhsc.edu)

### **Neuroscience Track**

Ursula Winzer-Serhan  
[uwinzer@medicine.tamhsc.edu](mailto:uwinzer@medicine.tamhsc.edu)

## **Introduction**

This booklet summarizes the requirements for the completion of graduate degree requirements (PhD and MS) in Medical Sciences through the College of Medicine Interdisciplinary Graduate Program. The Interdisciplinary Graduate Program offers specialization in the following areas:

**Biochemistry and Structural Biology:** *State of the art biophysical technologies are exploited to define mechanisms for protein folding, and protein trafficking in the endoplasmic reticulum and nucleus. Reverse genetic approaches are used to elucidate the roles of newly discovered proteins and define functional protein domains.*

**Cardiovascular and Lymphatic Biology:** *The Cardiovascular and Lymphatic Biology Track provides graduate students with the knowledge and tools to investigate human biology and cardiovascular disease at the leading edge of medical research.*

**Cellular and Molecular Biology:** *Researchers in this track are interested in gaining new mechanistic insights into wide range of biological and pathological processes, using both genetic and biochemical approaches.*

**Clinical and Translational Science:** *The overall educational goal of this track is to prepare future biomedical researchers who can interact effectively with the spectrum of clinical providers and community members, and function efficiently within large research teams, either as members or as team leaders.*

**Microbial and Molecular Pathogenesis:** *Much of the research in this group focuses on the interplay between pathogens and hosts. Considerable emphasis is placed on the infectious agents themselves (viruses, bacteria and parasites), including host recognition and invasion.*

**Neuroscience:** *This group embraces a number of diverse interests in the central and peripheral nervous systems, including gene expression, neurophysiology, neuropharmacology, neuroendocrinology and signal transduction.*

**General requirements for the Medical Sciences degree are reviewed initially with specific requirements for the individual tracks presented in detail [here](#).**

## **Overview of the Program**

The Medical Sciences graduate program provides students with formal course work and experimental research leading to the Ph.D. degree. Students are expected to demonstrate professional level knowledge and research skills in their chosen area. The first year curriculum is meant to provide a broad-based foundation for students in the Medical Sciences program through course work in Medical Sciences and through research rotations leading to the selection of a faculty research advisor. In subsequent years, students must complete their formal course work, pass a preliminary examination, conduct an independent research project, and prepare a dissertation. It is expected that research worthy of a Ph.D. will constitute a significant contribution to the field in general and should be publishable in a peer-reviewed journal. Evaluation of the quality and quantity of the student's research will be the responsibility of the student's Advisory Committee. A general timeline for the program is shown below. Details and specific stages are discussed in the following sections, and more detail can be found in the Graduate Catalog available online through the Office of Graduate and Professional Studies (OGAPS) <http://ogaps.tamu.edu/>.

## Yearly Steps to Fulfill Doctoral Degree Requirements

### Year 1

- Initiate Graduate Training with the [Individual Development Plan \(IDP\)](#)
- Core Courses – must include an Ethics or Responsible Conduct of Research course.
- Complete lab rotations. Lab rotation forms must be submitted before rotations
- Choose Research Advisor – Finalize lab choice by the end of first year and submit a [letter of agreement/Laboratory Compact](#)

### Year 2

- Choose Advisory Committee Members— no later than 90 days prior to preliminary examination
- Annual meeting with Advisory Committee
- File Degree Plan
- Discipline-Specific Courses
- Start Research Project
- Give Yearly Research Seminar (as described by Track)

### Year 3

- File [Proposal](#)- **before the Spring semester of 3<sup>rd</sup> year**
- [Preliminary Exam](#)- **Preliminary Examinations are encouraged to be taken in the summer of year 2 and must be completed no later than spring semester of year 3.** English Language Proficiency requirements must be completed before the Preliminary Exam
- Meet with Advisory Committee
- Give Yearly Research Seminar (as described by Track)
- Admission to Candidacy- see details below

### Years 4-5

- Research
- Give Yearly Research Seminar (as described by Track)
- Meet with Advisory Committee
- Final Defense and Final Examination- **Must submit request to OGAPS no less than 10 days prior to scheduled examination/defense date**

## **Academic Requirements**

Successful completion of the Ph.D. degree requires 96 credit hours beyond a baccalaureate degree (64 credit hours beyond a master's or professional degree). Within the Medical Sciences program, 25-30 of the 96 hours will typically be in formal course work and the remainder in research hours. Some latitude is possible, however, between formal course hours and research hours. Consult the Track Advisor and the Assistant Dean of Graduate Studies for specific cases. Full-time graduate students supported by Graduate Assistantships must enroll in a minimum of 9 credit hours for fall and spring semesters and 6 credit hours for the summer (either 6 hours for the ten-week session or a combination of hours for both 5-week sessions). Students are required to remain in good academic standing with a minimum average GPA of 3.0. Failure to maintain this standard will result in the student being placed on academic deficiency, potential loss of stipend and can lead to dismissal. In addition to the formal graded course work, students are required to maintain adequate progress in their research endeavors and to participate in departmental functions such as seminars, journal clubs, lab meetings, and any other professional activities. **Specifics for each Track see track requirements can be found [here](#).**

### **Coursework Requirements**

- IBT students, except 1<sup>st</sup> year students, are required to take IBST 681 – “Seminar- Medical Sciences”, which is held in the Fall & Spring Semesters. Students are required to report on four seminars per month during the semester. Once students complete/pass the Preliminary Exam, they will only be required to report on 1 seminar per month during the Spring/Fall semesters.
- 1st year grad students are exempt from taking the IBST 681 – “Seminar-Medical Sciences” course their 1st year.
- IBT students are required to take IBST 605 – “Biomedical Research of Professional Development” class held in the Fall or Spring semester, until they have passed their Preliminary Exam.

### **Graduate Student Roundtable**

The goal of the Graduate Student Roundtable is to allow graduate students to meet with each other and the Assistant Dean of Graduate Studies in an informal format to discuss the program and other student driven issues. The roundtable will meet the last Friday of each month at noon and lunch will be provided. The students will have the chance to suggest topics before each lunch and a significant portion of time during the hour will be devoted to questions, suggestions, discussion from the students.

The goal is to enhance dialog between students and between students and the Graduate Program. Further, a goal is to have the students help drive the Graduate Program to meet their career needs.

### **Residence Requirement for Degrees Awarded by the Texas A&M Health Science Center**

A major purpose of the residence requirement for graduate study is to ensure the advantages of the university environment. These activities include, among others, accessibility to libraries, laboratory experiences, seminars and colloquia presented by faculty and other professionals, and numerous cultural events. The requirement also provides the faculty the opportunity to properly evaluate the student and their development, to guide and direct studies, and to determine competency. The majority of credits toward a graduate or post-baccalaureate professional degree must be earned through the Texas A&M Health Science Center. The Assistant Dean of Graduate Studies may consider exceptions to this policy under special circumstances. Please see the student rules in the [Graduate Catalog](#) for details.

# Progress Towards the Ph. D

## Year 1

### Role of the Track Advisor

The Track Advisor serves as the general program advisor to Medical Sciences graduate students and as academic advisor to first-year students. Questions about policies, procedures, and program requirements should be directed to the Track Advisor. First year students should consult with the Track Advisor about their academic curriculum, and must obtain approval from the Track Advisor before registering for courses. Once a research advisor is identified, academic advisement becomes the responsibility of the Research Advisor.

### Individual Development Plan (IDP)

The IDP is a tool through NIH that allows you to identify and map your career goals. The IDP will assist you with:

- Developing an Individual Development Plan customized to your needs
- Identifying, clarifying, and committing to goals based on your priorities and professional goals
- Creating and developing strategies for goal achievement
- Tracking progress toward your goals
- Understanding, evaluating, and strengthening your technical and non-technical competencies
- Practicing confidently discussing strategies for aligning expectations with those of your supervisor
- Making the most out of a recent promotion, job opportunity, or other developmental prospect
- Analyzing alternatives and solutions
- Go to their website to utilize these tools: [http://trainingcenter.nih.gov/idp\\_consulting.html](http://trainingcenter.nih.gov/idp_consulting.html)

### First Year Curriculum

The first year should be directed primarily towards meeting the core course requirements of the Medical Sciences Program. Each student should consult with the Track Advisor to develop a specific curriculum, which is most appropriate for that student and that meets the requirements for that track.

### Choosing a Research Advisor - Laboratory Rotations

Students should select a faculty mentor (Research Advisor) by the end of their first academic year (generally by the start of the Summer Session for students entering the previous fall). To facilitate this process, first year students supported by College of Medicine assistantships must participate in three laboratory rotations during the academic year. More rotations may be completed if a lab has not been found after the minimum rotations. The laboratory rotations provide the student an opportunity to become acquainted with the faculty, other graduate students, the available research projects, and specific laboratory techniques.

**Students are encouraged to contact faculty members individually to discuss further specific projects and research opportunities in each lab. Track advisors are also a good source of potential rotation labs. [Rotation Forms](#) should be completed and returned to the Graduate Office after deciding the labs in which the student will rotate.**

During rotations, it is the student's responsibility to arrange sufficient time to participate fully in lab activities. Typically, this will include discussions with the faculty member, contribution to ongoing research projects, attendance at lab meetings, and acquisition of specific technical skills specified by the faculty member. By the end of the Spring semester, the student should be prepared to make a final decision regarding a choice of faculty mentor. When choosing faculty to rotate with, it is important to ask the individual faculty members if they are planning to take students that year and

also whether he or she has available funding. Faculty members are not obligated to take students into their programs and may be unable to do so due to lack of space, funding, or time constraints. **It is the student's responsibility to initiate discussions with faculty members about the availability of research positions in laboratories.**

### **Finalizing Lab Choice**

A letter of agreement should be submitted from the faculty mentor to the Graduate Office through the Department/Academic Unit Head stating their willingness to take this student. The proposed track for matriculation should be indicated at this time. This agreement will be consummated with the completion and submission of the [Laboratory Compact and the Letter of Agreement](#) to the Assistant Dean of Graduate Studies.

## **Year 2**

### **Advisory Committee Structure**

Each student is required to form an Advisory Committee that will oversee the student's progress toward the Ph.D. Members of the committee will be determined by the Research Advisor in consultation with the student. The Advisory Committee should be formed no later than the end of the first semester in the second year of study. After the first year, the Advisory Committee is required to meet with the student at least once annually to review the student's progress ([Form](#)). **Failure to do so may result in the student being blocked from registering.** The committee will consist of no fewer than four members of the Graduate Committee Faculty of Texas A&M University, one of which will be the student's Research Advisor. The Research Advisor will be the chair of the committee unless the advisor is not a member of the College of Medicine Graduate Committee Faculty. In that case, a member of the College of Medicine Graduate Committee faculty must serve as co-chair and must approve the committee membership. ***At least one of the committee members should be from a department other than the home department of the student.***

The committee members' signatures on the degree plan indicate their willingness to accept the responsibility for guiding and directing the entire academic program of the student and for initiating all academic actions concerning the student. Although individual committee members may be replaced by petition for valid reasons, a committee cannot resign *en masse*. The chair of the committee, who usually has immediate supervision of the student's research and dissertation or record of study, has the responsibility for calling all meetings of the committee. The duties of the committee include responsibility for the proposed degree plan, the research proposal, the preliminary examination, the Dissertation or record of study and the final examination. In addition, the committee, as a group and as individual members, is responsible for counseling the student on academic matters, and, in the case of academic deficiency, initiating recommendations to the Office of Graduate and Professional Studies.

### **Degree Plan**

Students are required to file a [Degree Plan](#) with the Office of Graduate and Professional Studies (OGAPS). The Degree Plan lists the courses, including research hours, which the student will complete as part of the Ph.D. degree, and the total hours listed should equal 96 unless the student has a M.S. or professional degree in which case the hours listed should total 64. This proposed degree plan should be submitted through the online Document Processing Submission System located on the website [ogsdpps.tamu.edu](http://ogsdpps.tamu.edu). It is recommended that students consult with their Research Advisor about the content of the proposed Degree Plan prior to initiating the electronic submission. The Degree Plan will be electronically routed for approval by the Advisory Committee and the Assistant Dean of Graduate Studies prior to submission to the OGAPS. In doing the degree plan, ~1/3 of the

required hours should be didactic coursework, with the remainder being research credit hours. In reviewing the coursework necessary for the degree, no more than 4 distance education courses can be taken. **The [Degree Plan](#) should be filed during the second year of study, and must be filed no later than 90 days prior to the preliminary examination.** Any changes in the Degree Plan require approval by the Advisory Committee and the Assistant Dean of Graduate Studies, and must be petitioned through the Office of Graduate and Professional Studies Document Processing Submission System [ogsdps.tamu.edu](https://ogsdps.tamu.edu).

## Year 3

### **Preliminary Examination**

The Preliminary Exams have two parts: written and oral. The acceptable formats for this examination are listed in Appendix III. The student should verify with their Advisory Committee the specific requirements. For example, the written exams are usually scheduled prior to the oral exam, with each member of the committee allotted one day. Each member of the Advisory Committee gives the student a written examination. The student should discuss the format of each exam beforehand with the respective committee members. An individual member may choose to waive a written exam. The entire Preliminary Exam must be completed within three weeks. Upon successful completion of all written exams, the oral examination may be taken. At the conclusion of the preliminary examination, the student will be notified of his or her performance and the chair of the student's committee will submit the Report of the form to the Office of Graduate Studies. **The Preliminary Examinations *must* be completed before the spring semester of the third year.**

Prior to scheduling the preliminary examination with the other committee members, the committee chair will review with the student eligibility criteria, using the [Preliminary Examination Checklist](#) to ensure the student is ready for the examination. The following list of eligibility requirements applies:

- Student is registered at Texas A&M University for the semester or summer term during which any portion of the preliminary examination may fall. If the entire examination falls between semesters, then the student must be registered for the term immediately preceding the examination.
- An approved degree plan was on file with the Office of Graduate and Professional Studies at least 90 days prior to the first written examination.
- Student's cumulative GPR is at least 3.00.
- Student's degree plan GPR is at least 3.00.
- All English language proficiency requirements have been satisfied.
- All committee members have scheduled or waived the written portion and agreed to attend the oral portion of the examination or have found a substitute. Only one substitution is allowed and it cannot be for the committee chair.
- At the end of the semester in which the exam is given, there are no more than 6 hours of coursework remaining on the degree plan (except 681, 684, 690, 691, 5V98, 5V99 and 692). The Assistant Dean of Graduate Studies has the authority to approve a waiver of this criterion
- The time span from the first written examination to the oral is **no more than three weeks**. The Assistant Dean of Graduate Studies has the authority to approve a waiver of this criterion.

The chair of the advisory committee will promptly report the results of the Preliminary Examination to the Office of Graduate and Professional Studies, using the [Preliminary Examination checklist](#) and Report of the Preliminary Examination form. Both forms must have the appropriate signatures (Original signatures of each committee member and the Assistant Dean of Graduate Studies). These forms should be submitted to the Office of Graduate and Professional Studies within 10 working days of the scheduled examination.

After passing the required preliminary oral and written examinations for the doctoral degree, the student must complete the final examination for the degree within four calendar years. Otherwise, the student will be required to repeat the preliminary examination.

### **Dissertation Proposal**

Students are required to submit a detailed proposal outlining their research project. The proposal should include relevant background information and sufficient description of the experimental approaches so that the merit and feasibility of the project can be evaluated. The proposal must be approved by the Advisory Committee, and the Assistant Dean of Graduate Studies prior to submission to the Office of Graduate and Professional Studies (OGAPS). The completed proposal should be approved and submitted to OGAPS with the [Proposal Approval Form](#) no later than spring semester of the third year. Please refer to the instructions on how to prepare your document.

The Dissertation Proposal is a description of proposed research and defines the scientific problem to be studied for the dissertation research. The Dissertation Proposal can be prepared as soon as the overall research plan is developed. There is no requirement or even expectation that a Proposal will contain significant preliminary data.

The Proposal should explain the rationale or approach and the methodology to be used. The final copy of the proposal should be at most 10 pages, single-spaced (not including Preliminary Data and References). A well written proposal is organized according to NIH Grant Guidelines (e.g. R21) and should include 4-5 sections: 1) Specific Aims, 2) Background and Significance, 3) Preliminary Data (optional), 4) Experimental Design and Methods, and 5) Literature Cited.

### **Specific Aims**

The Specific Aims answer the question "What do you intend to do?" The proposal should state the broad, long-term objectives and list concisely and realistically what the specific research described in this application is intended to accomplish and the hypotheses to be tested. One page is recommended.

### **Background and Significance**

This section should answer the questions "What has already been done?" and "Why is the work important?" Provide a brief sketch of the background for the present proposal, and also critically evaluate existing knowledge and specifically identify the gaps that the project is intended to fill. State concisely the importance of the research described in this application by relating the specific aims to the broad, long-term objectives. Two to three pages are recommended.

### **Experimental Design and Methods**

Explain how you will do the work. Students may use figures and diagrams to explain the background material or how certain kinds of experiments will be performed. Clearly outline the experimental design and the procedures to be used to accomplish the Specific Aims of the project. The Experimental Design and Methods section of the proposal should NOT be the kind of detailed description of protocols used in the Materials and Methods section of a paper. Rather, it should focus on how the data will be collected, analyzed, and interpreted. Describe any new methodology and its advantage over existing methodologies. Discuss the potential difficulties and limitations of the proposed procedures and alternative approaches to achieve the Aims. Provide

a tentative sequence or timetable for the investigation. The inclusion of Preliminary Data is encouraged to support feasibility, but it is not required. If Preliminary Data is included (title the section Preliminary Data), it should be brief (3 pages at most). Although no specific number of pages is recommended for this section of the application, the total for all sections combined may not exceed 10 pages.

### **Literature Cited**

Use references to support statements or concepts. List references at the end of the proposal rather than throughout the text. Each citation must include the names of all authors, the title of the article or book, the name and volume number of the journal, page numbers, and year of publication. The list should be relevant and current; it need not be exhaustive. Students are expected to have read and understood all, or the pertinent parts, of each reference listed. References may be organized in any consistent fashion; for example, list in order of appearance and number consecutively in the text, or cite the authors in the text and list the references alphabetically by author. This section is not included in the 10-page limit.

### **Seminars and Journal Club Participation**

All students are required to attend appropriate seminars and Journal Clubs. This includes presentation of literature and research in these forums. See specific requirements for individual Tracks for expectations concerning seminar presentations and participation in departmental journal clubs.

### **Admission to Candidacy**

To be admitted to candidacy for a doctoral degree, a student must have: (1) completed all formal coursework on the degree plan with the exception of any remaining 681, 684, 690 and 691, or 5V98 and 5V99, (2) a 3.0 Graduate GPA and a Degree Plan GPA of at least 3.0 with no grade lower than C in any course on the degree plan, (3) passed the preliminary examination (written and oral portions), (4) submitted an approved dissertation proposal, (5) met the residence requirements. Students will receive a \$1000/yr stipend increase starting the date of their admission to candidacy. It is the student's responsibility to initiate the stipend increase with their Research Advisor. The final examination will not be authorized for any doctoral student who has not been admitted to candidacy.

### **Dissertation Research**

The dissertation work must be the original research performed by the candidate. With the council of the Research Advisor and the student's committee, the candidate will work on the research project until such time as the scholarly merit has been met. This will vary depending upon the research topic, but it is the student's responsibility to present and discuss the research with the Advisor and the committee, both formally and informally, so there is an assessment of progress. It is the responsibility of the Committee to determine when the research goals are met and to proceed with writing the dissertation.

## **Year 4 to Completion**

### **Final Examination**

Candidates for the Ph.D. degree must pass a final examination administered by their Advisory Committee. The examination consists of two parts: 1) a public seminar where the student presents their research findings to an audience of faculty, students, and staff and 2) an oral defense of the dissertation conducted by the Advisory Committee. As the final examination represents a culmination of the student's graduate program, all faculty and students are encouraged to attend the public seminar. The [request to hold and announce the final examination](#) must be submitted to the Office of Graduate and Professional Studies a minimum of 10 working days in advance of the scheduled date. Examinations/Defenses that are not completed and reported as satisfactory to the Office of Graduate and Professional Studies within 10 working days of the scheduled

examination/defense date will be recorded as failures. The Office of Graduate and Professional Studies must be notified in writing of any cancellations. The Final Defense Request and Announcement form must be completed at least 10 days prior to your defense.

The Advisory Committee will submit its recommendations on the appropriate Report of the Final Examination for Doctoral Candidates form to the Office of Graduate and Professional Studies regarding acceptability of the candidate for the doctoral degree. A student must be registered in the University in the semester or summer term in which the final examination is taken. The Committee will also submit to the Medical Sciences Graduate Program Office the [Graduate Student Annual Review Form](#).

### **Dissertation**

The dissertation is a scholarly document which presents the research findings of the student in the context of the field of study. The format of the document is directed by the Office of Graduate and Professional Studies (OGAPS) and guidelines for the preparation of the document and the steps for completing the process can be found on the [OGAPS website](#).

After successful defense and approval by the student's Advisory Committee, the head of the student's major department/academic unit, and the Assistant Dean of Graduate Studies, a student must submit his/her dissertation in [electronic format](#) as a single PDF file. The PDF file must be uploaded to the website, [ogaps.tamu.edu](http://ogaps.tamu.edu). Additionally, a signed approval form must be brought to the Office of Graduate and Professional Studies. Both the PDF file and the signed approval form are required.

Exam results must be submitted with original signatures of only the committee members approved by the Office of Graduate and Professional Studies. If an approved committee member substitution (1 only) has been made, his/her signature must also be submitted to the Office of Graduate and Professional Studies. The student should consult the academic calendar for the deadlines to schedule a defense for that semester and for the last day that a student can defend to qualify for graduation that semester.

## **Requirements for Master of Science**

The College of Medicine has established a Master of Science Degree in Medical Sciences. The curriculum for the M.S. Medical Sciences is designed to develop new understanding through research and originality. Students in the COM M.S. degree program should not expect financial support through the Research Office. The progression to the M.S. degree is well defined in the Graduate Catalog on the Office of Graduate and Professional Studies website [OGAPS](#), and are summarized here. There are two options for the M.S. in Medical Sciences: the thesis and the non-thesis.

**MS thesis option** – A minimum of 32 semester credit hours of approved courses and research is required for the thesis option Master of Science degree. No more than 8 credit hours of research (691) can be applied to the MS degree except for student with a prior or concurrent MD degree.

**Requirements for MS (non-thesis)** - A minimum of 36 semester credit hours of approved coursework is required for the Non-Thesis Option, and no research hours (691) can be counted. Ordinarily the student will devote the major portion of his or her time to work in one or two closely related fields. Other work will be in supporting fields of interest.

### **Degree Plan**

The student's Advisory Committee, in consultation with the student, will develop the proposed degree plan. **The degree plan must be completed and filed with the Office of Graduate and Professional Studies prior to the deadline imposed by the student's college or interdisciplinary degree program, if applicable, and no later than 90 days prior to the date of the final oral examination or thesis defense.** A student should submit the degree plan using the online Document Processing Submission System located on the website [ogsdpps.tamu.edu](http://ogsdpps.tamu.edu). A student submitting a proposed degree plan for a Master of Science degree should designate on the official degree plan the appropriate program option. Additional coursework may be added to the approved degree plan by petition if it is deemed necessary by the Advisory Committee to correct deficiencies in the student's academic preparation. No changes can be made to the degree plan once the student's [Request for Final Examination](#) or [Request for Final Examination Exemption](#) is approved by the Office of Graduate and Professional Studies.

### **Graduate Committee**

The student's Advisory Committee for the master's degree will consist of **no fewer than three members of the Graduate Committee Faculty**, representative of the student's fields of study and research. The chair or the co-chair of the Advisory Committee must be from the student's major department (or intercollegiate faculty, if applicable), and **at least one or more of the members must have an appointment to a department other than the student's major department.** The outside member for students in an interdisciplinary program must have an appointment to a department different from the chair of the student's committee. The chair, in consultation with the student, will select the remainder of the Advisory Committee. The student will interview each prospective committee member to determine whether he or she is willing to serve. Only Graduate Committee Faculty members located on Texas A&M University campuses may serve as chair of a student's advisory committee. Other Graduate Committee Faculty members located off campus may serve as a member or co-chair (but not chair) with a member as the chair. The chair of the committee, who usually has immediate supervision of the student's research and thesis, has the responsibility for calling required meetings of the committee and for calling meetings at any other time considered desirable.

For more information on the Masters in Medical Sciences Program, please refer to the [Graduate Student Catalog](#).

## **ADDITIONAL POLICIES AND PROCEDURES**

**Students Entering with Advanced Degrees** – students entering with an M.S., M.D., or D.V.M. from a U.S. institution are required to complete 64 rather than 96 credit hours, where approximately one-third will be course work and the remainder research credit hours. Students with advanced degrees from outside the U.S. may be granted a similar reduction in hours required for the Ph.D.

**Transfer Credits** - Up to 12 hours may be transferred with approval by the Advisory Committee and the Assistant Dean of Graduate Studies. Grades for courses completed at other institutions are not included in computing the GPR. An official transcript from the university at which transfer courses are taken must be sent directly to the Office of Admissions.

**Petitioning to Waive Required Classes** - A letter should be written from the student, through the advisor to Assistant Dean of Graduate Studies and delivered to the COM-Office of Graduate Studies (8447 Riverside Pkwy, Suite 1000, Bryan, TX 77807).

**Stipend** -The College of Medicine will provide stipend support for first-year and second-year graduate students at an amount indicated in the offer letter. Beyond year 2, stipend support will be the obligation of the student's Research Advisor. Minimum stipend levels for each year will be set by the Graduate Instruction Committee in consultation with the Assistant Dean for Graduate Studies. Students will be notified annually of stipend amount. Faculty mentors and/or departments are strongly encouraged to provide full support for tuition/fees. Graduate students are encouraged to discuss tuition/fee support with their mentors during their lab rotation.

**Academic Standing** -Maintaining a 3.0 GPA is considered to be satisfactory academic standing. If a student falls below this minimum, two long semesters (excluding summer) are allowed to achieve satisfactory standing. If the student fails to meet satisfactory academic status at the end of this time, loss of stipend or **dismissal from the program may be recommended by the Director of the program.**

**Absence during the semester** – Students are obligated to inform the program if, for any reason, they are unable to participate in classes, rotations, or other programmatic activities for any significant time (typically more than 1 day). In such cases, the student should notify the Office of Graduate Studies (contact: Assistant Dean of Graduate Studies) or the student's advisor if he or she has chosen an advisor.

### **Family Medical Leave Act**

The Family and Medical Leave Act (FMLA) is a benefit that allows qualified employees to take up to twelve weeks of leave per fiscal year for his or her own personal illness, for the birth or adoption of a child, or to care for a family member. Employees may also take FMLA leave to take care of personal and family matters in the event a spouse or another eligible family member is called to active duty in the Armed Forces. Please see [website](#) for more information.

**Improper Consensual Relationships** – System policy 07.05.01 defines an improper consensual arrangement as “a mutually agreeable amorous, romantic, and/or sexual relationship between ...an employee and a student” where the employee has authority over the other individual. Such relationships between graduate students and their mentor are highly discouraged, and if they occur, the faculty person **MUST** report this to their immediate supervisor.

## **Student Resources**

### **Office of Graduate Studies**

Visit our website for more information on all programs, department contacts, activities, etc.

<https://medicine.tamhsc.edu/rgs/>

### **Registrar**

The Office of the Registrar has the responsibility to maintain and store student records. Importantly, this office is the contact for degree audits and for transcripts.

979-845-1031

Suite 1501 of the General Services

Complex <http://registrar.tamu.edu/Home>

Degree Audit	(979) 845-1089
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Records	(979) 845-1003
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Registration	(979) 845-7117
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State Policies	(979) 845-1085
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Transcripts	(979) 845-1066
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### **Financial Aid**

The Office of Financial Aid has the charge to provide students with information and resources to attend Texas A&M University.

979-845-3236

Pavilion 2nd floor

[financialaid@tamu.edu](mailto:financialaid@tamu.edu)

### **Student Business Services**

Student Business Office is dedicated to helping each student manage their financial obligations to Texas A&M University.

979-847-3337

Suite 2801 General Service Complex

[sbs@tamu.edu](mailto:sbs@tamu.edu)

### **Office of Graduate and Professional Studies (OGAPS)**

OGAPS serves the Texas A&M Graduate and Professional student community. They have many programs to facilitate interdisciplinary research and helps graduate students with career development. Their website has links to calendars and deadlines, forms, tuition information, the graduate catalog, and student life.

979-845-3631

112 Jack K. Williams Administration Building

[ogaps@tamu.edu](mailto:ogaps@tamu.edu)

<http://ogaps.tamu.edu/Home>

## **International Student Services**

Assistance with visas, ELPE information, legal issues, writing center, etc. See their website for a full list of resources.

<http://iss.tamu.edu/>

979-845-1824

1<sup>st</sup> floor Bizzel Hall East

## **Student Services**

Texas A&M University offers a variety of services such as student counseling services, housing services, disability services, a career center, and recreational activities. See their website for a full list of resources available to you that are included with your tuition at no additional cost.

<http://www.tamu.edu/current-students/index.html>.

Students are also eligible for the Employee Assistance Program (UTEAP) which offers counseling and providers for certain medical issues, legal problems, and general work-life issues.

<https://employees.tamu.edu/eap/>.

## **Leave policy**

If a leave over two weeks is requested for any reason, the student must receive approval from their advisor and file a written request for the leave with the COM Office of Graduate Studies. If the student has not committed to a laboratory, the written request must be approved by the Assistant Dean of Graduate Studies. Requests are narratives (memos) that explain the reason for the leave and include the dates the student is requesting to be absent. The request must be signed by the student's advisor. In case of disputes over leave, please contact the Assistant Dean of Graduate Studies. Once the program request is filed and approved by the Office of Research and Graduate Studies, the student fills out a leave petition with OGAPS (<https://ogsdpss.tamu.edu/>) that must be approved before the student initiates the leave. Students on LOA are not eligible for stipend support.

In the event that a leave unexpectedly extends beyond two weeks, the student must immediately notify their advisor and the COM Office of Graduate Studies. The advisor may recommend enrollment in the TAMU Graduate Continuous Enrollment course (CRN 21514 - TAMU 999-350) for 0 credit hours and withdrawal from any courses in which the student had enrolled prior to the leave. Only OGAPS officials may enroll the student in the continuous enrollment course (suggested contact, Russell Ramirez, Assistant Director, Graduate Records Processing Office of Graduate and Professional Studies; [r Ramirez@tamu.edu](mailto:r Ramirez@tamu.edu)). At the discretion of the advisor, the student may be placed on leave without pay (LWOP) and may be responsible for any possible tuition costs for possible online courses completed during the leave. If the student has not committed to a laboratory, the student may choose to be enrolled in the TAMU 999 course and withdraw from other courses. Students on LWOP are not eligible for stipend support. Additionally, students will be responsible for tuition costs during the LWOP.

## **Appendix Materials**

### **I. Policy for Medical Sciences Graduate Student Support**

#### 1. Students working for COM faculty:

The COM will provide stipend and tuition/fees support for the first 2 years (24 months) of the student's enrollment in the program. Subsequent years will be the responsibility of the PI and the PI's department. Department heads acknowledge this responsibility when signing off on the Lab Acceptance Memo.

#### 2. Students working for faculty whose primary appointment is not in the COM:

The COM will provide stipend and tuition/fees support for the first year (12 months) of the student's enrollment in the program. Subsequent years will be the responsibility of the PI and the PI's department. Department heads acknowledge this responsibility when signing off on the Lab Acceptance Memo.

## II. Lab Acceptance Memo Example

### MEMORANDUM

**TO:** Carol Vargas-Bautista, Ph.D.  
Assistant Dean of Graduate Studies

**THROUGH:** \_\_\_\_\_  
Mentor's Department Chairperson

**FROM:** \_\_\_\_\_  
Faculty Mentor

\_\_\_\_\_ Date

This memo is to acknowledge my acceptance of \_\_\_\_\_ in my laboratory for his/her dissertation research. I understand that it is my responsibility to serve as the chair (or co-chair if I am not a College of Medicine faculty member) of the student's dissertation advisory committee and to fulfill all the responsibilities of the chair as defined by the Office of Graduate and Professional Studies and the college's Graduate Instruction Committee (GIC). I will provide the resources for these studies and will advise and mentor the student in accordance with the requirements for the Medical Sciences program.

I also acknowledge the financial responsibility for this student including the stipend and benefits as set by the GIC. My stipend support for the student will begin on September 1, 20\_\_\_\_. I will also pay tuition and fees beginning with fall semester, 20\_\_\_\_, and I will budget for these items in future grants that would support the student. If for some reason, I am not able to meet these obligations, support of the student is the responsibility of my department, though assistance from the college's Office of Research and Graduate Studies can be requested.

### **III. Prelim Formats**

Preliminary examinations are to ensure that students have a strong general foundation in the basic medical sciences and sufficient understanding of their specific research area to proceed with their dissertation work. The preliminary examination will have both a written and oral component. The entire scope of the examination should be completed within three weeks.

For the written component there are 3 acceptable approaches:

**A.** Each Advisory Committee member is assigned 1 weekday to administer their examination. Typically the exam would be distributed by 9:00 AM and be due by 5:00 PM. Each committee member should meet with the student prior to their examination to discuss the format and area to be examined. Acceptable written formats include:

- 1) Essay type questions
- 2) Analysis of experimental data provided by the committee member
- 3) Critique of a manuscript/grant proposal provided by the committee member

**B.** The committee decides on a topic distinct from the student's research area and has the student prepare a grant proposal (typically NIH format). Each committee member would review the proposal and assign a Pass/Fail.

For approaches A. and B. a successful pass requires no more than 1 negative vote of the committee.

**C.** The members of the student's committee jointly develop at least 5 written questions. The student will have two weeks to provide written answers to 3 of the five questions (open book). Each committee member will grade each question as Pass or Fail. The grade for each question will be considered the majority grade (a tie, e.g. 2 Pass and 2 Fail, will be considered a Pass). Students are required to achieve a passing grade on all 3 questions to pass the written portion.

Once the written portion is successfully completed the oral examination can be scheduled. In all instances the oral examination will be conducted by the advisory committee as a group. The oral examination is open ended and can explore general knowledge as well as the specifics of the student's subject track and research project. A successful pass of the oral examination requires no more than 1 negative vote from the committee.

#### **IV. Policy for Creating, Removing, or Modifying MSCI Tracks**

The MSCI program has thematic tracks which represent specific areas of research focus. Tracks must have sufficient faculty expertise and coursework to form distinct concentration area for student training. Responsibility and oversight of tracks is the purview of the College of Medicine Graduate Instruction Committee (GIC), and no changes to existing tracks or formation of new tracks can occur without GIC approval.

**A. Creation.** To create a new track requires GIC approval (majority vote of a quorum). To submit a new track for review and approval by the GIC requires the following:

- A descriptive name for the new track
- A list of track faculty
- A proposed curriculum for the track, including required courses, possible elective courses, and any other programmatic requirements for the track
- An identified track leader who would serve as the track advisor

The above information should be submitted to the Assistant Dean of Graduate Studies for inclusion on the next GIC meeting. The new track leader (or designated spokesperson) will be invited to the GIC to present the track and answer questions.

**B. Removal.** Removing an existing track requires GIC approval (majority vote of a quorum). The track leader (or designated spokesperson) should provide the following to the Assistant Dean of Graduate Studies:

- A rationale for the closure of the track
- A summary of an open vote by all track faculty on whether or not to close the track. Closing the track should have the support of a majority of the track faculty unless there are extenuating circumstances
- The number of students currently in the track and their status in graduate program (i.e. first year, second year, etc.)

If a track is approved for closure, no new students will be placed in that track, including current first-year students. Students currently in the closed track will be allowed to complete their graduate work in that track or transfer to other tracks.

**C. Modifying.** Modifying an existing track requires GIC approval (majority vote of a quorum). The track leader (or designated spokesperson) should provide the following to the Assistant Dean of Graduate Studies:

- A rationale for the proposed change(s) and its consequences for students currently in the track
- A summary of an open vote by all track faculty on whether or not to support the changes. Changing a track should have the support of a majority of the track faculty unless there are extenuating circumstances
- The number of students currently in the track and their status in graduate program (i.e. first year, second year, etc.)

If the change(s) to the track is approved by the GIC, the change(s) will go into effect starting the next semester after the GIC approval.

## **V. MSCI Publication Policy – GIC Approved 11/20/17**

For their dissertation, PhD graduate students are expected to complete a research project of sufficient scope and breadth to constitute a significant contribution to their field of study. While the overall evaluation of the quality and quantity of the student's research is the responsibility of the student's Advisory Committee, publication in peer-reviewed journals is the accepted standard for ensuring quality and adequate completeness of scientific studies. Such publication provides independent, outside review of the student's work to ensure that the dissertation results conform to the normative standards of scientific rigor and significance. In addition, successful publication during PhD training is an important step of professional development that is often critical for advancing to subsequent scientific training. To maintain the highest quality of our MSCI training experience and to ensure that our PhD graduates are effectively positioned for further training, the GIC has implemented a publication requirement as outlined below:

- 1) Students must have at least 1 first-author publication published, accepted for publication, or in minor revision status before the final defense can be scheduled. Co-first-author publications are sufficient to satisfy this requirement, but review articles that do not present the student's original research data will not fulfill this requirement. Documentation of the publication or manuscript status should be provided to the Advisory Committee and the College of Medicine Graduate Office prior to scheduling a defense.
- 2) There may be circumstance where students have completed an acceptable dissertation but cannot meet the publication standard. In these instances the student or the chair of the student's Advisory Committee should initiate a written appeal to the Advisory Committee. The Advisory Committee will review the appeal and submit a written opinion to the GIC. A successful appeal will require a majority vote of the entire GIC voting membership.
- 3) This policy applies to all students who entered the program in 2015 and subsequent years.