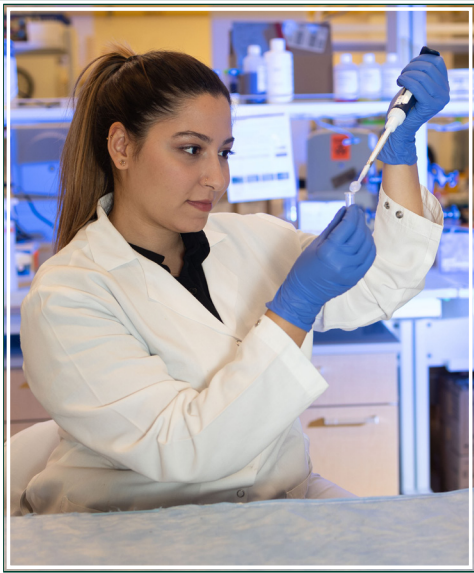


2023

Ph.D. Student Policies and Procedures



College of Pharmacy
UNIVERSITY OF HOUSTON

POLICIES AND PROCEDURES

For ALL Pharmaceutical Sciences Ph.D. Students

Academic Year 2023-2024

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1. OVERVIEW OF THE COLLEGE AND ITS GRADUATE ACADEMIC PROGRAMS

[ToC](#)

The major activity of the college is the Doctor of Pharmacy (Pharm.D.) program, a four-year course of study that is required of anyone who wishes to practice pharmacy in the US. There are four Pharm.D. cohorts of about 125 students each, called professional students. A professional degree is a non-Ph.D. doctorate (others on campus are the O.D. [Doctor of Optometry, J.D. [Juris Doctor], and Doctor of Medicine [M.D.]).

The college offers a Ph.D. degree in Pharmaceutical Sciences with five concentrations: Pharmacology (PCOL), Pharmaceutics (PCEU), Medicinal Chemistry (MedChem) Pharmaceutical Health Outcomes & Policy (PHOP), and Clinical & Translational Research (CTR). The PCOL, PCEU and MedChem concentrations are housed in the Dept. of Pharmacological & Pharmaceutical Sciences (PPS), the PHOP concentration in the Dept. of Pharmaceutical Health Outcomes & Policy (PHOP), and CTR in Pharmacy Practice and Translational Research (PPTR).

The college also offers a Master's degree in Pharmacy Leadership and Administration, which is not further discussed in this document.

Departmental Graduate Education Committees (GECs) are responsible for design and maintenance of curricula, selection of students (admissions) and assuring that students successfully complete their degrees and enter good career paths. There is a GEC for PCOL, PCEU and MedChem in the PPS department, and a GEC for PHOP in the PHOP department. A college-wide Graduate Studies Committee makes policy recommendations. (CTR is in development).

The major function of the office of the Assistant Dean of Graduate Programs is to provide administrative support for all Pharmaceutical Sciences educational activities, support all college graduate admissions, perform assessments, and oversee quality control. The office also determines the allocation of college and university resources among the concentrations.

2. IMPORTANT CONTACTS

[ToC](#)

Graduate Programs Director

For most issues, contact this individual, who will be able to answer questions or direct you to another source for answers.

Melissa Nieto
Program Director
6010 H2
mnieto2@central.uh.edu (713) 743-7725

Graduate Education Committee (GEC) Chairs

Answer questions about academic issues, admissions, progression, curriculum:

PPS (PCOL, PCEU & MedChem)

Jason Eriksen, Ph.D.
5021 H2
jeriksen@central.uh.edu (713) 743-1226

PHOP

Hua Chen, Ph.D.
4048 H2
hchen20@uh.edu (832) 842-8355

Department Chairs

Pharmaceutical Health Outcomes and Policy (PHOP)

Rajender Aparasu, Ph.D.
4052 H2
raparasu@central.uh.edu (832) 842-8374

Assistant Chair, Hua Chen, Ph.D.
4048 H2
hchen20@uh.edu (832) 842-8355

Pharmacological and Pharmaceutical Sciences (PCOL, PCEU & MedChem)

Ashok Kumar, Ph.D.
5012 H2
akumar43@central.uh.edu (713) 743-3376

Vice-Chair, Greg Cuny, Ph.D.
7036 H2
gdcuny@uh.edu (713) 743-1884

College of Pharmacy Central Business Office

Because most students are employed and receive financial aid, the Central Business Office (CBO) of the College of Pharmacy is involved in many student affairs.

Miranda McMorris
Executive Director, Business Operations
3037 H2
mmcmorris@uh.edu (713) 743-1297

Assistant Dean for Graduate Programs

For many other cases (e.g. grievance, exemptions from rules, scholarship eligibility, administrative calamity)

Brian J. Knoll, Ph.D.
6007D H2
bknoll@uh.edu (713) 743-1299

Call Melissa Nieto for an appointment and e-mail her with background information to assist us in solving your problem.

3. CANVAS PhD STUDENT WEB SITE

[ToC](#)

The central web hub for PhD students is a Canvas course located here:

[PHAR1398 185137F - COP Graduate Students](#)

It is a place to download forms to verify milestones and other requirements, and to upload them after being filled in and signed. It also includes much reference and instructional material. All PhD students are automatically enrolled in the 'course'.

On the left is a list of links, the most important of which are *Home*, *Assignments*, and *Quizzes*

Most common forms to be turned in are found in *Assignments*

In *Home*, the *Documents* section has many documents (Handbooks, Grievance Procedures, etc) and *Misc forms* for less common forms.

Also in *Home* are numerous reference documents for IT, and for Teaching Assistants.

4. CURRICULA

[ToC](#)

Each concentration has its own requirements, including didactic courses, electives, qualifying exams seminars and the like. These are found in the program handbooks posted in Canvas, *Home>Documents*.

Courses to be taken each year are determined in meetings with the graduate staff. These individuals can make sure that courses and sections are available, and that courses fit properly into each student's program of study.

5. GRADUATE ASSISTANTS

[ToC](#)

Most Ph.D. students support their studies by being employed part-time for 20 hrs./wk. as a graduate research assistant or graduate teaching assistant.

Descriptions of Categories

Research Assistant (RA)

RAs are primarily responsible to their faculty advisors. RAs are expected to devote themselves full-time to coursework and research for the purpose of completing their Ph.D. degrees. In addition, faculty advisors may assign 'side projects' to fulfill the requirements of a contract that pays the stipend (but for no more than 20 hr./wk.). The source of funds is most often an external grant held by the faculty advisor (a contract, or a major project), or other sources controlled by the faculty advisor (e.g. royalties). A form detailing RA responsibilities must be signed and uploaded to the Graduate Students Canvas site before the fall of each academic year (*Canvas>Assignments>All Concentrations>RA Responsibilities Form*). A student with their own individual fellowship is expected focus on mainly that project, though some assistance may be given to other projects after discussion with the advisor (be a good 'lab citizen').

Teaching Assistant (TA)

TAs are immediately responsible to the directors of the courses to which they are assigned, and to the College. TAs assist with instruction and support activities in the Pharm.D. program, and to a very limited extent, some PHOP graduate courses. The source of funding is the College of Pharmacy. TAs are to work no more than 20 hrs./wk. and must record their times to track this activity. Time logs will be submitted to the Asst. Dean for Graduate Programs on a biweekly basis. In addition, TAs are expected to spend significant time in their own coursework and research for the purpose of completing their Ph.D. degrees. International TAs who have extensive oral communications with Pharm.D. students must score on the Internet-based TOEFL Speaking test a 25 or greater (even if your iBT total score is ≥ 79). TAs not meeting this standard will instead serve as Instructional Assistants (IAs), with the same financial aid. A form detailing TA responsibilities must be signed and uploaded to the Graduate Students Canvas site before the fall of each academic year. (*Canvas>Assignments>All Concentrations>TA Responsibilities Form*)

Financial Support

Stipends

All RAs, TAs and IAs receive yearly stipends (PHOP: \$26,935.92; PCOL, PCEU & MedChem: \$27,935.92), paid in 12 monthly installments as 0.5 full-time employees (FTE). Due to the fluctuations in faculty funding or shifting teaching requirements of the

Pharm.D. program, an RA may be moved to a TA position, or vice-versa. The admissions offer letter specifies the financial support the student receives the first year, and the college is bound to that financial commitment, though the position (TA, IA or RA) may change later. No student admitted with TA, IA or RA support will be denied stipend support without documented cause (e.g., chronically low GPA, serious misconduct, research inability).

Keeping your assistantship requires that you maintain a 3.0 GPA. If your GPA falls below a 3.0, you will be allowed to keep your assistantship while you are on academic probation (**section 21**), but you may lose tuition and fee support (GTF, see below). If you cannot raise your GPA above a 3.0 after this one semester, you may lose your assistantship, and along with it the right to pay in-state tuition. You might also be dismissed from the program. If there is a problem with finding classes to take during the probation semester, you may petition the GEC for an extension of probation.

The college will not employ any student as a TA beyond the 10th long semester plus the following summer, except under special circumstances. Employment beyond 10 semesters will only be permitted for Research Assistants who are supported by their faculty advisors. The University does not allow any kind of GA employment beyond 12 long semesters. Students not graduating after ten semesters plus the following summer will normally be ineligible for GTF but will be eligible for the in-state waiver if employed as RAs. Students who perform CPT in the summer after their 10th long semester may be supported for one additional semester (the fall, their 11th long semester), as long as it is their last semester and students take a reduced course load (RCL).

Graduate assistants must declare their source of support 6 weeks before the beginning of classes to be effective for that semester. Faculty and students will be sent forms and instructions to complete this requirement.

Graduate Tuition Fellowship (tuition and fee support)

The College of Pharmacy GTF policy is [here](#). In brief, the key provision is maintaining a GPA above 3.0. If the GPA falls below 3.00, GTF will be revoked immediately, and not restored until the GPA is again ≥ 3.00 . If the GPA is very close to but still below 3.00, the university can be petitioned for a probationary period if there are extenuating circumstances and a plan to raise the GPA is outlined. If courses are not available, the probationary period can be extended. Students must also show adequate progress towards a degree by meeting milestones such as advisor appointment, committee formation, qualifying exams, etc.

In-state waiver

Another form of financial aid enables non-residents to pay tuition (which is paid by GTF anyway) at the Texas resident rate (the 'in-state waiver'). All Graduate Assistants receive this benefit as long they are employed as Graduate Assistants (see above under 'Stipends'), or, for students who are self-paying, hold a UH-approved competitive annual scholarship award of \$1,000 or more. Student's spouses may obtain this waiver to take classes, usually as non-degree objective (NDO) students. Normally, Graduate Assistants need take no action to obtain the waiver; others however (such as

spouses and scholarship students) must fill out a special form (see the graduate office staff).

Other support

Graduate students may apply for scholarships from the COP each spring when a solicitation is sent out. These are for one-time sums of \$250-\$2,000 from a diverse set of private donors and foundations; deserving students are matched to the appropriate sources by the College Graduate Studies Committee.

Students are strongly encouraged to apply for predoctoral fellowships from external agencies (e.g., and especially, the NIH). Do not be influenced by faculty grumbling about funding difficulties: most agencies are delighted to encourage and fund young scientists, and success rates are relatively high (25-50%). Winning one of these is a huge boost to your career and frees you from worry about funding your graduate studies and from teaching responsibilities. The college conducts courses to train you in scientific writing, and the college would support your application administratively. Fellowship opportunities currently are sparse for international students (the American Heart Association is a notable exception). The fellowship landscape is constantly changing, however, and students are encouraged to search for these opportunities.

University Recruiting Fellowships

Some new students are offered recruiting bonuses to enroll in a UH-COP graduate program (e.g., Presidential Fellowship). Be aware that these awards also require the maintenance of a 3.0 GPA, and that if an award is lost due to low grades, it is not immediately restored when grades are rectified (but the University can be petitioned to restore funds under some circumstances). This is different from the GTF, which is restored automatically if lost due to low grades.

Scholarship students

Students bringing their own scholarships are handled on a case-by-case basis, depending on whether their funding covers tuition only, stipend only, or both. The college is under no *obligation* to fund students who have lost scholarship support during their studies, however efforts will be made to allow the student to continue studies in such a circumstance.

6. SATISFACTORY ACADEMIC PROGRESS

[ToC](#)

Certain academic requirements do not correspond to graded didactic courses. Such requirements, or Milestones, include taking required trainings, passing policy assessments, submitting rotation reports, choosing a faculty advisor, appointing a committee, taking the qualifying exam on time, holding committee meetings, working on an Individual Development Plan, *and more*. Each concentration may have its own such requirements, and these are listed in the PHOP and PPS Handbooks. Enrollment holds will be placed on each student's account each semester, and not lifted until their Milestones are current (see **section 12**). Continued problems may result in temporary employment suspension with loss of stipend, and/or loss of GTF, and possible dismissal from the program.

Notes about grading

- a. Courses are graded with whole letters only (A, B, C, D, F): there are no plus-minus grades
- b. Some courses are graded S/U, and these do not factor into your GPA. However, a 'U' grade is the equivalent to a 'C' with respect to the maximum number of semester hours of 'C' permitted (see **section 21**).
- c. If you are given an incomplete (I), you have one year to complete the course requirements before it is assigned an 'F' automatically. To avoid misunderstandings, student and instructor should complete an Incomplete Grade Agreement form (Canvas>Home>Misc forms).
- d. If you see an 'NR' on your grade report, that means the instructor forgot to give you a grade (it happens). Alert him/her immediately.

7. HEALTH INSURANCE

[ToC](#)

International students

These students are required by law to have health insurance, and Student Health Insurance is automatically deducted as a fee. The fee covers you the entire year, even though part is usually charged at the beginning of the fall semester and part at the beginning of the spring semester. If you have dependents and/or need more coverage, contact Human Resources (see below) for other options. The student health insurance requirement can be waived if some other insurance is provided in its place (e.g. Employee Health Insurance, see below).

US citizens or equivalent

These students are not required by the university to have health insurance, but the College of Pharmacy requires that you have some kind of coverage and will ask you to present evidence of it. Bear in mind that you may be covered by someone else as a spouse, or as a dependent up to the age of ca. 25.

Employee Health Insurance

As a UH employee, you can purchase extensive employee coverage for yourself and family, but at a higher cost than for student health insurance. View the [Human Resources](#) insurance page to learn more about this option.

Worker's Compensation

As a part-time employee, you receive no fringe benefits whatsoever. However, UH does provide Worker's Compensation coverage if you are injured on the job (classroom or lab). Please visit [here](#).

8. OUTSIDE EMPLOYMENT

[ToC](#)

The Federal Government forbids international students (i.e., F-1 visa holders) from having additional employment off-campus. Their documents specify work as a Graduate Assistant for no more than 20 hours/week at a particular site. It may be possible to work slightly more than 20 hrs./week if the student has another on-campus appointment (called 'overload'). Consult with the graduate staff if such an opportunity arises; there are forms to fill out and permissions to obtain. An exception to this rule is Curricular Practical Training (CPT) described below (**section 22**).

For domestic students holding GTF, University policy stipulates:

Graduate students holding the GTF must not be employed, on or off-campus, for more than twenty (20) hours per week (50% of Full-Time Equivalent [FTE]). Any violation of this provision without prior approval by the Dean of the Graduate School will result in withdrawal of the funding during the semester in which the violation occurs by the student.

EXCEPTION: Approval is not required to work additional hours when class is not officially in session and/or during semester breaks and holidays.' The Exception does not mean weekends or evenings while classes are in session but to the periods between semesters and spring break. It is strongly recommended that students focus their energies on research and completing the degree. Working a second job compromises your ability to put in the odd hours often needed for research projects, and places stress of the relationships between students, their faculty advisors and co-workers.

Due to the State of Texas policy on Continuous Enrollment (**section 16**), a student may not 'take a break' from his/her studies for a semester (or more) to work a full-time outside job.

Students pursuing a consecutive PharmD-PhD degree may be subject to different conditions, and should consult the Assistant Dean for Graduate Programs.

9. GRADUATE ASSISTANT TRAINING

[ToC](#)

Training For all COP Graduate Assistants

As an employee of the University of Houston, you receive training online from Human Resources (HR). These are mandated by the governments of the United States or Texas, or the UH Board of Regents. You will receive notification indicating that you have been enrolled in the required mandatory training. All new or returning university employees (including faculty, staff, student workers, and temporary employees paid through the payroll system) must complete online training courses within the first 30 days of employment. In addition, there are annual repeats of the courses as refreshers. These requirements are in constant flux, and you will be notified by HR as appropriate.

Research Ethics

All Ph.D. students must take the course Responsible Conduct of Biological Research (RCR) (BIOL 6120), or equivalent training (see below). This is in-depth case-based instruction for the practicing scientist, not a broad 'Ethics in Science' type of course aimed at the general public. Also, online training through the Collaborative Institutional Training Initiative (CITI) is required. See below for COP policy.

Responsible Conduct in Research (RCR) Policy:

Approved by COP faculty, 17 April, 2015

All graduate students are required to be trained in Responsible Conduct in Research (RCR).

1. To fulfill the Ph.D. course requirement, graduate students are required to take both the Collaborative Institutional Training Initiative (CITI) online training in RCR and a didactic course in RCR.
2. To fulfill the M.S. course requirement, graduate students are required to only take the CITI online training in RCR.

A. CITI Online Training:

CITI (Collaborative Institutional Training Initiative) online RCR training is a nationally recognized source for research-related training. All graduate students are required to complete a basic set of required modules within the specialty area appropriate to the nature of their research. This CITI online training is required to be completed within the first semester of enrollment. An 80 percent score is required to pass the CITI online

training quiz and to fulfill this RCR requirement. The University of Houston (UH) Division of Research (DOR) staff will verify CITI training and this course training documentation must also be provided to the Assistant/Associate Dean for Graduate Programs. Courses suitable for students in biomedical sciences (PCOL, PCEU and MedChem) and in social sciences (PHOP) are available. You will need institutional login credentials. Find instructions here *Canvas>Assignments>All Concentration>CITI Research Ethics-Training*

The CITI online RCR training meets the minimum requirement for all graduate students funded on National Science Foundation (NSF) and National Institute of Food and Agriculture (NIFA) grants. However, the CITI online training alone is not sufficient to meet the National Institutes of Health (NIH) training requirement in RCR. All graduate students, either Ph.D. or M.S. students, and regardless of funding or training support, must also complete didactic course training in RCR; as defined in Section-B, below. Valid CITI online RCR training must be maintained throughout the graduate student's training.

B. Didactic Course RCR Training:

The didactic course offered at UH is BIOL 6120, currently run by the Department of Biology. This course includes the following topics: scientific misconduct, plagiarism, conflicts of interest, federal regulations (biosafety, human subjects; if these specific federal regulations are relevant toward student training), mentor/mentee responsibilities, data acquisition and management, authorship and publication, peer-review, collaborative research, and impact of research conduct on society. This didactic course training is required to be completed within the first two years of enrollment. A letter grade of B or better is required to pass and to fulfill the RCR requirement. The course training (including the syllabus, credit hours and grade) must be documented and provided to the Assistant/Associate Dean for Graduate Programs.

The UH course BIOL 6120 currently meets the NIH training requirement in RCR. If the graduate student obtains and meets the described subjects/topic requirements from a similarly offered course and/or instruction, documentation and competency must be provided to the Assistant/Associate Dean for Graduate Programs. This competency is required to be completed within the first year of enrollment.

Training For all PCOL, PCEU and MedChem Graduate Students

Safety

Most students in these concentrations work in wet laboratories and handle human-derived products and/or hazardous/radioactive substances at some point in their graduate careers. Requirements and procedures are constantly evolving; contact PPS

staff for more information. Individual faculty advisors also may require their students to be trained specifically for their projects if they involve special techniques or hazards.

Animals

Most PCEU, PCOL & MedChem students work with experimental animals (usually rodents), and specialized training is mandated: contact PPS staff for more information. Each faculty advisor may have a specific protocol for his/her project, so when you go into a lab for a rotation, additional, more specialized animal training may be required.

Pedagogical Training for All TAs

Comprehensive general training is given to all new TAs during orientation, and to other students as needed. This training is intended to enable TAs to assist the instructors of any professional course. A student starting as an RA may eventually become a TA (if there is a funding change) and will receive training at the appropriate time. Some professional courses require TAs to demonstrate or teach specific skills to Pharm.D. students, and these will be taught by the director of the relevant courses, or the Associate Dean of Academic Affairs.

Policy Training for All Ph.D. Students

This consists of student study of the Ph.D. Handbook, and for GAs, their responsibilities forms. You are assessed on your knowledge this material in a Canvas quiz online; these quizzes must be taken by all students during the fall in order for them enroll in the spring. In Canvas, *Quizzes* are among the lefthand list of links.

10. SHORT-TERM LEAVE POLICY

[ToC](#)

One of the fringe benefits **not** received by 0.5 FTE employees (such as TAs and RAs) is paid vacation. If you wish to take significant time off, it is best to do so between fall and spring semesters, when the university is closed. Otherwise, you must apply for unpaid short-term leave. Also, if UH Human Resources requires it, you may have to be terminated and then re-hired, depending on the duration of your absence. If you wish to take leave while enrolled in classes, you will have to obtain permission from instructors to complete class requirements remotely, or in some other way. Contact the graduate office staff for more information. Graduate study is year-round effort, and it is not permitted for Ph.D. students to take off summers: doing so may result in loss of stipend, and lead to questions about degree progress and commitment. Scholarship students may be in violation of their funder's policies and may also fall behind in degree progress if they leave for extended periods of time.

Short-term leave is different from Leave of Absence (LOA). In LOA, you are given permission to miss one or more semesters of enrollment, so you are not in violation of State continuous enrollment requirements. With short-term leave, you remain enrolled (except in summer, when enrollment is not required).

To take short-term leave, consult the graduate office staff for details, and a form to fill out (*Canvas>Home>Misc forms*). In general, you need permission from your faculty advisor and, if a TA, the course coordinator for whom you are working. Final approval will come from the GEC Chair and the Assistant/Associate Dean of Graduate Programs. It is critical that you make a request BEFORE finalizing your travel plans. Faculty respond very negatively to a perceived fait accompli.

Approved by COP Faculty, 23 October 2015

In addition to University of Houston (UH) holidays and end-year closure, Graduate Assistants (Teaching Assistants; TA, Research Assistants; RA and Instructional Assistants; IA) may take up to 10 working days of unpaid leave during a calendar year, additional time may be approved at the discretion of the Faculty advisor, Assistant/Associate Dean of Graduate Programs, Department Chairs and/or Course Coordinator. The maximum length of a leave, including public and school holidays, must not exceed 4 weeks and should not have more than 1 week of overlap with the official closing of Fall/Spring semesters, as defined by the school calendar. However, TAs and IAs are forbidden to be absent during Pharm.D. final exam periods. If longer periods of leave are required, combining a maximum of 2 years leave may be acceptable upon approval by the Asst. Dean for Graduate Studies. A graduate assistant who requests extended leave is required to submit a written request to justify why the extended leave is necessary. The request needs to be first approved by the course coordinator for whom they are working (for graduate students that are TAs or IAs), their advisor (for all graduate students). Final approval will come from the Assistant/Associate Dean of Graduate Programs.

11. STUDENT PROFESSIONAL TRAVEL

[ToC](#)

Students may be provided financial support by their research advisors to attend professional conferences. To qualify for travel support, a student must (1) submit, and have accepted, an abstract for a poster or oral presentation on which they are first author; and (2) apply to the professional society for travel support ('travel award'). Although a student will be funded regardless of whether they win an award, an effort should be made, since these awards are achievements that boost student careers and reflect well on the program.

Pay close attention to the deadline for abstract submission (usually 4-6 months prior to the conference). Act early to book cheaper flights and take advantage of special hotel rates (these rooms go quickly). You may need double occupancy to keep down lodging costs.

The State of Texas and the University of Houston have strict, complex and ever-changing rules about travel to prevent employees from misusing the system. In general, you must begin the travel process at least thirty days prior to traveling.

Each department has a unique procedure for student travel. Consult your advisor and the departmental administrators. The procedures are complex and change frequently, and staff receive special training so they can assist you.

If you receive travel support from some entity, it can be supplemented by a [Cullen Fellowship Travel Grant](#).

12. COURSE ENROLLMENT

[ToC](#)

Once you know what courses you need to take in the next semester (in consultation with your faculty advisor and/or the graduate staff), you may enroll online (MyUH) when the University opens that function near the end of the current semester. Enrollment holds will be placed on all students each semester. Holds will be released when students show that they are current with respect to:

- a. Training sessions
- b. RA/TA Responsibilities form
- c. Policy quizzes
- d. Plagiarism pledge
- e. Rotation reports (where appropriate)
- f. Faculty Advisor selection
- g. Committee formation
- h. Dissertation committee meetings
- i. Qualifying exams (written and oral)
- j. Individual Development Plans (IDP)
- k. Required research ethics training (CITI)
- l. Health insurance verification (where appropriate)

Forms documenting the completion of these items must be uploaded to the Graduate Student Canvas site.

Each course has one or more sections, and each section has an instructor. In some cases, such as 6X98 research courses with your faculty advisor, you must enroll in a specific section with that faculty advisor named as the instructor. If the section you need is missing, it usually means that we just overlooked it (because there are so many).

Contact the graduate staff and ask to have the right section created. First year students who do not yet have an advisor still must have a named instructor listed for a Special Problems 6X98 course. The instructor may be the departmental vice chair or the GEC chair.

Be sure that you have enrolled for 9 hours, spring and fall (unless you have a rare form of financial aid that only allows 5), unless you are doing RCL (see below). Typically, a student takes 3 or 6 hours of a didactic course, then fills in up to nine hours with one or more 6X98 courses. Students are not required to enroll in the summer UNLESS they plan to graduate in August, or UH needs you to do so for political reasons and will pay GTF for it. If for some other reason you think you need to enroll in the summer, contact the graduate staff.

13. TAKING COURSES AT OTHER INSTITUTIONS

[ToC](#)

The university has a Memorandum of Understanding and Agreement (MUA) to permit its students to register for courses at other institutions and receive a grade that counts towards a UH degree, is shown on their UH transcript and is used in UH GPA calculations. It is referred to as Inter – Institutional/ Concurrent Enrollment, and it includes regional institutions that are members of the Gulf Coast Consortium (GCC). This is very useful for students needing elective courses. A form is located at *Canvas>Home>Misc forms*. GTF pays the tuition.

Please note the following UH policies:

- Only a maximum of 12 credit hours may be taken per student, not per degree.
- Courses taken must be graduate level.
- Student must be full-time enrolled in total (total hours ≥ 9).
- International students must always be enrolled in at least one course (3 credits) at the home institution if they take an interinstitutional course.

Discuss with your faculty advisor about the course(s) to be taken. Consult the graduate office staff for administrative details, as these vary from one institution to the next. In general, you need approval from the course director at the other institution, from your faculty advisor, and finally the UH registrar. After this, you get approval from the registrar at the other institution. The Assistant Dean for Graduate Programs signs the form that completes the process.

The other institutions involved are:

- Baylor College of Medicine
- MD Anderson Cancer Center
- University of Texas Health Sciences Center Houston (includes the Medical School and School of Public Health)
- Rice University
- University of Texas Medical Branch (Galveston)
- Texas A&M University

14. MEETING WITH COMMITTEES

[ToC](#)

Periodic committee meetings are required, twice yearly for PPS concentrations, less often for PHOP. These meetings are important as progress reports and assists students in their dissertation research. A form to complete and upload is located at *Canvas>Assignments>All Concentrations>Dissertation Committee Meetings Progress Report*.

Approved by COP Faculty, August 5, 2016

Before defending the dissertation, Ph.D. students are assessed during two distinct periods of study:

Before doctoral candidacy

1. Class work (grades)
2. Research rotations
3. Qualifying or Comprehensive exams (written and oral) After doctoral candidacy

During the doctoral candidacy, the student must submit progress reports following their regularly scheduled committee meetings to the Assistant/Associate Dean for Graduate Program. The information contained within these progress reports and the frequency of these reports will be decided by their individual degree programs, however the minimum requirement is one report per annum from the student. At a minimum, the progress report should include the student's (1) previous accomplishments, (2) current progress, (3) research plans and (4) predicted completion date. This progress report should be discussed with their faculty advisor. The faculty advisor and/or committee is also obligated to include a narrative, as part of the student's written progress report, describing any important issues that may affect the student's ability to complete their dissertation. These reports will be available only to the student, Chairs of the Departments, Assistant/Associate Dean for Graduate Programs, and the Program Graduate Education Committees.

15. LEAVE OF ABSENCE (LOA)/CONTINUOUS ENROLLMENT

[ToC](#)

To complete the Ph.D., the state requires that a student be continuously enrolled from one long semester to the next (summers do not count), with no gaps. If a gap becomes necessary (mostly due to health or family matters), you can apply for a Leave of Absence (LOA). A LOA is typically for a semester or more in duration when you cannot attend classes. It can be renewed, within certain limits specified by the program. Consult first your faculty advisor, then the Chair of your GEC. If everyone approves, speak to the Asst. Dean for Graduate Programs, who will begin administrative procedures.

Additional points:

- If you intend to leave after beginning classes, be aware that GTF may be revoked, and that you will be partially refunded tuition on a sliding scale set by the University. You will need to perform a term withdrawal from all of your classes. See the graduate staff to do this.
- Please note that semesters taken off due to a LOA are still counted towards the 10-year limit to complete the Ph.D., i.e. 'the clock keeps ticking'.
- Please note that semesters taken off due to a LOA are still counted towards the 5-year limit to complete the Ph.D. after the qualifying exams are completed, i.e. 'the clock keeps ticking'.
- Before taking any action, discuss with your Faculty Advisor and GEC chair whether your assistantship will still be available to you upon your return, as circumstances may change by the time you return (e.g., grant will have expired).

16. TRANSFER CREDIT

[ToC](#)

Approved by COP faculty, 17 April, 2015

A. Courses taken at other institutions may be used to fulfill Ph.D. course requirements under the following conditions:

1. The courses were graduate level and a 'B' grade or greater was obtained.
2. The courses were taken at a U.S. institution within the previous three years.
3. The courses are similar in rigor and content to those offered in the College of Pharmacy graduate programs.
4. The course cannot have been previously used to fulfill another degree.

B. The student provides the Assistant/Associate Dean for Graduate Programs with the following:

1. Original transcripts documenting the course including the grade received and the number of credit hours.
2. A syllabus, or list of topics from the course being transferred.
3. A petition explaining what COP course is to be replaced by the transferred credit. (Student should request syllabi to inspect COP course content).

The Assistant/Associate Dean for Graduate Programs sends the documents to the relevant departmental Graduate Education Committee and to the relevant course director. The GEC has the option of requiring a competency exam before approving transfer.

If approved, the Assistant/Associate Dean for Graduate Programs will notify the student. The registrar makes the final determination of the number of credits.

Usually, no more than 9 SCH can be used as transfer credits. However, if a student is coming to UH with a new faculty member from another institution, up to 50% of the credits required for the Ph.D. can be transferred.

17. MANAGING DEGREE COMPLETION

[ToC](#)

It is critical that you carefully plan your degree completion. Abbreviated graduation schemes are located at *Canvas>Home>Documents*. Below are some important points:

1. Plan a year in advance. Before your last year, you will be queried about your graduation plans. Typically, Ph.D. students graduate in the spring of their last year (the 10th long semester) or the summer following. The college must know the numbers to better manage enrollment and financial aid. If you do not accurately predict your graduation, you may wind up losing some financial aid.
2. Schedule your required seminar (PCOL, PCEU and MedChem): These concentrations require a seminar during the penultimate semester. Schedule this as soon as possible, bearing in mind that available dates may be limited.
3. Take Reduced Course Load: You must be enrolled in Doctoral Dissertation during your last semester, but for Ph.D. students it can be for a reduced number of credit hours (3). This should be done *only if you are absolutely certain of finishing in the next semester*, and after discussion with your advisor and the Graduate Office. The considerations are quite complex and cannot be summarized in this document. Consult the Graduate Office.

Note 1: Most Ph.D. students do not have to enroll in the summer, but if you want to graduate in August, you must enroll in Doctoral dissertation, 8X99.

Note 2: If the completion deadline is missed, but completion is still possible before the Official Reporting Day (ORD) of the next semester, you can register for one credit hour in that semester and receive your degree that semester.

4. Register to graduate: Early during the last semester, go online and register to graduate (the function should be in your MyUH account). **Note:** if you fail to graduate in the semester you registered, you will not be able enroll the next semester until you cancel the previous registration to graduate. Then, you must register to graduate again. Contact the graduate staff to cancel a graduation registration.
5. Schedule your defense: As soon as is possible, arrange for your defense. **Allow time to revise the document before turning it in to the college Graduate Academic Advisor (that deadline is 2 weeks before the last grading day).** Committee members are extremely busy, and you will find there is often difficulty in getting them together in one place at a suitable time. Consider Zoom or other such methods to conduct meetings if you have out of town members (consult your GEC chair and faculty advisor).

It is sometimes possible for an absent member to read your document and then send questions: ask the GEC chair, faculty advisor and your committee if this is acceptable.

It is critical to schedule your defense to occur at least two weeks before the official end of the semester (when grades are due). Committee members may require changes in your dissertation that take time to complete and get committee approval.

6. Remote employment: If you intend to be away from campus during your final semester, you cannot be supported as a TA. You may be supported as an RA if your faculty advisor has the resources and you are doing research related to your project; however, special permission must be obtained at least a month prior to the beginning of the semester. Contact the Assistant Dean for Graduate Studies. Some explanation and justification, and a General Petition, will be required.

7. OPT/CPT [International students]: If you will complete your degree requirements early in the semester and plan to begin employment between your defense and the end of the semester, you must immediately make special arrangements with the International Students and Scholars Services Office (ISSSO). The process can take anywhere from 2-3 months. Contact that office and the GAA.

Completion of the Ph.D./M.S. Degree

*Approved by COP faculty, August 5, 2016 Modified June 14, 2017 (deadline)
Modified August 4, 2020 (copyright permissions; signature page)*

1. To earn a graduate degree, all required courses and research hours must be completed, along with qualifying/comprehensive exams, departmental seminar (PPS concentrations), dissertation/thesis defense and uploading the defended and revised document to Vireo.

2. The graduate staff will use iThenticate to check for originality, prior to submission of the document to the faculty advisor. The dissertation must then be sent to the student's committee **two weeks** prior to the proposed defense date.

3. Any copyrighted material used in figures must be accompanied by the appropriate permissions.

4. Use the UH approved title page template, which includes committee member names **but not the signatures**. (In Canvas, under *Misc Forms*; also [here](#))

5. The thesis/dissertation is not complete until it is (1) successfully defended; (2) revised according to committee specifications; (3) verified by iThenticate to be an original work; (4) checked for copyrighted material; (5) uploaded to the UH library

archive through Vireo; (6) approved (in Vireo) by both the student's faculty advisor and the Graduate Office. *All of these steps must be accomplished one week before the last grading day of the semester.*

Note: If the work contains patentable material, consider an embargo. Talk to the Graduate Office.

For Ph.D. students: If the deadline is missed, the student must enroll in the subsequent semester for 3 semester credit hours (SCH). There will be no Graduate Tuition Fellowship (GTF) awarded, and employment is not guaranteed. However, if the student then completes **every** degree requirement before the last day to add classes in this subsequent semester (12th class day), the student may change to 1 SCH by submitting a petition to the Assistant/Associate Dean for Graduate Program of the College of Pharmacy.

6. To participate in the graduation ceremony ('walk'), the student must have at least obtained complete signature approval from the dissertation committee following the successful completion of the student's dissertation defense **by the end of the final exam period**. The remaining steps (revising dissertation, uploading) may be completed later, but the student must register for the next semester as described above.

18. GRIEVANCE PROCEDURES

[ToC](#)

These are described at *Canvas>Home>Documents*. Please note that this document describes the procedure to be followed at the Department and College levels, before moving (if necessary) to the University level ([here](#)).

Of note, these procedures are NOT to be used for contesting grades. A grade protest procedure is in development.

19. ACADEMIC AND RESEARCH MISCONDUCT

[ToC](#)

The College of Pharmacy joins the University of Houston in affirming commitments to the integrity of their academic missions. We treat academic and research dishonesty with the utmost of seriousness.

The College of Pharmacy follows University of Houston and Division of Research policies and procedures, slightly adjusted for COP circumstances. The document (*Code of Conduct, Research Trainees*) is located at *Canvas>Home>Documents*.

20. CAREER DEVELOPMENT

[ToC](#)

While some Ph.D. students matriculate with a clear idea of what career they want to pursue, many do not. Students may be unaware of the opportunities available to them in government, industry, and in diverse other areas.

Graduates in some College of Pharmacy degree programs have immediately taken high-paying jobs in industry; however, this situation can vary depending on the state of the economy and the regulatory environment, not to mention the ever-shifting health care landscape. All students can benefit from learning about career options other than those immediately in front of them. Career development at the College of Pharmacy consists of the following:

A. Individual Development Plans (IDPs)

There are several IDP web sites available, depending on broad disciplinary definitions. myIDP is an element of the Science Careers web site (located [here](#)) that is orientated at the physical sciences, while [Imagine PhD](#) might be more suitable for other students.

At these sites, a student creates a free account, and takes surveys to assess Skills, Interests and Values. An algorithm then suggests pathways to potential careers and how to best follow them, as well as extensive references that describe the careers. Generally, it is best to start this in the first year, because you may discover that a desired career goal requires a certain skill set, and you would need time to acquire it before graduation. These are not intended to be the sole source of career information, but they are simple, turnkey, self-driven tools that can be very useful as part of your career search.

We require students to implement an Individual Development Plan, and the way we track this is by asking for certificates that are generated after each module is completed and automatically e-mailed to the student. Note, only the certificate is sent, not the IDP itself. Confidentiality is assured by this method, and you need never reveal your IDP unless you want to discuss it with someone you trust. Upload your IDP certificates here: *Canvas>Assignments>All Concentrations*.

B. Seminars

The concentrations sponsor seminars by alumni or by distinguished visiting speakers. Some of these may be entirely career-focused, while others are research seminars that may allow additional time for students to ask about professional development.

C. Dissertation Committee Meetings

A Ph.D. student meets with his/her committee once or twice per year (depending on the program). At this meeting, the student is asked about his/her career plans, and dialogues occur (hopefully). A committee member may have valuable insights into certain careers or workplaces, suggestions about skills the students should acquire, and

valuable contacts. Information about career development is required in regular committee reports (section 13).

D. LinkedIn

The Graduate Program office has a group on LinkedIn. Alumni and students are encouraged to join, with aim of making connections to foster mentorship and facilitate job searches.

21. ACADEMIC STANDARDS

[ToC](#)

The University permits colleges to implement standards that are more rigorous than University standards.

Approved by COP Faculty, 23 October 2015

This policy applies to all Ph.D. programs offered at the departments associated to the College of Pharmacy at the University of Houston (UH). Specifically, this policy refers to all didactic courses established for those programs.

1. To obtain an advanced degree from the College of Pharmacy, a cumulative grade point average (GPA) of at least 3.00/B (A=4.00) must be maintained in all graduate level didactic core courses required for that Ph.D. degree. Failure to do so will automatically put the student on academic probation for the following semester and may result in loss of financial support. Once on academic probation, the student has one semester (either the next Fall semester or Spring semester) to improve his/her grades. If after this, the student's cumulative GPA is still below 3.00, the student may have to be dismissed from the program. However, if either (1) the necessary graduate courses are not being offered during next Fall semester or Spring semester or (2) not enough graduate courses / credit hours are available to enable the student to raise their GPA to the required cumulative 3.00, then the student may petition for their probationary period to be extended for an additional semester. This petition should include detailed reasons that justify the extension as well as current transcripts. The petition should be directed to the student's departmental Graduate Education Committee (GEC). The departmental GEC will evaluate the student's petition and recommend whether the student should either be granted an extension of the academic probationary status or be dismissed from the graduate program. The petition, together with the GEC recommendation, will be forwarded to the Assistant/Associate Dean of Graduate Programs of the College of Pharmacy for a final decision. The maximum duration for a probationary period is two long semesters (Fall and Spring); which corresponds to a maximum period of 12 months. Graduating students must have a 3.0 or better GPA at the time of graduation.

2. **College of Pharmacy Graduate students are allowed to receive a grade of 'C' in no more than 8 Semester Credit Hours (SCH) throughout the Ph.D. program.** Students will receive a letter of warning after they receive their first 'C' reminding them of this policy. Students will be automatically put on academic probation upon receipt of their second 'C' grade and will be dismissed from the program upon receipt of another 'C' grade that adds to the total of 8 or more SCH.

3. A student receiving a 'D' in any core course with 3 or more SCH will be dismissed from the program, unless the GEC determines that other aspects of the student's career (e.g., high GPA, publications, research progress) warrant the student's continuation under academic probation. If the student is permitted to continue, they must repeat the

course and achieve at least a 'B' grade. Failure to get a 'B' on the second try will result in immediate dismissal from the program.

4. A student receiving an 'F' in a course with 3 or more SCH will be dismissed from the program with no appeal.

5. A student receiving one Unsatisfactory (U) grade in any course (including any credit for research, lab rotations, seminars, special problems, and doctoral research) will be put on academic probation. A student receiving two Unsatisfactory (U) grades in any course (including any credit for research, lab rotations, seminars, special problems, and doctoral research) will be dismissed from the program. A student with an 'I' as the most recent grade in a graduate level course will not be eligible for graduation.

Students enrolled in Pharm.D./Ph.D. program will follow this same policy described above. If they were to be dismissed from the Ph.D. program for any of the reasons previously described, they will be still allowed to remain in the Pharm.D. program.

Note: The financial consequences of low grades are described in Section 5.

22. INTERNSHIPS

[ToC](#)

Working at a drug company, biotech firm, consultancy, etc. is an excellent way to boost your career and learn about work outside of academia. Faculty advisors report that this is the most transformative experience a student can have.

Finding a position

In some disciplines these are very easy to find, and in fact you might even be sought after. Students often discover positions from web postings, or because their faculty advisors or other faculty members have connections. Begin searching in the fall for a position the following summer.

After you have found a position

You need a letter from the prospective employer explaining the job title, salary, a basic description of job duties, hours of employment per week, job location, the start date and ending dates.

Domestic Students, summer

In the summer, since you are not enrolled, simply make suitable arrangements with the employer. Make sure to inform your faculty advisor and the Asst. Dean for Graduate Programs. We need to record and publicize this activity, and temporarily suspend your assistantship.

- If you are a TA, you must not leave before the end of the spring final exam period and must return in time to resume TA duties in the fall.
- If you are enrolled in any spring course other than research hours, you must not leave before completing it.
- If the position is paid, you cannot be simultaneously employed as a graduate assistant, and we will suspend your appointment temporarily. Please notify the GAA and CBO of intent to complete a paid internship
- You must be in good academic standing (i.e. GPA \geq 3.0) and have made adequate progress on your dissertation project (as attested by your faculty advisor).

International Students, summer

For international students the process is different due to immigration requirements. The activity is called Curricular Practical Training (CPT) and requires a student be enrolled in a special sub-plan. See the graduate staff for more details. An important criterium is that you are not eligible until after you have been in US for 12 mos. The four limitations described above also apply to international students.

Fall or spring internships, domestic and international students

Due to enrollment requirements, these are complex to manage, and it is prudent to begin arrangements as soon as possible. In general, such work should be closely related to the student's dissertation topic. Contact the graduate staff, who may need to reach outside of the college for expertise.

Get the process started at least 4 weeks ahead of time, if possible.

The graduate staff will guide you through the process: it involves your home department, the Asst. Dean's office, and the ISSS office. There may be nominal fees, but they are reimbursed in some cases (PCEU, PCOL & MedChem). We are aware that sometimes offers are made on short notice.

23. LIMITS TO NUMBER OF YEARS/HRS OF GRADUATE STUDY

[ToC](#)

The State of Texas does not want anyone to be a perpetual graduate student. You must finish your Ph.D. within ten years and Leaves of Absence do not stop the 'clock'. The State also limits the number of years you may take to complete your Ph.D. after passing your qualifying exam to five. This clock also continues to tick during a Leave of Absence. There also are limits to the total number of credit hours you can take, called the '99 hour rule'. If (a) you complete 30 master's credits hours at UH, or, (b) earn a master's degree in the same discipline at some other institution, you can take a maximum of 99 doctoral credits hours, after which you must pay non-resident tuition. This is rarely a problem for COP Ph.D. students, who typically start work at the Ph.D. level from the beginning.

24. OTHER SOURCES OF INFORMATION

[ToC](#)

The University determines many policies, and these are found [here](#) (choose 2023-2024 Graduate Catalogue in drop down). The [UH Graduate School](#) web site has much useful information. Bear in mind that Colleges have the option of modifying University policies to make them more rigorous; thus, it is wise to consult with the graduate staff or the Asst. Dean for Graduate Programs for information about any given policy.

Policies and procedures undergo constant changes, and it is prudent to verify anything you read here by asking the graduate staff.