

BIOCHEMISTRY

Graduate Program

Student Handbook
2020-21

THE UNIVERSITY OF TEXAS AT AUSTIN

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Welcome!

Welcome to the graduate program in Biochemistry at The University of Texas at Austin. This handbook will serve as a resource for incoming and current graduate students in the program, acquainting you with the policies and procedures involved in obtaining an advanced degree. We look forward to working with you and supporting your progress towards a graduate degree in Biochemistry. We encourage you to actively use this handbook throughout your studies. This handbook is a summary of the university and program policies. For more complete information, refer to the Graduate School Catalog or inquire to the Graduate Advisor or Graduate Program Staff. **This handbook contains guidelines applicable to the class entering in Fall 2020 and supersedes all previous versions.**

Your Responsibilities as a Graduate Student

You are responsible for understanding and following the rules and policies that govern your academic degree. Diligent planning is required to ensure that you meet all the milestones and deadlines for your degree. The [Graduate School website](#) is a centralized resource for information on degree requirements, deadlines, and policies. Two University catalogs are essential references: The General Information Catalog and The Graduate Catalog. These catalogs are available online at catalog.utexas.edu/graduate. The policies and requirements governing your graduate career are dynamic. **You are well advised to stay in frequent contact with the Graduate Program Administrator and Graduate Advisor, and default to them whenever you have questions.**

Note that the Graduate School requires all graduate students to maintain a cumulative graduate GPA of at least 3.0. If your cumulative GPA falls below 3.0, the Graduate School will place you on academic probation. You will have one semester to raise your cumulative GPA above 3.0 or you will be dismissed from the program

In addition to the requirements of the Graduate School, the Biochemistry Graduate Studies Committee (BCH GSC) has set additional requirements for the graduate program. These include:

- Performing all required laboratory rotations during the proscribed rotation periods during the first academic year. See *Laboratory Rotations* for additional details about this requirement.
- Attend and actively participate in all of your courses. Participation in individual classes will be defined by the course instructor. (Students may request and be granted accommodations for a documented disability. Please see the *Disability Services and Accommodations* for more information.)

Failure to satisfy these requirements will result in you not making satisfactory progress toward your degree. In this event, you will be notified in writing by the Graduate Advisor. The letter will include immediate corrective actions that are required to continue making satisfactory progress towards your degree. If you fail to take the recommended actions, the Biochemistry GSC will be notified and may then recommend your termination from the Biochemistry Graduate Program.

The Graduate School

As a graduate student, you are admitted to both the Biochemistry Graduate Program and the Graduate School of The University of Texas at Austin. All graduate degrees are the responsibility of the Graduate School.

The Graduate School includes the Vice President and Dean of the Graduate School and staff, plus about one hundred Graduate Studies Committees. The Graduate School can be reached at (512) 471-4511 or GradStudentSvcs@austin.utexas.edu.

Each department or field of study offering a graduate degree has a Graduate Studies Committee (GSC) composed of active assistant professors, associate professors, and full professors (tenured and tenure-track faculty). Each GSC sets its policies and supervises its graduate program.

Approximately 30 faculty members from various GSCs, plus six graduate students, serve as representatives in the Graduate Assembly, the legislative body of the Graduate School.

There is also a student organization concerned with issues related to graduate study, called the Graduate Student Assembly (GSA) (utgsa.net). Each graduate program may elect one student representative to the Graduate Assembly, although any graduate student is welcome as a member.

The College of Natural Sciences (CNS)

Dr. Paul Goldbart is the Dean of the College of Natural Sciences (cns.utexas.edu). The Dean's office is located in W.C. Hogg 3.134 and can be reached at (512) 471-3285 or cnsdean@austin.utexas.edu.

CNS is home to a number of organized research units and twelve academic departments, including Astronomy, Chemistry, Computer Sciences, Human Ecology, Integrative Biology, Marine Science, Mathematics, Molecular Biosciences, Neuroscience, Physics, and Statistics and Scientific Computation.

Please visit the CNS website for additional information about college-wide policies: cns.utexas.edu/graduate-education/college-policies.

The Institute for Cellular and Molecular Biology (ICMB)

Founded in 1997, the Institute for Cellular and Molecular Biology (icmb.utexas.edu) is a university-wide research unit that supports the Cell and Molecular Biology (CMB), Biochemistry (BCH) and Microbiology (MIC) Graduate Programs. ICMB faculty members are from multiple departments within the College of Natural Sciences, the College of Engineering, College of Pharmacy, and the Dell Medical School.

Beginning in fall 2020, the Department of Molecular Biosciences will become the administrative home for the ICMB. An Executive Committee, comprised of the Director, GSC Chairs, Graduate Advisors, Graduate Program Administrator, faculty representatives from different disciplines, and a student representative provide oversight and guidance for graduate education within the ICMB.

US Mailing address:

The University of Texas at Austin
The Institute for Cellular and Molecular Biology 100 E. 24th St.
Austin, TX 78712

Campus mailing address:

ICMB, Mail Code A5000

The Biochemistry (BCH) Graduate Program

The Biochemistry Graduate Program is administered through an executive committee that represents the Biochemistry Graduate Studies Committee (GSC). These members are drawn from diverse departments, with faculty primarily from Molecular Biosciences, Chemistry, Pharmacy, and Biomedical Engineering.

US mailing address:

The University of Texas at Austin
Biochemistry Graduate Program 100 E. 24th St.
Austin, TX 78712

Campus mailing address:

BCH Graduate Program, A5000
Phone number: (512) 471-0934
The administrative offices are located in NHB 2.606

Biochemistry Graduate Program Administration

Graduate Studies Committee Chair (GSC): Jessie Zhang, Ph.D.

jzhang@cm.utexas.edu | 512-471-8645 | NHB 4.126

The GSC Chair oversees the Biochemistry Graduate Studies Committee, which is a committee of all Biochemistry faculty members that sets policy concerning academics and degree requirements for the program. The GSC Chair also oversees graduate admissions for the program.

Graduate Advisor: David Taylor, Ph.D.

dtaylor@utexas.edu | 512-471-9156 | NHB 4.121

The Graduate Advisor is a faculty member appointed by the Dean of the Graduate School to advise Biochemistry doctoral students (generally in the sense of clarifying policy or granting exceptions to policy), to monitor their academic progress, and to represent the Graduate School in matters relating to graduate students.

Graduate Program Staff:

Graduate Program Administrator: Justine Meccio

justine.meccio@austin.utexas.edu | 512-471-0934 | NHB 2.618

Graduate Coordinator: Yasmin Deosaran

Yasmin.deosaran@austin.utexas.edu | 512-471-0934 | NHB 2.618

The Graduate Administrator and Graduate Coordinator are the staff who handle most of the day-to-day operations of the program. Their responsibilities include responding to inquiries, facilitating degree processes, handling petitions and special requests, monitoring degree progress, student academic employment and fellowships, processing registration, and maintaining graduate student files. In addition, they are available to assist students with other ad-hoc issues or concerns. Most questions concerning the program can be addressed to the Graduate Administrator and/or Coordinator, who will consult with the Graduate Program Advisor and GSC Chair as necessary. The Graduate Administrator and Coordinator also implement the recruitment and admission process for applicants to the CMB program. They are responsible for event planning, orientation activities, and supporting the administrative needs of new students throughout the first year.

Biochemistry Graduate Studies Committee (BCH GSC)

Hal Alper	Walter Fast	Edward Marcotte	Christopher Sullivan
Eric Anslyn	Ilya Finkelstein	Stephen Martin	David Taylor
Dean Appling	Ilya Finkelstein	Edward Marcotte	David Soloveichik
Jeffrey Barrick	George Georgiou	Stephen F Martin	Scott Stevens
Karen Browning	Marvin L Hackert	Andreas Matouschek	Christopher Sullivan
Lulu Cambronne	Rasika Harshey	Mikhail Matz	David Taylor
Lydia Contreras	David Hoffman	Jennifer Maynard	Lauren Webb
Richard M Crooks	Jon Huibregtse	Jason McLellan	Christian Whitman
Kevin Dalby	Brent Iverson	Edward Mills	Claus Wilke
Bryan Davies	Arlen Johnson	Som Mukhopadhyay	Blerta Xhemalce
Dan Dickinson	Kenneth Johnson	Tanya Paul	Yan (Jessie) Zhang
Livia Eberlin-	Adrian Keatinge-Clay	Shelley Payne	
Schiavinato	Alan Lambowitz	Pengyu Ren	
Ron Elber	Dan Leahy	Susanne Ressler	
Andrew Ellington	Songmin Lee	Rick Russell	
Walter Fast	Hung-Wen (Ben) Liu	Jason Shear	

Degrees Offered

The Biochemistry Graduate Program is designed for students seeking a Ph.D.; however, under certain rare circumstances and with the consent of the supervisor and Graduate Advisor, a Master of Arts with Thesis may be allowed.

Doctor of Philosophy (Ph.D.)

The Ph.D. program prepares you for a career in research by emphasizing scholarship and original research. By the submission of a dissertation, you demonstrate that you have a mature knowledge of the field and that you can design and execute original research.

Requirements for Admission

To be considered for graduate admission to the University of Texas at Austin, candidates must meet the [minimum requirements](#) set by the Graduate School and the Biochemistry Graduate Program. Students seeking a graduate degree in biochemistry must have a bachelor's degree or the equivalent in a cognate area, such as chemistry, biology, physics, or microbiology with the following preparation: mathematics through one year of chemistry, including organic chemistry, biochemistry, and physical chemistry; general physics; and biology, including cell biology. Deficiencies in undergraduate courses, if not too extensive, may be corrected during the student's first two semesters in the graduate program. These courses are usually not counted toward graduate degrees.

The Biochemistry Graduate Program only accepts students seeking a Ph.D. Admission is only offered for the fall semester of each academic year. Please see the program website for additional details about admissions requirements and procedures: icmb.utexas.edu/biochemistry/prospective-students/admission-requirements.

Commitment to Diversity

The Biochemistry graduate program is committed to providing educational opportunities to students from diverse backgrounds. We strongly encourage students of all backgrounds, and especially students underrepresented in the sciences to apply for admission to the graduate program. In addition to the

support from our department, the University of Texas at Austin offers a number of [fellowships](#) to promote graduate study and diversity.

Academic Requirements for a Biochemistry Ph.D.

As noted above, the Biochemistry Graduate Program expects incoming students to have successfully completed at least one year each of biology (genetics and cell biology recommended), organic chemistry, biochemistry and general physics. Students with any deficiencies in these areas should remedy them as soon as possible. You are urged to speak with the Graduate Advisor if you have any concerns about what remedial courses you may need.

The requirements for a Ph.D. from the Biochemistry Graduate Program are:

- GPA of 3.0 or higher
- Continuous membership in a permanent lab after completion of three lab rotations in the first-year
- Completion of the core courses with a grade of at least a B
- Completion of BIO 391 Grant Writing course in the fall of second year
- One additional elective (3 credit hours each and related to Biochemistry)
- Completed TA Training Workshop prior to first TA position
- One semester as a teaching assistant (TA)
- International Students: successful completion of ITA English Language Certification exam and workshop (first year)
- Successful completion of Qualifying Exam (spring of second year)
- Admission to candidacy (after completion of qualifying exam; spring or summer of second year)
- Concurrent registration in dissertation hours from admittance to candidacy until graduation
- Annual meetings with dissertation committee
- Successful completion of dissertation and final defense

Additional information about Biochemistry Ph.D. requirements are referenced in the Graduate Catalog at catalog.utexas.edu/graduate/fields-of-study/natural-sciences/biochemistry/degree-requirements.

Degree Milestones

The UT Austin Graduate School has set up a web-based system of Milestones that should be achieved during the Ph.D. program. Students must review these Milestones upon starting the degree program and check them periodically throughout their training. You may view the current Biochemistry Graduate Program Milestones at gradschool.utexas.edu/academics/milestones.

Progress Towards Degree

All students are expected to make reasonable progress toward the degree. Among other situations, any of the following could be cause for dismissal from the Biochemistry Program due to failure to progress:

- Core courses not successfully completed by May of second year
- Qualifying Exam not completed by spring of second year
- Admission to Candidacy not initiated by start of third year
- Annual Meetings not conducted annually or on time
- Dissertation not completed within four years of admission to candidacy

Laboratory Rotations

During the first nine months in the program, you are required to perform rotations in the laboratories of ICMB-affiliated faculty. These rotations broaden laboratory experience and will help students find the research area and permanent laboratory that best suits them. You are required to spend at least 20 hours per week working in their rotation lab. At the end of each rotation, the faculty member completes a rotation evaluation of your performance. These evaluations are shared with the Graduate Advisor and determine whether you will receive credit that semester for research hours.

2020/2021 Laboratory Rotation Schedule

Sep 1, 2020 – Oct 16, 2020	Virtual Rotation (7 weeks)
Oct. 19, 2020 – Dec. 18, 2020	In-person Rotation 1 (9 weeks)
Jan. 4, 2021 – Mar. 12, 2021	In-person Rotation 2 (10 weeks)
Mar. 15, 2021 – May 21, 2021	In-person Rotation 3 (10 weeks)

Note: The above rotation schedule may be subject to change as a result of the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic.

Rotations are arranged through mutual agreement between the student and the faculty member (Principal Investigator or 'PI') of the lab in which the rotation is arranged. Students should start contacting PIs to ensure a rotation placement well in advance of the start of each rotation period.

Faculty members must be part of the Biochemistry (BCH), Cell and Molecular Biology (CMB) or Microbiology (MIC) GSCs in order to accept a BCH student for a rotation. **Changes to an assigned rotation may be made only with permission of the Graduate Advisor. It is not an option to remain in a laboratory for longer than the designated rotation period, nor are students permitted to begin a rotation later than the mandated start date. Failure to participate in or to complete the required lab rotations may result in the BCH GSC recommending your termination from the program.**

Once a PI agrees to accept a you for a rotation, a *Rotation Agreement* form is required to document this. You are responsible for obtaining all required signatures on the *Rotation Agreement* form, including those of the PI and the Graduate Advisor before submitting the completed form to the Graduate Program Administrator. The *Rotation Agreement* form is due to the Graduate Program Administrator by the start date of the rotation period.

Permanent Laboratories

At the end of your final rotation, you will choose which laboratory to work in on a permanent basis. This is done after careful consideration and consultation with the supervising professor (also known as Primary Investigator or PI) of the lab. All students who start their first rotation in September will join a permanent lab after their third rotation ends, at the beginning of May, 2021. ICMB financial support ends on 5/31/21 for all first-year students. Subsequent support becomes the responsibility of the permanent lab (starting on 6/1/21). It is program policy that first-year students may not be appointed as Teaching Assistants (TA); therefore, PIs are expected to support their first-year BCH student as a Graduate Research Assistant (GRA) in the summer of 2021.

If you have not made arrangements for a permanent supervisor by the end of your first nine months in the program, you will be notified that the next six weeks are your last in the program. If you find a permanent supervisor before the end of this six-week period, that supervisor must petition the Graduate

Advisor to request approval for your continuation in the Ph.D. program. You may not be eligible for financial support during this six-week period.

If, for any reason, you end your association with your permanent laboratory before arranging a position with a new laboratory, you will be allowed two months to find another permanent laboratory. While you are without a laboratory, you may not continue to work toward the Ph.D. and may not have financial support unless you have a TA position. Your new supervising professor must be a member in good standing of the Biochemistry GSC and must petition the Graduate Advisor asking that you be allowed to continue in the Ph.D. program.

After a PI agrees to accept you into a permanent laboratory, a *Permanent Lab Agreement* form is required to document this. You are responsible for obtaining all required signatures on the *Permanent Lab Agreement* form, including those of the PI and the GSC Chair before submitting the completed form to the Graduate Program Administrator. Students will be notified via email of the deadline to submit the *Permanent Lab Agreement* form.

Once in a permanent laboratory, you may change your laboratory if necessary. However, any change must be discussed with and approved by the Graduate Advisor. Your new supervising professor must be a member in good standing with the Biochemistry GSC. If you select a supervising professor that is not a member of the Biochemistry GSC, that faculty member must request to be added to the Biochemistry GSC. If the new supervising professor is a member of the GSC for the CMB or MIC graduate program, you may transfer to the new graduate program, pending approval of the new graduate program.

Co-PI Rule

It is possible to have two faculty members listed as supervisors (co-PIs). You may designate one as primary supervisor or you may have them listed equally as co-supervisors, in which case they will have equal responsibility over your progress. However, if one of the supervisors is not a member of the Biochemistry GSC, that faculty member cannot be the primary supervisor. He or she can be a co-supervisor or a secondary supervisor. Please inform the Graduate Program Administrator if you plan to have a co-PI.

Core Courses

Effective Fall 2020, the Fall standard core courses are:

- BCH 395J Genes, Genomes, and Gene Expression
- MOL 290C Introduction to Biostatistics & Computational Analysis
- MOL 190C Responsible Conduct of Research

The Spring 2021 standard core course is:

- MOL 390C Graduate Biochemistry

Additionally, students are required to take one of the following courses in the spring of their first-year:

- BCH 387D Biophysical Methods in Biochemistry and Molecular Biology
- BCH 394P Bioinformatics
- BCH 394 Structure and Function of Proteins and Nucleic Acids

If a student earns less than a B (3.0) in any of the core courses, they need to retake the course. If it is necessary to repeat a core course, it must be taken at the very next opportunity that the course is offered. The core courses may not be taken more than twice. Note that the Graduate School requires a

cumulative GPA of 3.00 to remain in good standing. Failure to pass a core course that is being re-taken for the second time and/or failure to maintain a GPA of 3.0 or higher will result in a probationary status or dismissal from the program.

Core Course Descriptions

BCH 395J Genes, Genomes, and Gene Expression

Explore how genomes are maintained, propagated, and converted to functional RNAs and proteins. Understand the primary literature that has led to key advances in these research areas and the experimental approaches that are currently being used to forge new advances. Appreciate the current frontiers in these areas and explore the boundaries; what questions have known or hypothesized answers, and what questions remain to be answered by the next group of researchers and students.

MOL 190C Responsible Conduct of Research

This course will provide formal training in the ethical and responsible conduct of research in the disciplines represented in the ICMB graduate programs. Such training is required for researchers funded by training grants and federal fellowship awards, but is also vital for trainees embarking on their careers in scientific research. The class will be taught by a team of faculty with experience in research training and mentorship, using a discussion and case-study based approach. The topics covered will include professional development of trainees, research misconduct, conflicts of interest, collaborations, mentor/mentee responsibilities, authorship and publication, peer-review, data management, animal and human subject research, as well as contemporary ethical issues such as racism and inequity in science.

MOL 290C Introduction to Biostatistics & Computational Analysis

This course will introduce first year Ph.D. students in the ICMB graduate programs to the basic concepts and practices of statistics, programming, quantitative data analysis and data visualization as they apply to research in biochemistry, cell and molecular biology, and microbiology. Quantitative data analysis skills are increasingly critical in these research fields, so this course is intended to provide the foundation for developing these skills and prepare for more advanced coursework. Students will learn in an interactive, hands-on manner using the widely used languages R and Python, and build up to executing an independent data analysis project working in teams.

MOL 390C Graduate Biochemistry

Mode of action of biological macromolecules. Tools and methods that biochemists use to dissect biological problems. Lectures, case studies and in-depth analysis of original research papers.

BCH 387D Physical Methods in Biochemistry and Molecular Biology

This course will focus on the theory and application of physical methods used in biochemistry and molecular biology, with a major emphasis on macromolecular structure determination by X-ray crystallography and cryo-electron microscopy. Other topics include surface plasmon resonance, isothermal titration calorimetry, and bilayer interferometry. The course will provide students with the knowledge to design structural and biophysical studies to maximize data quality and avoid pitfalls, as well as to analyze and critique metrics used to validate structural results found in the primary literature. Much of the learning is expected to occur during lectures, with supplemental learning occurring via online content.

BCH 394 Structure and Dynamics of Protein and Nucleic Acids

This course is designed to give students the tools they need to be successful in a career in research in biochemistry and related disciplines by building a strong foundation to understand structure/function

relationships in biological macromolecules. Students are expected to have a basic knowledge of protein and nucleic acid structure at the introductory biochemistry level. Learning is facilitated by computer simulation of reaction kinetics, which provides the basis to learn kinetics but also gives the most robust and comprehensive methods of fitting data to test models.

BIO 394P Bioinformatics

An introduction to systems biology and bioinformatics, emphasizing quantitative analysis of high-throughput biological data, and covering typical data, data analysis, and computer algorithms. Topics will include introductory probability and statistics, basics of Python programming, protein and nucleic acid sequence analysis, genome sequencing and assembly, proteomics, synthetic biology, analysis of large-scale gene expression data, data clustering, biological pattern recognition, and gene and protein networks.

Additional Required Coursework

BIO 391 Grant Writing and Presentation Skills

In preparation for the qualifying exam, second-year students are required to take BIO 391 Grant Writing & Presentation Skills. BIO391 is a writing-intensive course for second-year graduate student in the fall semester that involves writing of an NIH-style grant proposal on their own research, presentation of the proposal to the class, and practice in identifying specific aims in research areas outside their primary area. The class is taken by students in the Microbiology, Biochemistry, and Cell and Molecular Biology Programs.

Required Elective

The Biochemistry program requires students to complete one additional elective course related to Biochemistry that will be selected in consultation with the student's PI. Elective courses must be three credit hours and related to biochemistry. Please consult the current course schedule for a list of available electives.

Qualifying Examination

In order to proceed with the Qualifying Exam, you must:

- Have a cumulative grade point average of at least 3.0
- Have completed all core courses with a grade of B or above
- Be assigned to a permanent laboratory
- International students must also be ITA certified as eligible for employment "with student contact".

I. Purpose

The Qualifying Examination is a critical step within the doctoral degree program and is required for admission to candidacy. You will be expected to prepare a written research proposal and a short presentation, and defend the proposal orally before a committee of three faculty. The examination is designed to test whether the student is ready to plan and carry out independent research. The exam will also test the breadth of the student's preparation beyond the focus of the dissertation research. It is scheduled typically at the beginning of the fourth long semester, so that students will have completed their core courses, and spent considerable time in a research laboratory. The examination will concentrate on the experiments and background aspects of the proposed research, but may also test general knowledge in all areas of biochemistry.

II. Format

There will be a single written proposal and oral exam on the topic of your laboratory research. The written component of the exam will consist of a proposal following the NIH guidelines for a pre- doctoral fellowship, but with an added appendix of relevant figures and preliminary data. In writing the proposal, you are expected to consult with your advisor, but the work must be entirely your own. For example, you are not allowed to copy sections of your advisor's research grant proposals. In addition, you must propose at least one set of experiments that have NOT been suggested to you by your advisor.

You will be expected to have a thorough understanding of your proposed research, both broadly and specifically. The following is a partial list of the things you are expected to understand in preparation for your oral exam.

- What is the significance of your proposed research? What are the anticipated results and implications to the broader field of biochemistry and biology? What motivates the proposed research?
- You should understand the basis for your research in terms of prior literature and foundations of biochemistry (e.g., structures of proteins and nucleic acids, basic energy metabolism, etc.) upon which you build your research.
- You should provide quantitative and/or statistical analysis of your data, including an understanding of the equations used in data fitting and the use of numerical integration in data fitting, when appropriate.
- Understand all aspects of any method your research is using or proposing to use. For example, be able to explain how mass spectrometry, qRT PCR, nexgen sequencing, etc. work if you propose to use these methods.
- If you are using kits in your research, you must understand the biochemical reactions that are taking place, how they are used to get the desired result, and what variables you can control to optimize the efficiency of the reactions.
- Do you have a working hypothesis that guides the design of your experiments?
- What are the appropriate controls, both positive and negative for your experiments?
- How will you adjust your methods if your controls are not working or you are not getting the expected results?
- If you are making mutations, you must know the structures of the amino acids, the rationale in choosing mutations, and biochemical basis for expected outcomes. You should have a working knowledge of the structure of any protein you are studying and how any mutation will impact the structure and/or function of your protein.
- You should know the meaning of steady state kinetic parameters and equilibrium binding constants, and how they are measured.
- You should know what it would take to probe the mechanisms underlying the phenomena you are observing in your research.
- You should consider how your research could lead to a new patent. What might be required to translate the results of your research into a useful product?

III. Timing

Each student is required to submit an abstract and title for the proposed research at least five weeks before the qualifying exam date. The abstract should concisely state the problem, and briefly describe the approach that will be used in the research plan. The most relevant references should be included (typically one or two references), as well as a general description of the methods to be used. Each

abstract typically fits on one page. Exams will typically be scheduled between early February and early March. The Graduate Advisor and/or Graduate Program Staff will provide instructions about how to submit your title and abstract.

IV. Proposal Format

After submitting the abstract, you will have four weeks to complete the written research proposal (the written proposal is due one week prior to the exam). This document involves a detailed description of the background and logic behind the proposition, and the experiments proposed to address it. The proposal should address the following questions: (a) What do you intend to do? (b) Why is this important? (c) What has already been done? (d) How are you going to approach the problem? Proposals are usually hypothesis driven, with experiments designed to test the proposed hypothesis.

The format to be used is as follows:

- A. Cover Page: Includes your name, project title and the name of your supervising professor.
- B. Abstract: This should be a self-contained description of the project, that should be understandable on its own. Include a statement of objectives, and methods to be employed. Limited to 30 lines, the abstract should fit on one page.
- C. Specific Aims: State concisely the goals of the proposed research, and its impact on the research fields involved. List succinctly the specific objectives (e.g., to test a stated hypothesis). Limited to one page.
- D. Background and Significance: Present the background to the proposal, critically evaluating existing knowledge, and specifically identify gaps which this project is intended to fill. State the importance of the research described in this proposal by relating your specific aims to longer term goals. Suggested length is two to three pages.
- E. Experimental Design and Methods: Describe the experimental design and the procedures to be used to accomplish the specific aims. Discuss how the data will be analyzed and interpreted. Discuss potential difficulties and limitations with your approach and suggest alternative approaches. Point out necessary controls. Potential outcomes of the experiment should be presented, and results described using hypothetical data. These figures should be included under "Supplemental Material" and will not be counted against your page limitations. Your objective in this section is to convince the reviewer that you know what you are talking about, have thought things through, and are prepared for the inevitable surprises. (Suggested length typically three to five pages)
- F. Literature Cited: Use a standard citation format.
- G. Appendix: Figures, tables, etc. relevant to the proposal may be included in an Appendix. This appendix may be used to show preliminary data and illustrate anticipated results.
- H. Biographical Sketch page: Include your undergraduate and any other degrees, TA or GRA experience, and other relevant information.

The proposal should be single spaced with at least one-inch margins on each side, using a 12-point font size. Each item should be identified by its title. Be concise and clear. **An electronic copy (PDF**

format) of the Written Proposal must be submitted to the Graduate Advisor and Graduate Program Staff by 5:00pm one week prior to the examination date.

Note: Be extremely careful to avoid plagiarism in preparing the text and figures of your proposal. Here is a one suggestion as to how to avoid plagiarism: While reading the sources of information that you plan to use in preparing your assignment, take notes on the content, using your own words. While preparing your paper, refer to your notes, rather than the original source. If you feel the need to use a phrase from a source, be sure to put the phrase in quotes, and reference the source.

V. Examination Format

To conduct the exam, you will make an oral presentation and defense before a committee of faculty on the assigned date. Plan a twenty-minute talk. The examination committee will generally focus on questions pertaining to the proposal, but may also lead you to discussion of related topics. Your supervising PI is invited to the oral defense, but is not a member of the examination committee, and is asked to observe only. Following the exam, the examination committee will discuss your performance and their decision with you, as well as any recommendations or conditions made. The examination committee will record the outcome and its evaluation on the *Qualifying Examination Results* form, provided by the Graduate Program Administrator. This form will be included in your student record.

VI. Outcomes

1. Unconditional pass. Self-explanatory.
2. Conditional pass. Your committee may ask you to re-write a portion of your proposal, or satisfy some other condition before you pass the exam. Establishing conditions is up to the discretion of the committee.
3. No pass. This outcome indicates that the proposal and/or defense are inadequate. Any student receiving this outcome will need to substantially re-write the proposal and re-defend it.
4. Fail.

After Your (successful) Presentation and Defense

Get in the lab and get going! You should use your proposal as a starting point and a guide to help you get immersed in your thesis project. Consider sending your proposal to the NIH (or re-formatting and sending it elsewhere).

Admission to Candidacy

Once you have successfully passed your Qualifying Exam, you must apply for, and be admitted to candidacy. You are expected to apply for and be admitted to candidacy by the end of your second year, after completing course requirements. There may be a small number of students who are not able to complete their qualifying exam with the rest of their cohort. If this situation applies to you, you may delay reaching candidacy until your third year with the approval of the Graduate Advisor. In any case, you must reach candidacy by the end of your third year (sixth long semester). Failure to meet this benchmark will result in loss of good standing in the program. Any exceptions require approval of the Graduate Advisor, and must be communicated to the Graduate Program Staff. The Graduate School will notify the student via email when their *Candidacy Application* is approved.

Requirements for Admission to Candidacy:

Admission to Ph.D. candidacy has four requirements:

- Complete the 4 core courses with a grade of B or above.

- Maintain a GPA of 3.0 or higher
- Successful completion of the Qualifying Exam
- Submission and final approval of an online [Candidacy Application](#)

Dissertation Committee:

Before you submit a *Candidacy Application*, you will need to form your official dissertation committee. Your committee will have three primary responsibilities:

- General supervision of your research
- To monitor your degree progress
- To certify that an acceptable dissertation is submitted when you complete your degree

Students should consult with their PI and Graduate Advisor to form a suitable permanent Dissertation Committee. Students should explicitly confirm with proposed committee members that they agree to serve on the Dissertation Committee before submitting the *Candidacy Application*. Any changes in committee membership must be made prior to application for candidacy.

Biochemistry Dissertation Committees are typically composed of a total of five UT GSC members, including the student's supervising professor (PI). Your PI chairs the committee, and at least one member must be from completely outside of the BCH GSC. If it's not possible to acquire a committee member that is outside of the BCH GSC, then you must have at least one member that is outside of your primary department. Approval from the Graduate School may be required in this event. The University permits a dissertation committee of four members; however, the policy of the Biochemistry Graduate Program is for committees to have five members.

If you elect to have a scholar from off-campus on your committee, they must be appropriately credentialed to serve on a Dissertation Committee. **The Graduate Advisor and Graduate Dean will approve an addition of such a committee member only under exceptional circumstances, and only if the expertise he/she offers cannot be provided by a faculty member on campus.** Students should consult with the Graduate Advisor for approval prior to contacting faculty members outside of UT Austin.

It is sometimes necessary to change the membership of the Dissertation Committee prior to completion of the dissertation. Changes for the sole purpose of constituting a more compliant committee will not be approved. Changes in the committee must be completed well in advance of the dissertation defense. Before changes will be approved, the Graduate Advisor and the Graduate Dean must approve the *Request for a Doctoral Committee Change* form. Consult the Graduate Program Staff prior filing a request for a change in committee membership.

Registration in Candidacy Status

Following admission to candidacy status, you will no longer register for Advanced Study and Research but instead must be registered for Dissertation every long semester. Once in candidacy status, you must enroll in Dissertation Hours with a course number ending with a "W" (e.g. BCH 399W, BCH 699W, or BCH 999W) all subsequent semesters until graduation.

Annual Meetings and Dissertation Committee

Once you have been admitted to candidacy, you are required to meet annually with your Dissertation Committee to review their progress. Following this meeting, the committee will record a summary of recommendations via the *Annual Committee Meeting* form. This form will be provided by the Graduate

Program Staff and must be endorsed by the committee chair. It is your responsibility to obtain all requisite signatures on the *Annual Committee Meeting* form. The signed form and written recommendations must be returned to the Graduate Program Administrator and will be included in your student record.

If you have not completed the dissertation within three years of admission to candidacy, the results of the annual review will be presented with recommendations to the Biochemistry GSC Executive Committee. The Executive Committee will then decide what actions may be required to address your progress.

Although the supervising professor (PI) provides day-to-day guidance, all members of the committee are expected to be available for consultation and students should feel free to ask for advice from them or any faculty member.

Application to Graduate

Prior to graduation, you are required to notify the Graduate School of your intent to complete the degree by submitting the online *Graduation Application*. This application must be submitted by the published deadline during the semester you intend to complete the degree. Visit the Graduate School website at gradschool.utexas.edu/academics/graduation for information about current deadlines.

The Final Oral Exam/Dissertation Defense

All students completing the Ph.D. in Biochemistry must successfully present and defend their dissertation to their Dissertation Committee in order to graduate. The defense consists of two parts. The first is a public seminar that is open to all faculty and students. Immediately following the seminar, you will meet privately with the Dissertation Committee to respond to questions from the committee members.

As you prepare to defend your dissertation, you should consult with the Graduate Program Staff about necessary forms and procedures, as well as review the instructions on the Graduate School website: gradschool.utexas.edu/academics/graduation/deadlines-and-submission-instructions.

The final form of the dissertation must be circulated to the Dissertation Committee at least four weeks prior to the anticipated date of the final oral exam. When each member of the committee has had an opportunity to read the draft and agrees that it is ready to defend, you may schedule the final oral exam. It is your responsibility to coordinate an appropriate defense date, time, and location. A *Request for Final Oral Examination* must then be signed by the participating Dissertation Committee members and submitted to the Graduate School at least two weeks prior to the defense date.

The student, committee chair, and Graduate Program Staff will be notified via email when the Graduate School approves the *Request for Final Oral Examination*. The Graduate School staff will email instructions for the *Report of the Dissertation Committee* form. This form records the outcome of the student's final oral examination and must be signed by all of the committee members following the defense. It is your responsibility to obtain all necessary signatures and to submit the completed report form to the Graduate School.

Submission of Final Dissertation

Graduating students are required to publish their thesis, report, dissertation or treatise digitally by uploading a single PDF to the Texas Digital Library (TDL). The final document must be in a format acceptable to the Graduate School, and detailed information about formatting specifications can be found at gradschool.utexas.edu/academics/theses-and-dissertations/digital-submission-requirement-formatting. In addition to uploading the final dissertation to the Texas Digital Library, you are also required to submit a printed copy of the following documents, known as the *Required Printed Pages*, to the Graduate School:

- The *Report of Dissertation Committee* with signatures of your supervising committee - no proxy signatures allowed. ALL committee members and the GSC Chair (or representative) must sign the report. This form is provided to you by the Graduate School.
- A [Statement on Research with Human Participants form](#); and
- Any requests to [Delay Publication](#).

The *Required Printed Pages* and final dissertation are due to the Graduate School by 3:00 pm on the relevant deadline for each semester. These documents are a requirement for graduation. **If you do not submit all required materials by the published deadline for a given term, you will not graduate during that semester.**

Visit gradschool.utexas.edu/academics/graduation for a list of current deadlines.

Timeline of the Ph.D. Program

First Year

Fall semester

Attendance at ICMB Annual Retreat and Graduate Program Orientation
Complete BCH 395J, MOL 290C, and MOL 190C (Core)
Complete laboratory rotations

Spring Semester

Complete MOL 390C (Core)
Complete laboratory rotations
Complete ITA English-Language Certification (International students only)
Choose a permanent laboratory (May)
End of May: financial support from ICMB ends
First of June: newly assigned permanent laboratory assumes financial responsibility of student
End of August: TA workshop (if TA for the first time in the fall of the second year)

Second Year

Fall semester

Complete BIO 391 Grant Writing Course
*Complete required elective

Spring semester

Take and pass Qualifying Exam
* Complete required elective
Apply for Candidacy (end of spring/summer semester, if all requirements are complete)

Third Year

Fall semester

Enroll in Dissertation (W) course after admission to candidacy
*Complete required elective

Spring semester

Enroll in Dissertation Courses
Hold annual meeting with committee
* Complete required elective

*Note: The required elective can be taken in the second or third year of study.

Fourth Year through Graduation

Hold Annual meeting with committee
Completion of one semester TA requirement

Final semester

Apply to graduate – the deadline is early in semester
Schedule final defense with committee
Complete and defend dissertation
Submit final dissertation to Texas Digital Libraries
Meet all deadlines required by Graduate School

Master of Arts with Thesis (M.A.)

The Master of Arts with Thesis involves original research carried out under the supervision of a member of the Biochemistry GSC. This option is allowed only under certain, rare circumstances and requires the permission of the research supervisor and the Graduate Advisor. Students who are approved to complete a Master of Arts in lieu of the Ph.D. must notify the Graduate Program Staff of this decision. The Graduate Program Staff will create a *Program of Work* to certify completion of the M.A. requirements. The *Program of Work* must be approved by the Graduate Advisor and Graduate School.

Academic Requirements of the Master of Arts with Thesis

- Completion of the Core Courses with a grade of at least a B and an overall GPA of 3.0 or higher. The core courses for a Master of Arts are the same as for the Biochemistry Ph.D.
- Two additional elective courses – One is the BIO 391 Grant Writing, and the second elective should be 3 credit hours and related to Biochemistry
- Completion of a total of at least 30 semester hours of course work with the following requirements:
 - 21 hours must be graduate-level course work,
 - 18 hours must be in the major area,
 - 6 must be in supporting work (Supporting work: non-core biology/chemistry graduate or upper division course.)

All work counted for a MA must have been initiated no earlier than six years before date of degree. No more than six hours can be course with credit/no credit grades. Approval of the Graduate Advisor is required prior to registration for a credit/no credit course. No course counted toward any other degree may be counted toward the MA degree.

Master of Arts Thesis Committee

Your supervising faculty (PI) and one other BCH GSC member will serve as readers of the MA thesis. It is your responsibility to arrange for the second reader. Any faculty member asked to be a reader should have an interest in the topic.

The readers must be allowed at least two weeks to read the thesis and return it to you. Revisions are often necessary, so it is pertinent that you provide the thesis to your readers well in advance of the final deadline to submit the thesis to the Graduate School. Graduating students must submit all required materials and upload a final copy of their thesis to the Texas Digital Libraries by the published deadlines for each term. Current deadlines and graduation requirements can be found at gradschool.utexas.edu/academics/graduation.

Financial Support

Entering graduate students are supported for the first 9 months (Sept 1–May 31) by the ICMB as Graduate Research Assistants (GRA). These positions provide a stipend, university health insurance, and tuition remission for up to 9 credits during each fall and spring semester. Continued financial support becomes the responsibility of the permanent laboratory starting on June 1. When selecting laboratories, you should inquire as to the availability of summer support from grants as TA positions are very limited during the summer. The primary means of support for continuing Biochemistry students is through appointment as a Teaching Assistant (TA), Graduate Research Assistant (GRA), or receipt of a University Fellowship or external fellowship (NIH, NSF, etc.).

Policy for Graduate Student Stipends

It is the policy of CNS and the Biochemistry graduate program for continuing students to maintain compensation in line with the stipend rate for first-year students. The Biochemistry Graduate Program annual stipend rate for 2020/21 is \$32,500, plus university health insurance, and tuition for up to 9 credits at the in-state rate during fall/spring and for up to 3 credits at the in-state rate during the summer. It is the preference of the Biochemistry Graduate Program that PIs increase their student's stipends to remain in line with the stipend rate for incoming students, as the first-year student compensation may increase from year to year.

CNS policy states that the minimum stipend should be no less than the TA stipend for that fiscal year or the first-year student stipend, whichever is higher, and must include tuition and fees as stipulated by the Graduate School and Vice-President for Research. To remain in line with program policy, if a student serves as a TA, the BCH graduate program requires that the PI supplement the student's stipend so that it is in line with the first-year student stipend of their entering year. CNS policies on graduate student employment and stipends can be found at cns.utexas.edu/graduate-education/college-policies/academic-employment.

Academic Employment

Below is a description of the most common forms of benefits-eligible academic employment available to Biochemistry graduate students: Graduate Research Assistantships and Teaching Assistantships. Questions about employment may be directed to the MBS Human Resources staff (MBS_HR@austin.utexas.edu) and/or the Graduate Program Staff.

Graduate Research Assistants (GRA)

Most faculty have research grants that allow them to appoint students as Graduate Research Assistants (GRAs). You should communicate with your PI concerning the availability of continued grant

support for GRA positions. In order to be eligible for a Graduate Research Assistant position, you must be in good academic standing, be making satisfactory progress, and enroll in a minimum of 9 credits during each of the long semesters (fall and spring) and a minimum of 3 credits during the summer semester.

Teaching Requirement

The BCH Graduate Program requires that all students must be appointed as a Teaching Assistant (TA) for at least one semester by no later than their fourth year. Students will be required to complete this before graduation, but not before admission to candidacy. This is to allow increased flexibility in scheduling without compromising the standard timetable for advancement to candidacy.

Teaching Assistants (TA)

College of Natural Sciences (CNS) policy states that Biochemistry graduate students entering in 2020/21 may only be TA for a total of three semesters during their graduate studies. Exceptions to this rule require advance approval from the CNS Associate Dean for Graduate Education.

The Biochemistry Graduate Program does not directly control TA assignments, but coordinates with the Biology Instructional Office to make TA assignments for graduate students. Each semester, the Graduate Program Staff will survey faculty about the need for TA appointments. Requests for TA positions must be made by the supervising faculty (not the student) directly to the Graduate Program Staff. All students must complete a mandatory TA training workshop prior to their first TA appointment. This workshop is offered at the start of each fall and spring semester and is coordinated by the Biology Instructional Office (BIO).

ITA English-Language Certification for International Students

UT Austin conducts English-Language Certification for TAs whose first language is not English. The Biochemistry Graduate Program requires this certification of all international students, regardless of whether they serve as teaching assistants. All international students admitted to the Biochemistry graduate program are anticipated to unconditionally pass the Oral English Proficiency Assessment and be “certified with student contact.” Students must be certified to be employed “with student contact” before being admitted to candidacy. Under certain circumstances, international students may be exempt from the requirement to complete the ITA English-Language Certification exam.

Additional information can be found at global.utexas.edu/english-language-center/about/department-resources. ICMB will sponsor the registration cost for ITA English-Language Certification. Please also consult the Graduate Program Staff prior to registration.

Re-Appointments

Re-appointment as a TA or GRA is contingent on professional performance and satisfactory progress toward the degree. This includes compliance with the schedule set by the graduate program and demonstrated effectiveness as a TA or GRA.

Limit to Appointment Hours for Academic Employment

Appointments for academic employment as a GRA/TA/Al or grader may not exceed a cumulative total of 20 hours per week during the first two long semesters (fall and spring) of graduate study at UT Austin, and no more than 30 hours per week during the subsequent semesters, including summer. International students may only work as many as 20 hours per week during the fall and spring

semesters. Additional guidance about requirements for Graduate Research Assistants can be found at gradschool.utexas.edu/finances/student-employment/conditions.

Additional Employment and Outside Employment

Biochemistry graduate students are not allowed to have outside employment such as part-time positions in restaurants, retail, etc. or any type of job that interferes with completion of coursework or research. On occasion, you may have 5-10 hours of additional or outside employment that is related to your role as graduate students, such as paid grader positions, but only after the completion of the first year. International students are not eligible for additional employment beyond their current GRA or TA appointment. Before accepting any additional on-campus employment you should first consult your supervising professor and/or the Graduate Program Staff. You are required to disclose all outside activity that may result in a conflict of interest with your appointment at UT Austin. Information about this can be found on the UT Human Resources website at hr.utexas.edu/current/compliance/outside-employment.

University Fellowships

Each year the Graduate School accepts nominations from each graduate program for a variety of competitive University Fellowships. Many awards offer year-long stipends, and some provide generous compensation. Your supervising professor will nominate you based on research accomplishments and promise of research excellence. The Graduate Advisor evaluates nominees and determines which may be sent forward to the Graduate School. Nominees for these awards are selected based on the strength of their applications and on their records of performance. Additional information about available awards can be found at gradschool.utexas.edu/finances/fellowships. Questions about fellowships may be directed to the Graduate Program Staff.

Competitive National Fellowships

All first-year students strong grade point averages should apply for federally funded competitive national fellowships, such as the NIH or NSF Pre-doctoral Fellowships or the Howard Hughes Pre-doctoral Fellowship. These fellowships are prestigious and often provide support for several years of graduate education. You are also encouraged to explore and apply to fellowship programs for which you may be uniquely qualified. NSF Fellowship information can be found at www.nsf.gov/funding/. NIH Fellowship information may be found at www.grants.nih.gov/grants/oer.htm

Other Aid

The Office of Student Financial Services (finaid.utexas.edu) administers several long-term loan programs, the College Work-Study Program (for which graduate students are eligible), and a short-term loan program for registration and other emergency needs. Assistance with part-time or full-time job placement is also offered for students or student spouses. [Student Accounts Receivable](#) can provide information about institutional tuition/emergency loans and tuition and fee rates as well as information regarding fee payment and deadlines, loans, tax credits, etc. The Graduate Program Staff will email notices of additional scholarships and fellowships that become available throughout the year.

General Information

Contact Information

Mailboxes

All student mailboxes correspond with their lab's mailbox. First-year students will need to routinely update their directory information to reflect what lab they are rotating in so that they receive mail. All MBS-affiliated lab mailboxes are located in the mailroom of NHB 2.606.

Change of Address and Phone Number

It is important that all directory information be kept up to date; and you should update your personal contact information via UT Direct. You must list a phone number where voice mail messages may be left. To update personal information, please visit [Texas One Stop](#).

Email Communication

The BCH Graduate Program and the University of Texas use e-mail as the primary method of communication with students, therefore it is imperative that you maintain a current email address. Graduate students are expected to regularly monitor their email accounts and **failure to check email may result in missing time-critical information**. UT Austin does not mandate students create a utexas.edu email account, however, **all students who are employed as GRAs or TAs are required to establish a UT email account**. Information about establishing a UT email address can be found at get.utmail.utexas.edu. Please notify the Graduate Program Staff of any changes in email address.

Required Student Training

The University of Texas requires safety training for laboratory employees, which includes all Biochemistry graduate students. BCH students are required to be in compliance with these safety trainings prior to beginning their first lab rotation. The required safety courses offered by the Environmental Health and Safety Office (EHS) and are:

- OH 101 Hazard Communication (General)
- OH 102 Hazard Communication (Site-Specific)
- OH 201 Laboratory Safety
- OH 202 Hazardous Waste Management
- OH 207 Biological Safety

You can register for and complete the above courses online at ehs.utexas.edu/training/lab-training-requirements.php.

Fire Extinguisher Use, Animal Use Training, and Radiological Health are on-campus classes and are offered during the orientation period.

The Fire Prevention Services Office sponsors the Fire Extinguisher Use course, with more information at fireprevention.utexas.edu/fire-safety/portable-fire-extinguisher-training

All of the above requirements must be satisfied within the first 30 days of the fall semester.

Academic Integrity

As a graduate student at The University of Texas at Austin, it is important that you conduct yourself and your studies in a manner that aligns with the university's [Honor Code](#) and its standard of [academic integrity](#). Scholastic dishonesty includes, but is not limited to, cheating, plagiarism, collusion, and falsifying academic work, research, or records. **The Biochemistry Graduate Program has a zero-tolerance policy regarding academic dishonesty**. Any student caught participating in academic

dishonesty including, but not limited to plagiarism, falsifying academic work, research or records, will face immediate dismissal from the program.

Incomplete Grades

If a you do not complete all the assignments in a course before the end of the course, the instructor may report the symbol X (incomplete) to the registrar in place of a grade. You must then complete the course requirements by the last class day in your next long-session semester of enrollment. The instructor must report a final grade through the [Online Grade Change](#) system by the end of the grade-reporting period in that semester. If these deadlines are not met, the symbol X is converted to the symbol I (permanent incomplete). If you are not enrolled during a long-session semester for twenty-four months following the end of the semester in which the X is reported and the instructor does not report a final grade, then the symbol X is converted to the symbol I. The symbol I cannot be converted to a grade. When the symbol I is recorded, the symbol X also remains on the student's record. The period for completion of course requirements may be extended only under unusual circumstances beyond the student's control and only upon the recommendation of the instructor and the approval of the Graduate Dean. The instructor of record must make requests for an extension of X to the Graduate Dean through the submission of a completed "Update to Student Academic Record" form. This request must provide reasons why the student was unable to complete the course work by the last class day in his or her next long-session semester of enrollment after receiving the X.

Note: TAs and GRAs may acquire no more than one temporary incomplete grade (X) and one permanent incomplete grade (I), or two temporary incompletes (X).

Holiday Schedules

Graduate students do not have the same break schedules as undergraduates. All Biochemistry graduate students are paid continuously through the December, spring and May breaks, and thus, have the same work schedule and holiday schedule as university staff. The holiday schedule for university staff is published at www.utexas.edu/hr/holiday. **You should communicate with your faculty supervisor(s) about expectations for holiday schedules.** Note: The relative tranquility of campus during breaks is very conducive to research progress in the laboratory.

Second Degrees

Biochemistry students will not be allowed to work toward or obtain a second degree outside of the Biochemistry program (e.g., a Master's degree in a separate graduate program) without the written consent of their supervising professor and the Graduate Advisor.

Registration

In general, students must be enrolled for classes whenever they are receiving services from the University, such as course instruction, faculty interaction, employment, and fellowship or training grant stipends. Please read the following section carefully and check with the Graduate Program Staff if you have any questions regarding course load requirements.

Additional information about registration policies is published on the Graduate School website at gradschool.utexas.edu/academics/policies. International students should also consult UT International Student and Scholar Services for more information about registration and immigration requirements: global.utexas.edu/iss.

Full-time Student Status

The Graduate School at The University of Texas at Austin recognizes nine semester hours during a long-session semester (fall and spring) and three hours during a summer session as a minimum full-time course load. Graduate students who must register and remain registered for a full-time course load include holders of Graduate School-administered fellowships and scholarships; assistant instructors, teaching assistants, academic assistants, assistants, graduate research assistants, and tutors; students living in university housing; students receiving certain student loans; and international students.

Continuous Registration

The Graduate School requires that all graduate students at the University of Texas at Austin be continuously registered and pay tuition and fees for all long semesters (fall and spring) of each academic year until completion of the degree. Additional information about this policy is published at gradschool.utexas.edu/academics/policies/continuous-registration.

Registration for Dissertation Hours

Once admitted to candidacy, you must register for dissertation hours every long semester until graduation. You will no longer register for research hours but instead register for dissertation hours: 399W, 699W, or 999W. Registration for 999W fulfills the nine-credit requirements for Teaching Assistants, Graduate Research Assistants, or fellowship recipients.

Registration Access Periods

You may register for courses during prescribed registration access periods set by the Registrar published in the university [Course Schedule](#). Prior to registration, check your *Registration Information Sheet* (RIS) for information about specific dates and times when they may enroll in classes.

Note for GRAs, TAs, and Fellowship Recipients: If you are appointed as a GRA/TA/Al, you must be registered for the minimum required number of credit hours before your appointment will be processed and approved. Similarly, if you are a fellowship recipient you must complete registration before your awards will be distributed. **Failure to register on-time may result in delayed stipend disbursements.**

Confirmation of Attendance

Following registration and payment of your tuition and fees, you must take further action to confirm attendance. Once your tuition billing balance is paid and changed to zero, go to [MyTuitionBill](#) in UT Direct and select the "Confirm Attendance" option to secure your registration. This step must be completed during registration for every semester. **Failure to confirm attendance will result in your enrollment being cancelled by the university.**

Late Registration

If you miss the regular registration periods, you may be able to register late, but you will be responsible for paying any late fees assessed by the Registrar. Late fees may range between \$25 and \$200. Late registration takes place during the first four class days of each long semester and during the first two class days of each summer session. All late registrations require the approval of the Graduate Advisor and submission of a *Request for Late Registration* form to the Graduate School. Please consult the Graduate Program Staff for assistance with late registrations.

Adding/Dropping Courses

You may add and drop courses during the add/drop period without penalty. After the 12th class day, you cannot add a class without petitioning the Graduate School. Petitions of this nature are not often approved, so be certain your registration is correct before the add/drop period ends. If you need to drop a course after the 12th class day deadline and your petition is approved, you will not be reimbursed for the cost of the course. If you have to add a course to keep full-time status due to TA/GRA obligations, you will have to pay for the additional course.

Registration Requirement for the Master's Students

During the last two semesters before graduation, master's students must be registered in thesis courses, BCH 698A (3 credits) and BCH 698B (3 credits). BCH 698A may only be taken once and must be taken before BCH 698B. Students must be registered for 698B during the semester in which the thesis is submitted.

Leave of Absence

Students not yet in candidacy must obtain authorization from the Graduate Advisor for a leave of absence. Those admitted to candidacy must receive approval from the Graduate Dean and the Graduate Advisor for a leave of absence. An *Authorization for Leave of Absence* form must be submitted to the Graduate School and it is your responsibility to obtain all necessary signatures on the form.

If you are approved leave, you must apply for readmission in order to return to the University, but readmission during the approved period is automatic and the application fee is waived. While on an approved leave you may not use any University facilities; nor are you entitled to receive advice from any member of the faculty. A leave of absence does not alter the time limits for degrees or course work. Additional information is published on the Graduate School website at gradschool.utexas.edu/academics/policies/leaves-of-absence.

Withdrawal

Early Withdrawal from BCH Program During First Year

Early withdrawal from the program may result in a requirement to pay tuition for that semester. Consult with the Graduate Advisor and notify the Graduate Program Staff if you are considering leaving the program during first academic year.

Withdrawal from BCH Program and University

Students who drop their entire course load by definition withdraw from The University of Texas at Austin for the semester. To withdraw from the Graduate School, you must file a *Withdrawal and Refund Request* form with the Dean of the Graduate School, which may be obtained from the Graduate School in Main 101 or from GradStudentSvcs@austin.utexas.edu. The form must be signed by the Graduate Advisor, and you are responsible for obtaining all necessary signatures. If withdrawing from the university, you must also notify the Graduate Program Staff of your decision.

Withdrawal from the university before the last class day of a semester will result in a requirement to personally pay the tuition for that semester. Withdrawals during a semester cancel most UT payments of tuition and tuition waivers. These cancelations result in a large balance due which UT Austin will bill to you. This information does not apply to medical withdrawals. Additional information about withdrawal, including for medical reasons, is published at gradschool.utexas.edu/academics/policies/withdrawals.

Out-of-State Tuition Waivers

Employment as a TA or GRA qualifies non-Texas residents and international students for resident (in-state) tuition rates. To ensure the non-resident portion of your tuition bill is removed and you are charged in-state tuition rates, you must request an employment waiver. The employment waiver is available online via UT Direct and must be completed every semester during registration and before your tuition bill is paid. You may access the waiver form at utdirect.utexas.edu/acct/fb/waivers/rte_request.WBX.

Note for Fellowship Recipients

Recipients of University Continuing Graduate Fellowships, PGEF award (or Pre-Emptive University Fellowships) should not complete the employment waiver form during the semesters when they are supported by fellowship funds. The Graduate Program Staff will request a waiver for you during these terms. Recipients of *external* fellowships should notify the Graduate Program Staff of their funding and provide a copy of the award letter, as this information is required to request a tuition waiver from the Graduate School and College of Natural Sciences.

International Student Health Insurance Waiver

International students are required by the University to have health insurance in order to comply with visa regulations. The UT Select (staff) health insurance coverage provided to GRAs and TAs will fulfill this requirement. However, the University also automatically enrolls all international students in the UT Student Health Insurance Plan. As a result, **if you are insured through UT Select you will need to complete additional steps to waive coverage through the UT Student Health Insurance Plan after registering for classes.** This will automatically remove charges for the UT Student Health Insurance Plan from your tuition bill. The waiver form is available online and must be completed during registration every semester that you are appointed as a GRA or TA. Claim the waiver here: <https://utdirect.utexas.edu/apps/iss/insr/waiver/>.

Student Records

The Graduate Program Staff maintains the official program records of all Biochemistry graduate students. It is your responsibility to submit all required documentation or forms necessary to maintain your file. Records are subject to the **Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act of 1974 (FERPA)**. Members of the Biochemistry GSC, any faculty member appointed to your dissertation committee, and the Graduate Program Staff will have access to your file. Other university personnel may be required to access your student record, and may be authorized to do so by the Graduate Advisor, if their assistance is required to carry out necessary administrative responsibilities related to graduate studies. More information about FERPA and your privacy may be found at registrar.utexas.edu/staff/ferpa.

Your student file may contain:

- Admission Documents
- Curriculum Vitae
- Laboratory Rotation Agreement forms
- Permanent Laboratory Agreement form
- Qualifying Exam Results form
- Safety Training Certifications (e.g. Hazard Communication, Radiological Health, Laboratory Safety and Fire Extinguisher)
- TA Evaluations
 - Each time that you assist in a course, the supervising faculty member fills out an evaluation of your performance. One copy of the evaluation goes into your student file.

You may request that copies of your student evaluations be placed in your file. If you choose, you may prepare a statement that will be appended to the evaluation and become part of the file.

- Annual Meeting of Dissertation Committee forms
- Other items that provide a record of the student's activities and progress. Students are encouraged to place reprints of any published articles in their files.

Disability Services and Accommodations

The University of Texas at Austin is committed to providing every necessary resource to students with disabilities. If you are a person with a disability and have special academic circumstances – whether permanent or temporary – please visit the Services for Students with Disabilities (SSD) web site at diversity.utexas.edu/disability.

The Biochemistry Graduate Program is committed to accommodating students with documented disabilities. However, it is your responsibility to make arrangements for any accommodations with a course instructor. You must secure a letter from SSD, present it to the instructor, and formulate an appropriate accommodation plan with the instructor. Please see the SSD guidelines for additional details.

Parental Accommodation Policy

The College of Natural Sciences (CNS) recognizes that some graduate students start or expand families during their time in our graduate programs. CNS offers four types of accommodations for graduate students with growing families: Academic Accommodations, Teaching Assistant Accommodations, Graduate Research Assistant Accommodations, and Parental Leave. These accommodations are available to full-time students (enrolled for at least nine credit hours each long semester and three hours in summer). If you are anticipating the birth or adoption of a child, it is your responsibility to inform the Graduate Advisor and/or GSC Chair, and your research supervisor of any anticipated accommodation needs as early as possible. The full policy and faculty contacts in each department can be found at cns.utexas.edu/graduate-education/college-policies/parental-accommodations.

Where to Go When Problems Arise

You are encouraged to discuss concerns with the Graduate Advisor, Graduate Program Staff, supervising professor (PI), or Graduate Studies Committee Chair. The University also provides several support services for graduate students:

The **Office of the Student Ombudsman** provides a neutral, impartial, and confidential environment for students to express concerns related to life at the University of Texas at Austin. The office can assist graduate students with university-related difficulties, and help identify pathways and options for conflict resolution. More information is available at utexas.edu/student/ombuds.

The **UT Counseling and Mental Health Center (CMHC)** provides a variety of services for graduate students, including crisis intervention, and a variety of support groups and workshops. More information is available at cmhc.utexas.edu. A confidential 24/7 Crisis Line may be reached at 512-471-CALL (2255). Additional campus resources for a variety of concerns are published in a [Graduate Student Mental Health Resources Guide](#).

The **Behavior Concerns Advice Line (BCAL)** is a service that provides faculty, students and staff an opportunity to discuss their concerns about another individual's behavior. Trained BCAL staff will provide appropriate guidance and resource referrals to address the particular situation. This service is a partnership among the Office of the Dean of Students, the Counseling and Mental Health Center (CMHC), the Employee Assistance Program (EAP) and The University of Texas Police Department (UTPD). An individual can either call the line at 512-232-5050 or report their concerns using the online submission form at besafe.utexas.edu/behavior-concerns-advice-line.

Texas Global and International Student & Scholar Services (ISSS) provide advice, programs, information, and services to the international community, including incoming graduate students. Questions and concerns about immigration policy, visa requirements, employment restrictions, etc. should be addressed to the Texas Global and ISSS staff. Students may visit global.utexas.edu/issv for more information.

Student Emergency Services (SES) in the Office of the Dean of Students serves as a primary point of contact for students and their families and assists with navigating campus and community resources. SES can help students by offering: information regarding course load reductions or full withdrawals, emergency funds, short-term emergency housing, referrals to appropriate campus offices, discrete notifications to professors regarding absences, and coordination with families. More information can be found at deanofstudents.utexas.edu/emergency.

The **Title IX Office** is committed to creating and fostering a campus environment free from all forms of sex discrimination. [Title IX](#) is a federal law that prohibits discrimination on the basis of sex in any federally funded education program or activity. Title IX protects all members of our campus community who experience sex discrimination, sexual harassment, sexual assault, interpersonal violence (including dating and domestic violence), stalking, or discrimination on the basis of pregnancy.

Grievance Policy

Procedures for handling graduate student grievances are outlined on the [Graduate School's grievances webpage](#). The policies described there are based upon the following principles:

Graduate students have the right to seek redress of any grievance related to academic or nonacademic matters. Every effort should be made to resolve grievances informally between the student and the faculty member involved or with the assistance of the graduate adviser, Graduate Studies Committee chair, or department chair.

The Biochemistry graduate program leadership understands that grievances with faculty, staff, or peers are often difficult, and strives to ensure that students are comfortable reaching out for help. The following hierarchy is recommended when seeking assistance:

1. Graduate Advisor
2. Graduate Program Administrator
3. ICMB Executive Committee
4. Director of ICMB
5. Molecular Biosciences Department Chair

The comfort-level of the student and/or severity or urgency of the situation may merit escalation of the grievance up the hierarchy.

In situations where the grievance cannot be resolved informally at the program/department level, students have recourse through formal procedures that vary, depending on the type of grievance. Four main categories of grievances are:

- Academic Grievances (examples include: adherence to degree requirements, changes in supervising committee membership, situations involving program termination)
- Non-academic grievances (primarily issues involving either discrimination or misconduct)
- Employment Grievances for Teaching Assistants and Assistant Instructors (issues related to the academic freedom of individual TAs, non-renewal of a TA or AI position, withholding of salary or promotion)
- Employment disputes involving Graduate Research Assistants

Procedures for addressing each type of grievance listed above is available at cns.utexas.edu/images/CNS/graduate_students/Grad_Student_Grievance_Policies-CNS-June_2017_2.pdf.

Campus Safety

The **Office of Campus Safety & Security** oversees the offices of Emergency Preparedness, Environmental Health and Safety, Fire Prevention Services, Parking and Transportation, and the University of Texas at Austin Police Department. Students should explore their website to learn more about safety and security on campus: utexas.edu/safety.

SURE Walk

SURE Walk is dedicated to reducing all forms of interpersonal violence for the campus community. The program is organized by the UT Student Government and provides safe walks and rides home, to decrease the risk of any form of assault occurring. Additionally, they also aim to educate the community on assault, consent, healthy relationships, and resources for survivors of assault. More information can be found at utsg.org/sure-walk-1.

UT Austin Night Rides

UT Night Rides provides a Lyft ride from the main campus to students' homes. Rides are available every day from 11:00pm – 4:00am. Locations for this service mirror current UT Shuttles routes for West Campus, Far West, Lake Austin, North Riverside, Lake Shore, Crossing Place, and Intramural Fields as well as mainline Route 10, serving the Red River area. All UT Night Rides must originate from main campus only. Visit parking.utexas.edu/night for more information.

Emergencies

For emergencies, the University also has a dedicated phone number, 512-232-9999, and website: emergency.utexas.edu. You can also sign up for text message alerts for emergencies. **If you have an emergency anywhere on campus, you may call 911.** Your call will be routed to the correct dispatch office according to your location.

Facility Services

Call 512-471-2020 if you have questions or reports about building power outages or access issues, water line issues, landscape issues, or general maintenance needs.

Other Contacts & Campus Support Resources

The Office of the Dean of Students

The Office of the Dean of Students (<http://deanofstudents.utexas.edu/emergency/contact.php>) provides a variety of student support services along with opportunities for leadership experience, diverse student work environments, engaging programming and specialized resources.

College of Natural Sciences (CNS) Office of Graduate Education

The CNS Office of Graduate Education provides a variety of services to current students, including professional development and career support, orientation and trainings, and opportunities to participate in STEM outreach programs at local middle school and high schools. Visit cns.utexas.edu/graduate-education for more information.

Faculty Innovation Center Graduate Student Development Program (GSD)

The GSD Program is an initiative of the Office of the Provost, the Graduate School, and the Faculty Innovation Center (FIC). GSD provides opportunities to advance graduate students' pedagogical, academic, and professional progress, including support for drafting a teaching statement and creating a teaching portfolio. More information is available at facultyinnovate.utexas.edu/gsd.

Center for Biomedical Research Support (CBRS)

The Center for Biomedical Research Support (CBRS) provides access to cutting-edge technology and expert advice to enhance research. CBRS oversees several core research facilities critical for research activities on campus. Graduate students are also eligible to take the short courses and workshops offered by CBRS throughout the year. More information is available at research.utexas.edu/cbrs.

Resources that Support a Safe and Inclusive Campus

The Biochemistry Graduate Program, the University of Texas, and the College of Natural Sciences want all graduate students to benefit from supportive, inclusive, and safe classroom and research experiences. The following resources are available to support this goal:

- [CNS Diversity and Inclusion Resources and Initiatives](#)
- [Campus Climate Response Team \(CCRT\)](#) (report a bias incident)
- [Division of Diversity and Community Engagement \(DDCE\)](#)
- [Title IX Office](#)
- [Gender and Sexuality Center](#)

The **Molecular Biosciences Department Diversity and Inclusion Committee** focuses on issues concerning climate, conduct, and diversity within the graduate programs and wider research community. Comprised of faculty, staff, graduate students, and post-docs, the committee aims to promote diversity at all levels within the department. The committee works to provide resources, organize trainings, and to develop initiatives that support a positive and safe environment for all community members. The committee can be reached at mbs_di_committee@utlists.utexas.edu.

Students Against Racism and Discrimination in Natural and Engineering Sciences (SARDINES) is a grassroots organization of graduate students working to identify and rectify causes of inequity within the Molecular Biosciences (MBS) department and graduate program. We are committed to advocating for students who face unique and systemic challenges due to a fundamental aspect of their identity. These groups include, though are not limited to, students who identify as members of underrepresented groups (Black, Indigenous, Latinx, Southeast Asian, and Pacific Islander), members

of the LGBTQIA+ community, women, students with disabilities, international students, and members of religious minority groups. We work closely with the MBS Graduate Student Association (GSA) and the MBS Diversity and Inclusion committee to accomplish actionable goals that promote an equitable and inclusive environment where all scientists can flourish. Our current goals include increasing representation of diverse speakers in our departmental seminar series, generating a Student Rights document, producing educational resources on antiracism and distributing these to our scientific community, and coordinating outreach to the greater Austin community. Please contact utsardines@utexas.edu for more information and to get involved.

Additional Resources

Links to additional resources and programs available to students can be found on the ICMB website at icmb.utexas.edu/graduate-programs-home/resources.

APPENDIX

Mentorship and Outreach Opportunities for STEM Graduate Students

In-Person Opportunities:

[Summer Undergraduate Program for Experimental Research \(SUPER\)](#)

A 10-week program that provides summer research opportunities at the University of Texas at Austin. The program is available to rising Sophomores, Juniors, and Seniors who are considering a career in life-science research. The program is organized by the ICMB and graduate students are welcome to contact the Graduate Program Staff for information about participating.

[Texas STEM Connections:](#)

Portal to connect with K-20 educators, classrooms, out of school time programs, and other volunteer opportunities in STEM.

[Science Buddies Program:](#)

Most volunteer opportunities only take a few hours of commitment. Volunteers can work remotely in the Ask an Expert Program, where graduate students and post docs can answer questions from kids and parents on the forum.

[Present your PhD Thesis to a 12 Year-Old](#)

The UT Graduate Science Outreach group facilitates this program that places PhD students and scientists in elementary and secondary classrooms to share their discoveries and provide real-world examples to complement classroom science topics.

[Undergraduate Mentoring:](#)

Graduate students can serve as mentors for undergraduates interested in attending graduate school through the College of Natural Sciences mentor programs.

Remote Opportunities:

[National Summer Undergraduate Research Project:](#)

A community-driven initiative to create rewarding remote summer research opportunities for BIPOC undergraduate students in the microbial sciences.

[Skype a Scientist:](#)

Program that matches scientists with K-12 classrooms. Once matched, volunteers will video chat with the classroom for a 30 to 60-minute session. The format is Q&A style so that the kids feel they've had direct contact with scientists. The program aims to put a friendly face to science and make science less intimidating and more accessible. Volunteers do not need to prepare a lecture, and are encouraged to just have a conversation!

[Science in the Classroom:](#)

Science in the Classroom is looking for graduate students, postdocs, and anyone with an advanced graduate degree to help us annotate scientific research papers. We are also looking for expert high school and undergraduate teachers to help us package and present this content in the best way possible.

Conflict Management

Workplace conflicts are challenging and learning to constructively address disagreement is essential to maintaining a positive and professional environment. The following is a list of resources available through UT Austin related to conflict management. Many of these are designed to empower you to resolve conflicts rather than provide a solution for you.

Confidential Resources

- [Office of the University Ombuds](#)
- [Employee Assistance Program](#)
- [Counseling & Mental Health Center](#)

Resources for Mediation and Facilitation

- [Office of the University Ombuds](#) (confidential)
- [Conflict Management & Dispute Resolution Office](#)
- [University of Texas Project on Conflict Resolution](#)
- [Strategic Workforce Solutions](#)

Resources for Training on Effective Communication

- [Student Employee Excellence Development Program](#)
- [Leadership and Ethics Institute](#)
- [University of Texas Project on Conflict Resolution](#)
- [Preparing for Difficult Conversations](#) (Employee Assistance Program)
- [Dealing with Difficult People](#) (Human Resources)
- [How to Prepare for a Difficult Conversation](#) (Human Resources)

Resources for Legal Issues and Grievance Procedures at UT

- [Legal Services for Students](#)
- Graduate School [Grievance Resources](#)