

# MICROBIOLOGY

## Graduate Program

Student Handbook  
2020-21

THE UNIVERSITY OF TEXAS AT AUSTIN

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## **Welcome!**

Welcome to the graduate program in Microbiology 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 Microbiology. We encourage you to actively use this handbook throughout your studies. This handbook is a summary of university, program and departmental policies. **This handbook contains guidelines applicable to the classes entering in Fall 2020 and subsequent years and replaces all preceding versions applicable to previous classes.**

### ***Responsibilities of a Microbiology 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 milestones, deadlines and requirements of your degree. The [Graduate School website](#) is a centralized resource for information on policies, deadlines, and general doctoral degree requirements. Two University catalogs are essential references: The General Information Catalog and The Graduate Catalog. These catalogs are available online at [catalog.utexas.edu/graduate](http://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 Staff and default to them with any 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 Microbiology Graduate Studies Committee (MIC GSC) has set additional requirements for the graduate program. These include:

- Performing all required 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 as 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 necessary to continue making satisfactory progress towards your degree. If you fail to take the corrective actions, the Microbiology GSC will be notified and may then recommend termination from the Microbiology Graduate Program.

### ***The Graduate School***

As a graduate student, you are admitted to both the Microbiology 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](mailto: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 Graduate Studies Committee sets policy and supervises its graduate program.

Approximately thirty faculty members from various Graduate Studies Committees, 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). Each graduate program may elect one 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 Natural Sciences. The Dean's office is located in W.C. Hogg 3.134 and can be reached at (512) 471-3285. The website can be found [here](#).

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.

### ***The Institute for Cell and Molecular Biology (ICMB)***

Founded in 1997, the Institute for Cellular and Molecular Biology ([icmb.utexas.edu](http://icmb.utexas.edu)) is a university-wide unit that supports the Cell and Molecular Biology (CMB), Biochemistry (BCH), and Microbiology (MIC) Graduate Programs. ICMB-affiliated 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.

#### 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 Microbiology Graduate Program (MIC)**

The Microbiology Graduate Program administration housed in the Norman Hackerman Building (NHB).

#### US mailing address:

The University of Texas at Austin  
Microbiology Graduate Program  
100 E. 24<sup>th</sup> St.  
Austin, TX 78712

Campus mailing address:  
Microbiology Graduate Program, A5000  
Phone number: (512) 471-0934

### **Microbiology Graduate Program Administration**

Graduate Studies Committee Chair (GSC): Christopher Sullivan, Ph.D.

[chris\\_sullivan@austin.utexas.edu](mailto:chris_sullivan@austin.utexas.edu) | 512-471-53912NMS 3.218

The GSC Chair oversees the Microbiology Graduate Studies Committee, which is a committee of all Microbiology 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: Bryan Davies, Ph.D.

[bwdavies@austin.utexas.edu](mailto:bwdavies@austin.utexas.edu) | 512-471-5535 | NMS 3.118

The Graduate Advisor is a faculty member appointed by the Dean of the Graduate School to advise Microbiology 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](mailto:justine.meccio@austin.utexas.edu) | 512-471-0934 | NHB 2.618

*Graduate Coordinator: Yasmin Deosaran*

[Yasmin.deosaran@austin.utexas.edu](mailto: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.

### **The Microbiology Graduate Studies Committee (GSC)**

The Microbiology Graduate Program is administered through an executive committee that represents the forty faculty members of the Graduate Studies Committee. These members are drawn from diverse departments, with faculty primarily from Molecular Biosciences. The committee bears responsibility under its chairperson and the Dean of the Graduate School for graduate study in the program.

Hal Alper	Lauren Ehrlich Andrew	Alren Johnson	Ian Molineux
Jeffrey Barrick	Ellington	Jonghwan Kim	Nancy Moran
Clarence Chan	George Georgiou	Alan Lambowitz	Howard Ochman
Can Cenik	Vernita Gordon	Edward Marcotte	Tanya Paull
Lydia Contreras	Rasika Harshey	Andreas Matouschek	Shelley Payne
Bryan Davies	Jon Huibregtse	Despoina Mavridou	Scott Stevens
Arturo De Lozanne	Vishy Iyer	Jason McLellan	Christopher Sullivan
Jaquelin Dudley	Makkuni Jayaram	Kyle Miller	James Walker
			Blerta Xhemalce

## **Degrees Offered**

The Microbiology Graduate Program is designed for students seeking a Ph.D.; however, under certain rare circumstances with the consent of the PI 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 Microbiology Graduate Program. The Microbiology Graduate Program expects applicants to have a science degree and have successfully completed at least one year each of biology, general chemistry, organic chemistry, and physics. Students with any deficiencies in these areas should remedy them before applying to the program

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

### ***Commitment to Diversity***

The Microbiology 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.

### ***Admission to Micro from Biochemistry (BCH) or Cell and Molecular Biology (CMB) Graduate Programs***

The GSC Chair and the Graduate Advisor must approve transfers to the Micro program from BCH or CMB. Approval is on a case-by-case basis and dependent on academic and research performance prior to the transfer request. Transfers for first-year students are typically performed at the end of the summer, upon completion of a full year in the original program. If you are considering changing programs, you should consult with the Graduate Advisor and the Graduate Program Staff at the beginning of deliberations.

### ***Academic Requirements for a Ph.D. in the Microbiology Graduate Program***

As noted above, the Microbiology Graduate Program expects incoming students to have successfully completed at least one year each of biology, general chemistry, organic chemistry, and physics. Students with any deficiencies in these areas should remedy 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. in Microbiology are:

- GPA of 3.0 or higher
- Completion of the core courses with a grade of at least a B
- Continuous membership in a permanent lab after completion of three lab rotations in the first-year
- Completion of BIO 391 Grant Writing course in the fall of second year
- Completed TA Training Workshop prior to first year TA position
- One semester as a teaching assistant (TA)
- International Students: successful completion of ITA English Language Certification exam and workshop during first year
- One Microbiology elective course in the second or third year
- Successful completion of qualifying exam in the 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 Microbiology Ph.D. requirements are referenced in the Graduate Catalog at [catalog.utexas.edu/graduate/fields-of-study/natural-sciences/microbiology/degree-requirements](http://catalog.utexas.edu/graduate/fields-of-study/natural-sciences/microbiology/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. Students should review these Milestones upon starting the degree program and check them periodically throughout their degree. You are responsible for tracking completion of your degree Milestones. You may view the current Microbiology Graduate Program Milestones at [gradschool.utexas.edu/academics/milestones](http://gradschool.utexas.edu/academics/milestones).

### ***Progress Towards Degree***

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

- Core courses not successfully completed by May of second year;
- Qualifying Exam not completed by end of second year
- Admission to candidacy not initiated by start of third year
- Annual Meetings not conducted annually
- Dissertation not completed within three to four years of admission to candidacy.

### ***Laboratory Rotations***

During the first nine months in the program, students perform rotation projects in the laboratories of ICMB-affiliated faculty. These rotations broaden laboratory experience and will help you find the research area and permanent laboratory that best suits you. You are required to spend at least 20 hours per week working in the lab for your rotation. At the end of each rotation, the faculty member

completes a rotation evaluation of your performance. These evaluations are shared with the Graduate Advisors and determine whether the you 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. You are encouraged to contact potential rotation supervisors 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 MIC 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 or to begin a rotation later than the mandated start date. Failure to participate in or to complete the three rotations may result in the MIC GSC recommending your termination from the program.**

Once a PI agrees to accept a student 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 Staff. The *Rotation Agreement* form is due to the Graduate Program Staff 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 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 final 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 6/1/2021). It is program policy that first-year students may not be appointed as Teaching Assistants (TA); therefore, PIs are expected to support a first-year MIC student as a Graduate Research Assistant (GRA) in the summer of 2021.

If you have not made arrangements for a permanent lab by the end of the first nine months in the program, you will be notified that the next six weeks constitute your last in the program. If you find a permanent lab before the end of the six-week period, the supervising professor (PI) must petition the Graduate Advisor to request your continuation in the Ph.D. program. You may not be eligible for financial support during this six-week period.

After a PI agrees to accept a student 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 Staff. Students will be notified via email of the deadline to submit the *Permanent Lab Agreement* form.

Once in a permanent laboratory, students may change to another laboratory; however, any change must be discussed with and approved by the Graduate Adviser and GSC Chair. The new PI must be a member in good standing of the MIC GSC. If you select a supervising professor that is not a member of the MIC GSC, that faculty member must request to be added to the MIC GSC. If the new supervising professor is a member of the GSC for the CMB or BCH program, you may transfer to the new graduate program, pending approval of the new graduate program.

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 MIC GSC and must petition the Graduate Advisor asking that you be allowed to continue in the Ph.D. 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 MIC 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 Staff if you plan to have a co-PI.

## **Core Courses**

Effective Fall 2020, the standard core courses are:

- BIO 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:

- BIO 395M Advanced Microbiology

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
- BIO 395F Genetics
- BIO 395H Cell Biology
- BIO 395G Graduate Biochemistry

Substitutions to this list of courses may be possible, however, you must provide a rationale and obtain approval in writing from the Graduate Advisor prior to registration.

If you earn less than a B (3.0) in any of the core courses, you will need to retake the course. If it is necessary to repeat a core course, it must be taken at the very next opportunity. The core courses may not be taken more than twice.

## **Core Course Descriptions**

### **BIO 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.

### **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 biolayer 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.

### **BIO 395F Genetics**

This course will focus on modern molecular genetic concepts and the scientific process, with analyses involving genetic mechanisms in biological systems and disease. Instruction will take place

through lectures and reading/discussing primary literature. Students will develop and write their own independent research proposal involving primarily genetic topics and methodologies. BIO 395F goes beyond just learning modern genetics and techniques, aiming to provide students with additional skills that can be utilized in careers involving scientific research, obtaining funding, and writing and communication.

### **BIO 395H Cell Biology**

This course will involve an in-depth immersion in the current scientific literature exploring how basic cell biological processes (vesicle trafficking, cytoskeletal remodeling, etc.) contribute to the physiology of organisms, how fundamental molecular mechanisms drive cellular and subcellular behaviors, and how these mechanisms go awry in the course of human disease.

### **BIO 395G Graduate Biochemistry**

This graduate-level course is designed for students interested in dissecting biological problems at the molecular level, and in the tools and methods that drive the process of discovery. This is an interactive class comprising lectures, case studies, in-depth analysis of original research papers, and student-led oral presentations.

### ***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.

#### **Microbiology Elective**

One additional Microbiology specific elective course is required, and may be taken in the second or third year but no later than the fourth year of study. Students typically take one of the three approved elective courses, which are Advanced Virology, Molecular Immunology, and Advanced Immunology. Students may petition to have a different course to count towards their elective requirement, but must do so in consultation with their PI and Graduate Advisor.

### ***Required Grade Point Average***

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 be dismissed from the program.

### ***Annual Meetings***

Each year you will meet with an appropriate faculty member or committee to discuss the current status of your studies. In the first year this meeting will be conducted with your supervising faculty (PI) shortly after joining their lab on a permanent basis. During subsequent years, you will be required to meet with your PI and your dissertation committee. (*See Annual Meetings with Dissertation Committee.*) Annual meetings provide opportunity to assess your progress towards completing your degree and allows an opportunity for individualized attention and feedback.

## ***Qualifying Examination***

In order to proceed with the Qualifying Exam, a Microbiology graduate student must:

- Have a cumulative GPA of at least 3.0
- Have completed all core courses with a grade of B or above
- Be assigned to a permanent laboratory
- If an international student, have passed the ITA English Language Certification and be eligible for employment “with student contact”

The Qualifying Exam, often called the “Qual” or “Prelim”, is a major milestone in the Ph.D. program. The purpose of the Qualifying Examination is to evaluate a graduate student’s aptitude to perform original and independent research, and to write a doctoral dissertation. The examination provides a means for a faculty committee to assess the student’s mastery of concepts and methodological approaches by evaluating the student’s (1) general knowledge and fundamental understanding of Microbiology, (2) ability to design, articulate, explain and defend the proposed aims and research approach of their dissertation research, and (3) to critically evaluate and develop a set of experimentally testable hypotheses for a selected topic in Microbiology and related disciplines that is not their research specialty. The ultimate goal of the Qualifying Examination is to ensure that the student has achieved a sufficiently high level of knowledge and skills necessary for successful completion of a Ph.D. dissertation.

### *Qualifying Examination Timeline and Procedures*

All graduate students in their second year who have passed the appropriate number of required courses will take the Qualifying Exam to advance to candidacy. The Qualifying Exam is normally taken in the spring semester of a student’s second year. If a student has not met the requirements outlined above, the Qualifying Exam may be delayed to within three months of completing these requirements. If the student is completing any core courses in the spring semester of their second year, they may not conduct the Qualifying Exam until the subsequent summer term, after they have met all course requirements. Students who are not prepared to take the Qualifying Exam by the end of their second year must write an explanatory letter of appeal to the GSC Chair and Graduate Advisor and will be assigned a probationary status until further notice.

An informational meeting about the Qualifying Exam will be held in the fall semester of each year. At this meeting, second-year students will review the timetable and guidelines in effect for the Qualifying Exam, as well as the expectations and exam process, as outlined below:

1. At the beginning of the spring semester (usually in January), exam-eligible graduate students will submit (i) a one-paragraph summary (100-200 words) of their intended research proposal (abstract), and (ii) a list of four faculty members who might be appropriate to serve on their examination committee. These faculty will be selected in consultation with their PI. Selected faculty members must be members of the MIC GSC. The Graduate Advisor will use this information to form the student’s Qualifying Exam Committee. Students will receive instructions and a deadline to submit these require items from the Graduate Advisor and/or the Graduate Program Staff.
2. The student will be notified of the composition of their Qualifying Exam committee within 30 days after submission of their abstract. Upon learning the members of their exam committee, the student is responsible for scheduling their Qualifying Examination, which involves polling the committee members and their PI for their availability for a 2.5-hour timeslot. These guidelines may be adjusted if it becomes necessary to conduct 2021 Qualifying Exams virtually. In this event, updated guidance will be released by the Graduate Advisor. If the student’s PI cannot attend the exam, they will be required to provide the examining committee chair with a short statement describing the student’s progress. Deadlines for the written portions of the exam are relative to each student’s exam date (detailed below in

article 5a and 5b); all students are responsible for meeting their relative deadlines. The Graduate Program Staff will provide the committee chair with the *Qualifying Exam Results* form and the student's transcript, which will need to be brought to the exam.

### Exam Format

The Qualifying Exam consists of written and oral components. Both written components are submitted prior to the Qualifying Exam and form a large basis of the oral exam.

### **Written Component:**

1. The **Written Proposal**, based on a topic of choice but usually aligned to the student's dissertation research, must be submitted to the Graduate Program Staff and distributed to faculty members of the examination committee no less than 14 days before the Qualifying Exam.
  - a. The Written Proposal should be modeled on and follow the format of a NIH F31 pre-doctoral fellowship application. As a guide, the general format of the Written Proposal is listed below, but students should download the F31 application guide to obtain additional information about the contents and formatting of these applications. The proposal will consist of the following sections. (Note that the margins on all sides cannot be less than ½", and the allowable fonts no smaller than Times 12, or Georgia or Arial 11. All information presented in figures and tables must be legible and easily readable by all committee members.)
  - b. The **Specific Aims** page should describe concisely the Specific Aims of the proposal, including broad, long-term objectives and the specific goals of the proposed research to test a stated hypothesis. A Specific Aims page often includes one or two introductory paragraphs followed by the objective and description of each of three aims, which together form the basis of the research undertaken in the proposal. This is limited to one page.
  - c. The **Research Strategy** section, including all tables, graphs, figures, diagrams, and charts, is limited to six pages. This section should address the significance of the proposed studies, including the background leading to the proposed research projects; and the approach (including preliminary results, if any) will be used to provide experimental support of the proposed hypothesis. The precise format of this section can vary, but students should include the rationale of each proposed project, a discussion of the experimental or methodological approach, expected/anticipated results, interpretations, conclusions and significance, potential pitfalls, and alternative approaches.
  - d. A **Literature Cited** section (no explicit page limit) must be included in the Written Proposal, and students are expected to have read each of the papers listed in this section.

**Whereas students may seek input on their Written Proposal, the student must write the entire document.** The student is responsible for being knowledgeable about and defending the entire contents of the Written Proposal. **Faculty advisors, and other faculty members, may read, discuss, and make general comments on the Written Proposal but may not write, edit or in any way directly prepare a student's materials.** Peers may provide edits for grammar, clarity, style, and spelling, but they cannot write any part of the document.

### **Oral Component:**

1. The **oral component of the Qualifying Exam** should be scheduled to last 2.5 hours. Students are not allowed to bring refreshments for their exam committee to the Qualifying Exam. At the beginning of the meeting, the student will be excused and the exam committee will briefly discuss the materials that were submitted by the student, and the specific exam format and questioning procedures. Additionally, the committee will discuss the student's academic standing and progress, and the student's faculty adviser should be asked for input about these issues. **If the faculty advisor cannot attend the exam, he/she will be asked to submit written comments to the committee chair, which should be shared with the committee at this time.** The student will re-enter, and the exam will begin with the on-topic proposal followed by the off-topic proposal. At the completion of both proposals, the student will again exit and the committee will discuss the outcome of the exam; the committee should ask the PI again for input.
2. The first portion of the exam will focus on the topics and projects covered in the Written Proposal (approximately one hour, but the time will vary), and the second portion will focus on the topics and projects covered in the selected research paper and the Off-topic Specific Aims Page. The Qualifying Exam Committee, whose aim is to realize the purpose and goals of the Qualifying Exam, will decide the times devoted to each proposal and the specific format of the oral exam.
3. **The student should prepare a 15-minute presentation, with a maximum of 15 slides, for each of the written components.** These brief presentations will introduce the background material, and the proposed research goals and projects. The presentation should include an introduction that states the broad research question(s), an overview of the present state of knowledge, and the background work leading to the proposed projects, questions and hypotheses. This should be followed by a description of each of the specific aims, the experimental approach and anticipated results. **Students may practice their on-topic presentation in front of any audience they choose.**
4. During and after each presentation, the examiners will question the student in order to assess the student's depth of knowledge in the topic areas and understanding of the experimental approaches. The committee will ask general questions as well as questions pertaining to the specific topic areas. Students may be asked to draw or explain concepts using the whiteboard. One purpose of the exam is to probe a student's breadth and depth of knowledge, so the committee may spend more time on areas where it is not clear whether the student has extensive knowledge, and correspondingly less time on areas where the student demonstrates expertise.

#### Composition of the Qualifying Examination Committee:

The Qualifying Exam Committee will be comprised of three Microbiology GSC faculty members. Ideally, at least one of these will be selected from the list of four submitted by the student and who has expertise in the general area covered in the student's Written Proposal. The student's faculty advisor is encouraged to attend the Qualifying Exam but is not obliged to do so. If the faculty advisor cannot attend the exam, he/she will be asked to submit written comments to the committee chair, which will be shared with the committee at the exam. If in attendance, the faculty adviser is expected to be a silent observer and may speak only by permission of members of the exam committee.

#### Qualifying Exam Outcomes and Consequences:

At the conclusion of the examination (usually when committee members have no further questions), the student will again be asked to leave the room. The PI will be asked for any additional input and then s/he may also be asked to leave the room. The committee will then deliberate the outcome of the examination. The entire committee as a group will then call the student back into the room to convey its decision. The student's advisor, if s/he has exited the room, may come back into the room

along with the student. The examination committee will record the outcome and its evaluation on the *Qualifying Examination Results* form, provided by the Graduate Program Staff. This form will be included in the student's permanent file and a copy shall also be provided to the student.

A student may pass the Qualifying Exam unconditionally, or may fail one or more portions (e.g., the Written Proposal) of the exam. Additionally, the committee may vote to conditionally pass the student but ask for revisions of the written components or for the student to take additional coursework. (Serving as a TA for a course in an area that the student was deemed deficient cannot be a requirement for a conditional pass.)

Possible outcomes are:

1. Pass;
2. Conditional Pass (with conditions specified by the exam committee);
3. Re-examination of one or more parts of the Qualifying Exam at a later date;
4. Termination of work toward the Ph.D.

### Re-examination Procedures and Rules

In the event of a failing performance, and at the discretion of the Qualifying Exam Committee, the student will be advised of deficiencies and may be allowed to retake one or both portions of the Qualifying Exam.

A student given the option to repeat the Qualifying Exam must do so within three months of the original exam, except in exceptional circumstances requiring exemption by the MIC GSC Chair. At least one member of the student's original Qualifying Exam Committee must agree to serve on the subsequent exam committee. All three members may re-serve. The PI may request to the MIC GSC Chair that one or two members of the committee be replaced. A student who fails to pass the relevant portions of the examination a second time must leave the graduate program by the end of the following long semester.

A student who is not offered the option of re-examination must terminate work towards a Ph.D. and may not re-register for courses in the MIC Graduate Program.

A student advised to take a terminal Master's degree may register only for those courses counted toward the Masters of Arts with Thesis degree and must complete the courses within a year.

### **Admission to Candidacy**

Once you successfully complete your Qualifying Exam, you will apply for, and be admitted to candidacy. You are expected to do so by the end of your second year. 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:

- Completion of all core courses with a grade of B or above
- A cumulative grade point average of at least 3.0
- Successful completion of the Qualifying Exam
- Submission and final approval of a [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

You may retain Qualifying Exam Committee members as their Dissertation Committee; however, this is not a requirement. You should consult with their PI and Graduate Program Advisor to form a suitable Dissertation Committee. You must 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 should be made prior to application for candidacy.

Microbiology 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 MIC GSC. If it's not possible to acquire a committee member that is outside of the MIC 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 Microbiology Graduate Program is for committees to have five members.

If you elect to have a scholar from off-campus serve on the Dissertation 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. You 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**

Once admitted to candidacy, you no longer register for "Advanced Study and Research" but instead must be registered for "Dissertation Hours" every long semester. All subsequent semesters, until graduation, you will take Dissertation Hours with a course number ending with a "W" (BIO 399W, BIO 699W, BIO 999W).

### **Annual Meetings with the Dissertation Committee**

Once you have been admitted to candidacy, you are required to meet annually with your Dissertation Committee to review your progress. Your first annual meeting with your Dissertation Committee should be held within the next long semester (typically by the end of the fall semester) following admission to candidacy. Subsequent annual meetings should be held in the fall semester of each academic year; however, committee meetings may also take place in the spring semesters, at the discretion of the committee. You are responsible for coordinating a meeting date and time with faculty. Following the annual 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 Staff 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 reviews will be presented with recommendations to the Microbiology GSC. The GSC will then decide what actions may be required to address degree progress.

Although the supervising professor provides day-to-day guidance, all committee members are expected to be available for consultation so feel free to ask for advice from any faculty member.

### ***Application to Graduate***

Prior to graduation, all students are required to notify the Graduate School of their intent to complete their degree by submitting the online *Graduation Application*. This requirement applies to students completing a Ph.D. or the M.A. in Microbiology. The 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](http://gradschool.utexas.edu/academics/graduation) for information about current deadlines.

### ***Final Oral Exam/Dissertation Defense***

All students completing the Ph.D. in Microbiology 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, students meet privately with the Dissertation Committee to respond to questions from the committee members.

Students preparing to defend their dissertation 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](http://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, students may schedule the final oral exam. It is the student's 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 *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 then the student's 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](http://gradschool.utexas.edu/academics/theses-and-dissertations/digital-submission-requirement-formatting). In addition to uploading the final dissertation to the Texas Digital Library, Students 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 3:00pm 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](http://gradschool.utexas.edu/academics/graduation) for a list of current deadlines.

### ***Timeline and Milestones of the Microbiology Ph.D. Program***

This is an example of a typical degree plan, and may be subject to variation.

#### First Year

##### **Fall semester**

Attend ICMB Annual Retreat and Graduate Program Orientation

Complete Core Courses

Complete Laboratory Rotations

##### **Spring Semester**

Complete Core Courses

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 appointed as a TA for the first time in the fall of the second year)

#### Second Year

##### **Fall semester**

Complete BIO 391: Grant Writing and Presentation Skills

Complete Required Elective (may be completed in second or third year)

##### **Spring semester**

Complete Required Elective (may be completed in second or third year)

Take and pass Qualifying Exam

Apply for Candidacy (end of spring semester, if all requirements are complete)

#### Third Year

##### **Fall semester**

Required Elective (may be completed in second or third year)

Enroll in Dissertation Hours 399W or 699W after admittance to candidacy and every semester through graduation.

First Annual Committee Meeting with Dissertation Committee

##### **Spring semester**

Complete Required Elective (may be completed in second or third year)

#### Fourth Year to Graduation

Conduct Annual meeting with Dissertation Committee  
Completion of TA requirement (may be completed any time after student's first year)

### **Final semester**

Apply to graduate by the published deadline  
Schedule final defense with committee and submit *Request for Final Oral Examination* to Graduate School  
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 Microbiology GSC. This option is allowed only under certain 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 core courses with a grade of at least a B and an overall GPA of 3.0 or higher;
- Completion of required Microbiology elective;
- Completed TA Training Workshop prior to 1st TA position;
- Completed 1 long semester TA requirement;
- 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 (non-core biology/chemistry graduate or upper division course).
  - Completion of the BIO 698A and 698B thesis courses; Must be enrolled in the 698B course the same semester as graduation

All work for a MA must have been initiated no earlier than six years before date of degree. Once a student has 30 hours of graded course work, they may then have up to six hours of CR/NC. Approval of the Graduate Advisor is required prior to registration for a CR/NC course. No course counted toward any other degree may be counted towards a master's degree.

### ***Master of Arts Thesis Committee***

Your major supervising faculty (PI) and one other MIC GSC member will serve as readers of the M.A. thesis. It is the student's 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 the student. 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 requirements graduation can be found at [gradschool.utexas.edu/academics/graduation](http://gradschool.utexas.edu/academics/graduation).

## **Financial Support and Considerations**

As an entering graduate student, you are supported for the first nine months (September – May) as a Graduate Research Assistant (GRA). These positions provide a stipend, university health insurance, and tuition remission for up to 9 credits during each fall and spring semester. You must meet all requirements for employment and must be completing the required laboratory rotations to remain eligible for the GRA position. Continued financial support becomes the responsibility of the permanent laboratory starting June 1. Your primary means of support as a continuing student is through an appointment as a Graduate Research Assistant (GRA), Teaching Assistant (TA), receipt of a University Fellowship or external fellowship (e.g. NIH, NSF, etc.). Upon joining a permanent lab, it is the student's responsibility to discuss their stipend and source of support with the PI.

### ***Policy for Graduate Student Stipends***

It is program policy that graduate students maintain a stipend in line with the stipend rate in effect during their first-year of study. The Microbiology Graduate Program annual stipend rate for 2020/21 is \$32,500, plus university health insurance and in-state tuition for up to 9 credits each fall/spring and for up to 3 credits each summer term. It is the preference of the Microbiology Graduate Program that PIs choose to raise their student's stipends to remain in line with the first-year student stipend of 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. If a student serves as a TA, MIC policy 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](https://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 Microbiology 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](mailto:MBS_HR@austin.utexas.edu)) and/or the Graduate Program Staff. Additional information is available at [gradschool.utexas.edu/finances/student-employment](https://gradschool.utexas.edu/finances/student-employment).

#### ***Graduate Research Assistantships***

Many faculty members have research grants that allow them to appoint students as graduate research assistants. Students should be in communication with their PI concerning the availability of continued grant support and the availability of GRA appointments. In order to be eligible for a Graduate Research Assistant position, students 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 MIC 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 Microbiology 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 Microbiology 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 Certification for TAs whose first language is not English. The Microbiology program requires this certification of all international students, regardless of whether they serve as teaching assistants. All international students admitted to the Microbiology 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](http://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 satisfactory progress towards 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](http://gradschool.utexas.edu/finances/student-employment/conditions).

### ***Additional Employment and Outside Employment***

Microbiology 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, students may have 5-10 hours of additional or outside employment that is related to their 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 graduate students should first consult their supervising professor and/or the Graduate Program Staff. Information about this can be found on the UT Human Resources website at [hr.utexas.edu/current/compliance/outside-employment](http://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](http://gradschool.utexas.edu/finances/fellowships). Questions about fellowships may be directed to the Graduate Program Staff.

## ***Competitive National Fellowships***

All first-year students are encouraged to 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 offer financial support for several years of graduate education. You are also encouraged to explore and apply to fellowship programs on your own for which you may be uniquely qualified. Please visit [www.nsf.gov/funding](http://www.nsf.gov/funding) and [www.grants.nih.gov/grants/oer.htm](http://www.grants.nih.gov/grants/oer.htm) for more information.

## ***Other Aid***

The Office of Student Financial Services ([finaid.utexas.edu](http://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 and Policies**

### ***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 labs' 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 students should update their personal contact information via UT Direct. Students must list a phone number where voice mail messages may be left. To update personal information, please visit [Texas OneStop](#).

#### *Email Information*

The MIC Graduate Program and the University of Texas uses 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](mailto: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 classes 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
- OH 201 Laboratory Safety
- OH 202 Hazardous Waste Management
- OH 207 Biological Safety

Registration for the above courses is available online at [ehs.utexas.edu/training/lab-training-requirements.php](https://ehs.utexas.edu/training/lab-training-requirements.php).

The Fire Prevention Services Office sponsors the Fire Extinguisher Use course, with more information at [fireprevention.utexas.edu/fire-safety/portable-fire-extinguisher-training](https://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. Additional training may be required by specific labs or facilities.

### ***Academic Integrity***

Ethical conduct is expected of every student in the Microbiology program. 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](#). You will be held accountable for your conduct and decision-making. **The Microbiology Graduate Program has a zero-tolerance policy regarding academic dishonesty. If you are found participating in any form of academic dishonesty, you will face immediate dismissal from the program.** Academic dishonesty includes, but is not limited to, cheating, plagiarism, collusion, misrepresenting facts, and falsification of academic work, research, data or records.

### ***Incomplete Grades***

If a student does 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. The student must then complete the course requirements by the last class day in his or her 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 the student is 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 Microbiology 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](http://www.utexas.edu/hr/holiday). **Graduate students should communicate with their faculty supervisors about expectations for holiday schedules.** Note: The relative tranquility of campus during breaks is very conducive to research progress in the laboratory.

### ***Second Degrees***

Microbiology students will not be allowed to work toward or obtain a second degree outside of the Microbiology 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](http://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](http://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](http://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: BIO 399W, BIO 699W, or BIO 999W. Registration for BIO 999W fulfills the 9-credit requirement for Teaching Assistants, Graduate Research Assistants, fellowship recipients, and international students.

### Registration Access Periods

Graduate students may register for courses during prescribed registration access periods set by the Registrar published in the university [Course Schedule](#). Each student should check their *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 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 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 12<sup>th</sup> 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 12<sup>th</sup> 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 may 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 the responsibility of the student to obtain all necessary signatures on the form.

A student on approved leave 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. A student on

leave may not use any University facilities; nor is he/she 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](http://gradschool.utexas.edu/academics/policies/leaves-of-absence).

## ***Withdrawal***

### *Early Withdrawal from MIC Program During First Year*

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

### *Withdrawal from MIC 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, the student 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 [GradStudentSvc@austin.utexas.edu](mailto:GradStudentSvc@austin.utexas.edu). The form must be signed by the Graduate Advisor, and the student is responsible for obtaining all necessary signatures. Students withdrawing from the university should also notify the Graduate Program Staff of their 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 the student. 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](http://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](http://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 semesters of fellowship support. The Graduate Program Staff will request a waiver for you. 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 Waivers***

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, **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 UT Student Health Insurance 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 Microbiology graduate students. You are responsible for submitting all required documentation or forms necessary to ensure your record is accurate and up-to-date.. Records are subject to the **Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act of 1974 (FERPA)**. Members of the MIC 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](http://registrar.utexas.edu/staff/ferpa).

Your student file may contain:

- Admission Documents
- Curriculum Vitae
- Laboratory Rogation Agreement forms
- Permanent Laboratory 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***

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](http://diversity.utexas.edu/disability).

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

## ***Parental Accommodation Policy***

The College of Natural Sciences 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). It is the responsibility of a graduate student anticipating a birth or adoption to inform their Graduate Adviser and/or GSC Chair, and their 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](https://cns.utexas.edu/graduate-education/college-policies/parental-accommodations).

## **Where to Go When Problems Arise**

Graduate students are encouraged to discuss concerns with their Graduate Advisor, Graduate Program Administrator, 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](https://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](https://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](https://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/issss](https://global.utexas.edu/issss) 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](https://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 Microbiology graduate program leadership understands that grievances with faculty, staff, or peers are very difficult for graduate students, 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](https://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](https://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, we 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](https://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](http://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](http://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 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.

### ***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](http://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](http://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](http://research.utexas.edu/cbrs).

### ***Resources that Support a Safe and Inclusive Campus***

The Microbiology 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 appropriate resources and 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](mailto: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](mailto: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](http://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](#)