

Guidelines for the Graduate Program

Doctoral Students

Department of Physiology and Biophysics (M/C 901)
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I ADMISSIONS

A. Requirements

1. Completed University of Illinois Graduate Application. Online application is the preferred method. If a paper application is completed, it should be submitted to the Office of Admissions and Records and a copy sent to the Department of Physiology and Biophysics. A description of the application procedures and the relevant forms are available at the Department web site (www.uic.edu/depts/mcpb/index2.html) or directly through the Department of Physiology.
2. Completed Application for Graduate Appointment, Research Interests Form and Waiver should be returned to the Department of Physiology and Biophysics.
3. Official report of the Graduate Record Examination (GRE) scores. Minimal scores required are the following: verbal, 500; quantitative, 550; analytical, 4. An advanced test is optional. The Institution Code is R1851 and the Department Code is 0217 for this exam.
4. Test of English as a Foreign Language (TOEFL) for students whose native language is not English. A minimum score of 550 is required. The Institution Code is 1851 and the Department Code is 49 for this test.
5. Official transcripts of all previous undergraduate and graduate studies. Original transcripts should be sent to the Office of Admissions and Records and a copy sent to the Department of Physiology and Biophysics.
6. Three letters of recommendation. Letters should be sent to the Department of Physiology and Biophysics.
7. Personal interview (see B1 below).

B. Procedures

1. Interested students are strongly encouraged to complete these requirements by March 15 (January 15 to be considered for fellowships) for admission to the graduate program in the Fall of the same year. Interviews will be scheduled and held locally at the Medical School campus. In extenuating circumstances (i.e., foreign students), the Admissions Committee may waive the interview requirement or conduct phone interviews. Students completing their application by March 15 should be notified by April 1 of the decision regarding their application.
2. Students are accepted for admission starting the Fall Semester.

II ADVISORS

A. First-Year Advisor

The First-Year Advisor is a member of the Graduate Education Committee and is

appointed by the Head of the Graduate Education Committee. The responsibilities of the First-Year Advisor are to advise Ph.D. and M.D./Ph.D students in a given class entering each Fall with respect to registration, course requirements and rotations and to monitor student progress until they choose a Thesis Advisor.

B. Thesis Advisor

This is the faculty member in whose laboratory the student will perform his/her thesis research. The Thesis Advisor must be a Member or Affiliate Member of the Department of Physiology and Biophysics.

The student must notify the Graduate Education Committee, in writing, of the student's choice for Thesis Advisor. The prospective Advisor must also notify the Graduate Education Committee, in writing, of his/her willingness to accept the student. The Graduate Education Committee will then notify the Department Head as to its recommendation and the Head will make the final appointment. Students should choose a Thesis Advisor by the end of the Summer Semester, Year 1 so that the Pre-Thesis proposal (Section V, A) can be completed according to the timetable shown in Section IV, B.

C. Thesis Committee

The student has one Thesis Committee throughout his/her tenure. This Committee will be selected by the student and the Thesis Advisor prior to the Pre-Thesis proposal and must be approved by the Graduate Education Committee and the Department Head. The student is required to send an e-mail message to the Chair of the Graduate Education Committee of the proposed Thesis Committee. The student will be notified via return e-mail message upon approval of the Thesis Committee. The Chairperson of the Thesis Committee must be a Tenured/Tenure-Track member of the Department of Physiology and Biophysics other than the Thesis Advisor.

The Committee shall include:

1. Five or more members of the Graduate College including the Thesis Advisor and the Chairperson of the Thesis Committee. At least three members of the Committee must be Tenured/Tenure-track members of the Department of Physiology and Biophysics. At least one member must be from outside the Department. Exclusive of the Advisor and Chairperson, there should also be individuals meeting criteria 2 and 3. An individual from an outside institution may serve ex officio or may be a signatory member with prior approval from the Dean of the Graduate College.
2. Whenever possible, at least one person working on a similar but not identical concept in a different system (e.g. if the student is interested in LH-receptors in the ovary, they could have a committee member interested in α or β -adrenergic receptors in nervous tissue).
3. Whenever possible, at least one person working on a different concept in the same or similar system. (In the above example, there could be a committee member interested in cell proliferation in the ovary or in spermiogenesis).

Official notification of the Graduate College of the composition of the Thesis Committee involves submission of the “Committee Recommendation Form.” This form identifies the Thesis Committee, whose members are responsible for reading the thesis and for establishing that the quality, quantity and originality of the science described in the thesis warrants granting a Ph.D. It is recommended that the committee be appointed early to facilitate communication between the committee and the student. Although the Thesis Committee must be formed prior to the Pre-Thesis proposal, the deadline for notifying the Graduate College of the composition of the Thesis Committee (i.e. the deadline for filing the “Committee Recommendation Form”, is approximately one month prior to the Thesis Defense.

Following the Pre-Thesis Proposal, the student must meet with the Thesis Committee, either for formal (e.g. Mid-Thesis Seminar and Thesis Defense) or informal presentations, at least once per year until completion of their degree. The format of the formal presentations is described in Sections V, C-E. At the meeting the student will make a brief oral presentation to the Thesis Committee and review progress and identify problems encountered in their research. This will be followed by a discussion of the student's scientific development and progress toward successful completion of the thesis research. Following each formal and informal meeting, the Chairperson of the Thesis Committee must inform the Graduate Education Committee, Department Head and the student, in writing, of the student's progress towards completion of the degree. Each report must contain a summary of the work completed and the experiments to be undertaken for completion of the Thesis.

III REGISTRATION PROCEDURES

The registration period is usually the last three weeks of the previous semester. All encumbrances must be cleared before registration. The Office of Admissions and Records will notify continuing students the proper procedure for registration.

A student who does not complete registration by the tenth day of the Fall and Spring semesters and fifth day of the Summer semester will not be permitted to register after that date, will not be permitted to attend class or to participate in course work, and will not receive academic credit or financial support for the semester. In addition, a student who fails to complete registration by the tenth day of Fall and Spring and fifth day of Summer and who wishes reinstatement for the following semester, must submit an application for readmission which will require the approval of the Graduate College Dean and Office of Admissions and Records.

IV REQUIREMENTS AND RECOMMENDED SCHEDULE

A. Requirements

Minimum semester hours (sh) required: 96 hrs. from the baccalaureate or at least 64 from the Master's degree.

1. Core Courses

- a. Physiology GCLS 500

3 sh

- b. Translational and Applied Physiology PHYB 552 3 sh
- c. Biochemistry GCLS 501 3 sh
- d. Molecular Biology GCLS 502 3 sh
- e. Cell Biology GCLS 503 3 sh
- f. Research Methods I GCLS 504 1 sh
- g. Research Methods II - GCLS 505 2 sh
- h. Integrative Biology Development, Cancer, Immunology - GCLS 510 3 sh
- i. Cell Physiology PHYB 586 3 sh
- j. Physiology Seminar PHYB 595* (2 semesters) 2 sh
- k. Seminar in Physiology PHYB 591 (Fall & Spring each year) 1 sh
- l. Laboratory Rotations GCLS 506 (3 ten-week rotations) 6 sh
- m. Radiation Safety course 0 sh
- n. Animal Handling course GC 470 1 sh
- o. Scientific Integrity and Responsible Research GC 401 0 sh
or the on-line course offered through the Collaborative Institutional
Training Initiative (CITI)

*Note: Students register for this course in the semesters in which they plan to present their Mid-Thesis Seminar and Thesis Defense.

2. Students are required to register for PHYB 591 and to attend at least two-thirds of the Departmental Seminars, usually scheduled for 10:00 am on Fridays, Fall and Spring Semesters during their graduate career.

3. 400-500 Level Courses ≥5 sh

These courses are to be selected in consultation with the Thesis Advisor. These courses cannot include Core Courses or directed reading courses.

- 4. Thesis Research 599 (see Sect. IV, B)
- 5. Pre-Thesis Proposal (see Sect. V, A)
- 6. Oral Preliminary Examination (see Sect. V, B)
- 7. Mid-Thesis Seminar (see Sect. V, C)
- 8. Thesis Defense (see Sect. V, E)

B. Recommended Schedule

1. Year 1

	Courses	Fall	Spring	Summer
Two out of these three selectives	Physiology GCLS 500	3		
	Biochemistry GCLS 501	3		
	Molecular Biology GCLS 502	3		
	Cell Biology GCLS 503	3		
	Research Methods I GCLS 504	1		

Lab Rotation GCLS506 ^a	2	4	
Radiation Safety ^p	0		
Animal Handling GC 470 ^p	1		
Scientific Integrity GC 401 ^p	0		
Research Methods II GCLS 505		2	
Integrative Biology Development, Cancer, Immunology GCLS 510		3	
Translational and Applied Physiology PHYB 552		3	
Thesis Research PHYB 599 ^c			8
TOTAL	12	12	8

a. First year students will perform 3 laboratory rotations prior to selecting a Thesis Advisor. They will perform one rotation (approximately 10 hrs/wk) every 10 weeks starting during the Fall Semester, Year 1. The rotations will be chosen with the approval of the First-Year Advisor. The rotations must be performed in the laboratories of Tenured/Tenure-Track or Affiliate members of the Department of Physiology and Biophysics. In extreme cases (e.g. students with Master's Degrees or extensive previous research experience), students may petition to decrease the number of rotations. A written evaluation following each rotation is required from the faculty member and must be sent to the First-Year Advisor who will assign a grade of S or U based on the written evaluations.

M.D./Ph.D. students are also required to perform 3, 10 week rotations (10 hrs/wk) as outlined in the M.D./Ph.D. guidelines. The rotations can be completed by the end of the Spring Semester Second Year. A written evaluation following each rotation is required from the faculty member and must be sent to the First Year Advisor.

b. It is essential that students learn how to handle radioactive materials safely and to handle animals humanely, and conduct ethical research. Therefore, students are required to take classes offered by the Radiation Protection Office and the Biological Resources Laboratory preferably during their first year. Scientific Integrity is offered by the Graduate College.

c. Students should sign up for PHYB 599 for 8 hours with the First-Year Advisor and work full time in a laboratory during the Summer Semester, between the First and Second Years.

2. Year 2

Courses	Fall	Spring	Summer
Cell Physiology PHYB 586	3		
Third selective from Year 1	3		
Departmental Seminar PHYB 591	1	1	N/A
400-500 Level Elective(s) and Thesis Research 599	≥6	≥6	8
TOTAL	≥12	≥12	8

a. The written and oral parts of Pre-Thesis Proposal (see Section V, A) should be completed by Feb. 28 of the second year.

b. Students are expected to complete the oral Ph.D. Preliminary Examination (see Section

V, B) by the end of Second Semester of year 2

3. Year 3

Courses	Fall	Spring	Summer
Departmental Seminar 591	1	1	N/A
400-500 Level Elective(s) and Thesis Research 599	≥6	≥6	8
TOTAL	≥ 12	≥ 12	8

4. Year 4/5

Courses	Fall	Spring	Summer
Departmental Seminar 591	1	1	N/A
Thesis Research 599	variable	variable	8
TOTAL	≥ 12	≥ 12	8

a. The Mid-Thesis Seminar must be presented before Feb. 28 of Year 4.

C. M.D./Ph.D. Students

M.D./Ph.D. students are required to meet all the requirements of the Graduate Program, with the exceptions listed below, to obtain a Ph.D. degree in Physiology and Biophysics. However, every effort will be made to design a program that best suits the needs and talents of the individual students. Normally, students will begin their course work with the first two years of the Medical School curriculum. They are also required to complete their laboratory rotations by the end of the Spring semester of year 2 and the Pre-Thesis proposal by the end of the Fall Semester, year 3. Electives (400 or 500 level courses) should be completed in year 3. M.D./Ph.D. students are also required to perform rotations as described in Section IV, B.

- M.D./Ph.D. students must successfully pass USMLE Part I
- All required courses for Physiology Ph.D. students will be required for M.D./Ph.D. students with the exception of the core GEMS courses offered in the first semester

V DESCRIPTION OF NON-COURSE REQUIREMENTS

A. Pre-Thesis Proposal

There are two parts to the Pre-Thesis Proposal and both parts must be completed by Feb. 28 of the Second Year. The Pre-Thesis Proposal should be given before the student has begun substantive work on the Thesis Project. Experimental data collected by the student while in the Ph.D. Program should not be included in the Written or Oral parts of the Pre-Thesis Proposal.

1. Written Pre-Thesis Proposal

This is to follow official notification of Thesis Advisor approval by the Department Head (see Section II, C). This is to be a description of the proposed thesis project in the form of a proposal to NIH, NSF, or for any equivalent funding agency. It is to be distributed to the members of the Thesis Committee and to the Department Head three weeks prior to the oral part of the pre-thesis proposal. Brevity is encouraged. The Pre-Thesis Proposal (narrative portion) cannot exceed 10 single-spaced, type-written pages, if not submitted on official agency forms.

2. Pre-Thesis Oral

This is presented to the student's Thesis Committee and consists of a brief (20-30 minutes) oral presentation followed by an examination of the student's knowledge of the current state of the art, intellectual merits of the proposed research topic, general methods of approach, and possible contribution to the field. The function of the committee is to provide general advice on research strategy.

The Chairperson for the Thesis Committee must submit a report on the outcome of the examination to the Graduate Education Committee, the Department Head, and to the student.

B. Oral Ph.D. Preliminary Examination (Oral Prelim)

The oral qualifying exam will be taken no later than the end of the summer semester of the second year. Students are encouraged to take the oral qualifying exam by the end of the Spring semester of the second year. Under special circumstances, students may be granted an extension to complete this requirement no later than the end of fall semester of the third year.

The student will prepare, present and defend a research proposal that is distinct from their pre-thesis project, and from the focus of the advisor's research. A research proposal will be prepared by the student. The proposal should be prepared following the general guidelines for an NIH type grant proposal, as described under section 9, "Research Plan" PHS 398. The body of the proposal should not exceed ten (10) pages in length, not including the abstract and cited references. The research plan should be organized to answer these questions (1) What do you intend to do? (2) Why is the work important? (3) What has already been done? (4) How are you going to do the work? The proposal should be divided into three sections A) Specific Aims. List the broad, long-term objectives and what the specific research proposed is intended to accomplish. State the hypotheses to be tested. B) Background and Significance. Briefly sketch the background leading to the research plan, critically evaluating existing knowledge, and specifically identify the gaps, which the project is intended to fill. State concisely the importance and health relevance of the research by relating the specific aims to the broad, long-term objectives. C) Research Design and Methods. Describe the research design and the procedures to be used to accomplish the specific aims of the project. Include how the data will be collected, analyzed, and interpreted. Discuss the potential difficulties and limitations of the proposed procedures and alternative approaches to achieve the aims. The topics of the research proposal will be agreed upon by the chairperson of the oral exam committee. The proposal will be submitted to the oral exam committee one week prior to the exam. During the oral exam, the student will present the proposal to the committee who will test the student's comprehension of the methodology and critical thinking. In this context, the student is expected to be capable of

drawing upon their knowledge base from course work (didactic and non-didactic) to provide the rationale, premise, or underlying principles upon which any aspect of their proposal is based. This may include the ability to draw analogies to other physiological or cellular systems in which the rationale, premise, or underlying principles are also relevant. This will also provide the committee the opportunity to evaluate the student's writing and planning ability. The faculty on the committee should work closely with the student to help them develop a strong, balanced, innovative and feasible proposal.

Selection of topic: Student will propose three different topics distinct from the advisor's research to write a proposal on, providing a brief (250 word or half page maximum) statement of the problem to be addressed. The committee will then pick one of these topics for the student to base their proposal on. It is strongly recommended that the student allow one month for the preparation of the completed proposal. The oral must be completed before the end of the summer semester of the second year at the latest.

Selection of the Oral Exam Committee. The committee consists of at least five (5) members, of whom at least three (3) are UIC Graduate Faculty with full membership, and two (2) must be tenured. The chair of the committee must be a full member of the UIC Graduate Faculty. The student's thesis advisor is excluded from membership in this committee. The student will choose the members of the committee, including the chair, and this will be approved by the Director of Graduate Studies and Department Head, for recommendation for final approval to the Dean of the Graduate College. The committee must be approved before selection of the topic. The student is required to send an e-mail message to the Chair of the Graduate Education Committee of the proposed Oral Exam Committee. Upon approval of the committee, the student will be notified via return e-mail message and instructed to obtain a "Committee Recommendation Form" from the Graduate Support Staff in the departmental office. The student must acquire the signatures of the Advisor and the Chairperson of the Graduate Education Committee or Department Head then return the form to the Graduate Support Staff. The Chairperson of the Thesis Committee must be a Tenured/Tenure-Track member of the Department of Physiology and Biophysics other than the Thesis Advisor.

C. Mid-Thesis Seminar

The Mid-Thesis Seminar (30-minute maximum length) should be presented as a scheduled Departmental Seminar by Feb. 28 of the fourth year. The major purpose of this seminar is to determine whether the student is making satisfactory progress towards completion of the Thesis research. Students must register for PHYB 595, Journal Club and Seminar in Physiology.

The student must also distribute a one page abstract to the entire department two weeks prior to the Seminar date.

The student will meet with the Thesis Committee immediately following the Seminar. The purpose of this meeting is to evaluate further the student's research and to help the student in defining the research required to complete the Thesis. Following the Mid-Thesis Seminar, the Chairperson of the Thesis Committee must submit a report to the Graduate Education Committee indicating whether the student is making satisfactory progress.

D. Annual Seminars and Thesis Committee Meetings:

Students are required to present a 20-minute progress seminar once a year for the department. Students do not have to present a progress seminar if they have scheduled their mid-thesis or final defense that academic year. Students will present their seminar during the regular departmental seminar time. After the presentation, students are required to meet with their committee, which will fulfill the obligation of the yearly meeting. Students must meet with the Thesis Committee at least once a year. If the students do not meet with the thesis committee after the progress seminar, the student will make an oral presentation of their progress and identify any major problems they have encountered since the last meeting. This will be followed by a discussion of the student's scientific development and progress towards successful completion of the thesis research. At later stages of the student's career, the committee should advise the student of the appropriate time to start writing the thesis. Following each informal meeting the Chairperson of the Committee must inform, in writing, the Graduate Education Committee, Department Head and student, of the student's progress. This statement must contain a brief summary of the work completed and the plans for further experiments towards completion of the thesis. The Graduate Education Committee member in charge of Student Progress will keep track of the Annual Committee Meetings along with the formal requirements.

E. Thesis Defense

Following the completion of research, the student should submit the "Committee Recommendation Form" to the departmental Graduate Support Staff (see Sect. II, C). This should be followed about one month later by the Oral Defense of the Thesis.

The Thesis Defense should be presented after the Thesis has been read by the Thesis Committee. It is to be presented as a scheduled Departmental Seminar (45 minute in length) and is open to the public. The Thesis is formally approved by the Thesis Committee following the Thesis Defense. Students must register for PHYB 595, Journal Club and Seminar in Physiology.

Following the Thesis Defense, the Thesis is to be filed with the Librarian. A separate copy has to be submitted to the Department for its archives. The format of the Thesis and instructions for preparing the manuscript are detailed in a handout from the Graduate College Office.

F. Graduation Requirements and Probation

1. Graduation. In order to graduate, the student must have a cumulative grade point average of 3.0 (A = 4.00) or better and at least 96 semester hours beyond the bachelor's degree.
2. Probation. If the grade point average falls below 3.0 (A = 4.00), the student will be placed on probationary status. The student is warned that further registration in the Graduate College will be denied if the academic record continues to be unsatisfactory.
3. Disqualification from Further Study. All students will be required to achieve a grade of "B" or better in all required Physiology and Biophysics (PHYB AND GCLS 500) courses or they will be dropped from the program. Students can also be dropped from the graduate program for violation of the student disciplinary code as described under

Student Disciplinary Procedures (December, 1985). This document is available in the Office of the Dean of Student Affairs.

4. Failure to Meet Deadlines: Students must meet the deadlines for the Pre-Thesis Proposal (Section V, A) and the Mid-Thesis Seminar (Section V, D) and fulfill the requirement to meet annually with the Thesis Committee (Sections II, C and V, F). Failure to meet these deadlines or requirements can result in the Graduate Education Committee recommending to the Head that the student be dismissed from the Graduate Program.

VI SUPPLEMENTAL INFORMATION

A. Teaching Opportunities

Graduate students within the department who are in the third year or higher (regardless of the source of their financial support) have the opportunity to participate in specific departmental courses by proctoring, lecturing, conducting demonstrations, grading examinations, etc.

B. Stipends and Waiver of Tuition

Graduate students receiving stipends from the Department of Physiology and Biophysics must be full-time students (complete ≥ 12 hrs/semester) and spend 100% of their effort on activities related to and approved by the Department of Physiology and Biophysics.

C. Participation in National Meetings and Intramural Forums

Graduate students are encouraged to participate in national meetings in their area of specialization and in intramural forums (Sigma Xi Research Forum, Medical Student Research Forum). Departmental funds are available to assist graduate students to attend national meetings if they are presenting a paper. The student should request such support in writing from the Department Head. The Department Office maintains a file describing additional sources of funding and students should apply for these funds as well.

D. Publications

Each graduate student conducting research under the doctoral program must cite the Department of Physiology and Biophysics as the department (or one of the departments) from which the research emanated, in any publication resulting from the research. The department should be quoted as: "Department of Physiology and Biophysics (M/C 901), University of Illinois at Chicago, 835 S. Wolcott, Chicago, IL 60612-7342." This is also applicable to those students working with faculty who are affiliated with the Department of Physiology and Biophysics but whose laboratory is located elsewhere.

E. Changes to the Graduate Program Guidelines

These guidelines will be in effect until April 2014 and renewed every 4 years thereafter by vote of the department faculty. However, the Department of Physiology and Biophysics reserves the right to change these guidelines without notice. Changes must be approved by the departmental faculty.

Students have the right to follow the Guidelines in effect at the time of matriculation or the current Guidelines. Students must inform the Graduate Education Committee, when new Guidelines are enacted, of which Guidelines they choose to follow.

F. Administrative Note:

Please notify the departmental Graduate Support Staff, via e-mail, of all scheduled committee meetings, Pre-Thesis Oral, Oral Prelims, Mid-Thesis Seminar, and Thesis Defense as soon as the date is finalized.

VII GLOSSARY OF TERMS

1. **First-Year Advisor:** Advisor to students in each class entering in the Fall of a given year.
2. **Thesis Advisor:** Faculty member in whose laboratory the student performs the Thesis research.
3. **Chairperson of Thesis Committee:** A Tenured/Tenure-Track member of the Department of Physiology and Biophysics other than the Thesis Advisor.
4. **Affiliate Member:** Members of the Graduate College who have an appointment in the Department of Physiology and Biophysics.
5. **Graduate Support Staff:** Administrative Aide in the Department of Physiology & Biophysics

VIII GRADUATE STUDENT CHECKLIST

THESIS ADVISOR

_____ Letter to Graduate Education Committee of student's choice of advisor.

_____ Letter to Graduate Education Committee from prospective advisor accepting student.

THESIS COMMITTEE

_____ Obtain approval of thesis committee from the Graduate Education Committee

_____ Letter from Chairperson to Department Head and Graduate Education Committee stating that _____ has passed the Pre-Thesis Oral and may continue. Signed by all members of Committee.

ORAL PH.D. PRELIMINARY EXAMINATION

_____ Complete "Committee Recommendation Form" 4 weeks prior to taking examination. This generates the "Examination Report" from the Graduate College.

MID-THESIS SEMINAR

- _____ Schedule as regular Departmental Seminar.
- _____ Submit Progress Report to Thesis Committee three weeks prior to date of Mid-Thesis Seminar.
- _____ Distribute abstract to Department members two weeks prior to seminar date.
- _____ Chairperson prepares a letter for student, Department Head, and Graduate Education Committee describing student's progress and work still to be done to complete Thesis Research. Grade for seminar to be included (Satisfactory). Make sure Director of Graduate Studies gets a copy for grade report.

THESIS DEFENSE

- _____ Complete "Committee Recommendation Form" (Graduate College Form) 4 weeks prior to defense. This form can be downloaded from <https://grad.uic.edu/cms/?pid=1000363>. Once submitted, this form generates the "Examination Report" from the Graduate College.
- _____ Consult with Seminar Chairperson to set date of Defense, distribution of notices, abstracts, etc.