



# Molecular and Cellular Pharmacology

## **Program Handbook**

2024-2025

Reference this handbook to learn about the unique policies, requirements, procedures, resources, and norms for graduate students in the Molecular and Cellular Pharmacology Program.

Last updated: September 20, 2024

# Welcome

Welcome to the University of Wisconsin **Molecular and Cellular Pharmacology** Training Program! It is our goal to help each of you to realize your long-term career and training objectives. We want your time at the University of Wisconsin to be more than a series of techniques you learn in the lab, or information you learn in class—we want you to grow in confidence, leadership, and to develop the skills to be an independent scientist and a good ambassador of science to the community at large.

The discipline of Pharmacology is diverse and dynamic—covering topics from specific cellular signaling pathways and how they are affected by external agents and drugs to gene expression changes, drug target identification, therapeutics, engineering of screening platforms and therapeutic delivery systems, molecular imaging, and many other topics.

We are thrilled to have you in the program and hope to provide you with the resources you will need to have a productive and successful time in graduate school!

# Table of Contents

<b>Navigating Policy and Resources at UW-Madison .....</b>	<b>4</b>
<i>How to Use This Handbook.....</i>	5
<i>Who to Contact for Questions .....</i>	5
<b>Program Overview.....</b>	<b>6</b>
<i>Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion .....</i>	7
<i>How to Get Involved .....</i>	7
In Our Program.....	7
On Campus & In the Community.....	9
<b>Getting Started as a Graduate Student.....</b>	<b>9</b>
<i>New Graduate Student Checklist.....</i>	9
<i>In Our Program .....</i>	9
<b>Advising &amp; Mentoring .....</b>	<b>10</b>
<i>Finding &amp; Selecting an Advisor .....</i>	10
<i>Changing Your Advisor.....</i>	12
<i>Mentoring Networks and Working With Your Advisor.....</i>	12
<i>Giving &amp; Receiving Feedback .....</i>	13
<b>Degree Requirements .....</b>	<b>13</b>
<i>Doctoral Degree.....</i>	13
Requirements .....	13
Recommendations .....	14
Committee .....	14
Preliminary Exam .....	15
Dissertation & Final Oral Exam/Defense.....	22
Sample Course Schedule .....	14
<b>Enrollment Requirements .....</b>	<b>24</b>
<b>Academic Exception Petitions.....</b>	<b>25</b>
<b>Satisfactory Academic Progress.....</b>	<b>26</b>
<i>Definition .....</i>	26

<i>Not Meeting Academic Expectations</i> .....	26
<b>Personal Conduct Expectations</b> .....	<b>26</b>
<i>Professional Conduct</i> .....	26
<i>Academic Misconduct</i> .....	27
<i>Non-Academic Misconduct</i> .....	27
<i>Research Misconduct</i> .....	28
<i>Hostile and Intimidating Behavior (Bullying)</i> .....	28
<i>Grievance Process</i> .....	28
<i>Process and Sanctions for Violations of Conduct Standards</i> .....	29
<b>Incident Reporting (Hate, Bias, Sexual Assault, Hazing, Students of Concern, Bullying)</b> .....	<b>29</b>
<b>Funding, Employment, and Finances</b> .....	<b>30</b>
<i>Guaranteed Funding</i> .....	30
<i>Finding Funding Without a Guaranteed Appointment</i> .....	31
Campus-Wide and External Sources .....	31
<i>Additional Policies &amp; Resources</i> .....	32
<b>Professional Development</b> .....	<b>32</b>
<i>On Campus</i> .....	33
<i>In Our Program</i> .....	33
<i>In Our Discipline</i> .....	36
<b>MCP Faculty Roles, Policies, and Procedures</b> .....	<b>36</b>

# Navigating Policy and Resources at UW-Madison

This handbook is one of many sources to consult as you become familiar with the policies, procedures, requirements, resources, and norms of graduate education at UW-Madison:



[Program Handbook](#)

[Graduate Guide](#)

[Graduate School AP&P](#)

[UW-Madison Policy Library](#)

[Graduate Student Life](#)

[Graduate School at UW-Madison](#)

## How to Use This Handbook

This handbook is intended for graduate students who are pursuing a Doctoral degree in the Molecular and Cellular Pharmacology Program. The UW-Madison Graduate School is the ultimate authority for granting graduate degrees at the University. The Center for Training in Pharmacology and Drug Development administers the Molecular and Cellular Pharmacology program under the authority of the Graduate School. The Graduate School's Academic Policies and Procedures provide essential information regarding general University requirements. Degrees and course requirements may change over time. However, students must meet the degree and course requirements in effect when they entered the program. In addition, administrative procedures and processes can change over time. Students are required to follow the procedures and processes listed in the current handbook. The information in this handbook should also be supplemented by individual consultation with your advisor, committee, and the MCP Program Staff so that individual needs/interests and all degree requirements are met. Additional information is available via the MCP Program's website. Students may also wish to consult the Graduate School's website, Guide, and other official resources described in the above graphic.

## Who to Contact for Questions

Many of your questions about how to meet expectations and thrive as a graduate student will be answered by the various sources of policies, procedures, requirements, resources, and norms listed above. Several key positions in this program and on campus are ready to answer your remaining questions:

### **Graduate Program Staff**

Each graduate program will have at least one staff person typically called a Graduate Program Coordinator or Manager who serves as a point person for program policy and procedures. Graduate Program Staff are well versed in most elements of graduate education that extend beyond academic instruction in your program and will likely be your first stop for questions related to anything in this handbook.

### **Director of Graduate Studies**

Each graduate program has one faculty member designated to direct its educational vision and structure.

Names and contact information of your Graduate Program Staff and Director of Graduate Studies can be found on your program's page in the *Graduate Guide* ([guide.wisc.edu/graduate](https://guide.wisc.edu/graduate)). Simply navigate to the "Major/Degree" tab, click on your program's name, and look for the contact information box on the right side.

MCP Guide page: <https://guide.wisc.edu/graduate/medicine-public-health-school-wide/molecular-cellular-pharmacology-phd/>

### **Faculty Advisor**

Each student will be assigned a faculty advisor in each graduate program in which they are enrolled. Your faculty advisor(s) will be a key source of guidance for your academic development. Further definition can be found here: [policy.wisc.edu/library/UW-1232](https://policy.wisc.edu/library/UW-1232).

Guidelines for finding, changing, and working with your advisor can be found in the Advising & Mentoring section below.

The name and contact information of your faculty advisor can be found on your Student Center on MyUW ([my.wisc.edu](https://my.wisc.edu)) under "Academic Progress" and then "Advisors."

### **Graduate School Services**

For general inquiries and graduate student services from the Graduate School, see the operations and front desk contact information on this contact page:

[grad.wisc.edu/contacts](https://grad.wisc.edu/contacts).

## **Program Overview**

The mission of the Graduate Program in Molecular and Cellular Pharmacology is to equip students with the skills required to conduct biomolecular, biomedical, and pharmacological basic research. The MCP Program assists students in becoming independent investigators in these research areas.

The MCP Program works in collaboration with the Biomedical Graduate Program Consortium in the School of Medicine and Public Health, the Pharmaceutical Sciences PhD Program in the School of Pharmacy, the Cellular and Molecular Biology Program, the Integrated Program in Biochemistry, and other bioscience programs at UW-Madison. The MCP Program is continually developing relationships with industry partners to enable internships and other professional development experiences.

Pharmacology is the knowledge of the biochemical and physiological actions of drugs, which act on cellular signaling pathways. The molecular basis of cellular signaling and its control by various drugs is a major aspect of modern pharmacology and this aspect is emphasized in the Molecular and Cellular Pharmacology Training Program. The majority of signal transduction pathways still await discovery or at least a thorough molecular characterization. Members of our Program employ the whole spectrum of modern biochemical, cell and molecular biological, physiological, and pharmacological methods in a basic research-oriented scientific environment to unravel the many unsolved mysteries underlying cellular regulation and signaling. Certain research initiatives have a translational component, with the goal of applying basic discoveries to developing new therapeutic modalities. Our program brings together an outstanding group of dedicated trainers with a focus on cellular signal transduction. Graduates of the program will be well prepared for a career in basic biomedical sciences. We provide a unique training experience for scientists who want to elucidate basic principles of cellular signal pathways. Detailed knowledge of these pathways is the most important prerequisite for the discovery of new drugs and the treatment of diseases.

## Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion

We welcome and seek a diverse student body, and we uphold the university's [equal opportunity and affirmative action policy](#). We work in partnership with the Graduate School's [Office of Diversity, Inclusion and Funding](#). We also work in partnership with the [McBurney Disability Resource Center](#) to help create an accessible and inclusive educational experience for students.

Please view our website for more information and resources:

<https://molpharm.wisc.edu/diversity/>

## How to Get Involved

As a graduate student at UW-Madison, you have a multitude of opportunities to become involved on campus and in your academic discipline. This involvement often enhances your academic, professional, and personal growth through developing advanced leadership, communication, and collaboration skills. It also provides opportunity for professional networking.

## In Our Program

### **MCP Program Committees**



### **Steering Committee**

The MCP Program Director is aided in planning and administering the Molecular and Cellular Pharmacology Program Training Grant by the Steering Committee. It is responsible for policy development and revision in all matters affecting the entire Program. This committee reviews applications by new faculty for membership in the Program. Its approval is required for new courses initiated. It consists of the Director as chair, four faculty, and one student. The Molecular and Cellular Pharmacology Steering Committee is the governing body of the MCP Program. The Steering Committee normally approves all major activities of the Program and monitors the continued excellence of the Program.

### **Admissions Committee**

The committee begins meeting in early December each year to consider applicants for upcoming fall semester. Members review each applicant's credentials; GPA, TOEFL (if applicable), purpose statement, letters of recommendation, and transcripts and make final decisions for admissions. They also make recommendations for nominating applicants for Graduate school fellowships and training grant slots. Once an applicant is chosen as a potential MCP trainee, the student is invited for a visit to Madison.

### **Recruiting Committee**

The Recruiting Committee works with the Program Staff to organize recruiting weekends. MCP students are an essential part of the recruitment process. Student members on the committee assist in planning, coordinating, and conducting applicant recruiting visits. The committee consists of approximately 4-6 students each year. All students are invited to apply each fall and selection prioritizes early-stage students and those who express interest in helping plan and participate in recruiting events.

### **Symposium Committee**

This committee helps organize the annual symposium held on campus. The event includes a Keynote speaker, short talks by students and postdoctoral fellows, and a poster session. Talks are selected by the committee from abstracts that are submitted in advance with the remainder being chosen for poster presentation. The committee consists of approximately 4-6 students each year. All students are invited to apply each year and selection prioritizes students who are interested and able to participate in planning meetings and the day of the event.

### **Fellowship/Training Grant Committee**

This committee reviews the applications of students nominated by their mentor for the NIH training grant positions. They also make recommendations on other fellowships relevant to MCP students.

## **Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Committee**

This committee is responsible for advising the program, including graduate students, faculty, and staff, on the program's diversity, equity and inclusion needs and oversees progress of diversity initiatives throughout the program.

## **On Campus & In the Community**

The Wisconsin Idea is the principle that education should influence and improve people's lives beyond the university classroom. For more than 100 years, this idea has guided the university's work. Learn how you can get involved at <http://www.wisc.edu/public-service/>.

As a graduate student at UW–Madison, you have a multitude of opportunities to become involved on campus and in your academic discipline. This involvement enhances your academic, professional, and social development. You will find a list of ways to engage in campus and local community life at:

## **The Graduate School's Current Student Page**

[grad.wisc.edu/current-students](http://grad.wisc.edu/current-students)

## **Getting Started as a Graduate Student**

This section guides you through important steps to take as you begin your journey as a graduate student at UW-Madison.

## **New Graduate Student Checklist**

Be sure to review all steps listed on this webpage for new graduate students:

## **The Graduate School's New Student Page**

[grad.wisc.edu/new-students](http://grad.wisc.edu/new-students)

In addition to a checklist for all new graduate students, that webpage includes sections with additional steps to take if you are a new international student, student with a disability, student veteran, student with children, or student with funding.

## **In Our Program**

Each year, the MCP Program hosts an orientation week for new students the week before classes begin. This orientation features events to meet faculty, students, and

staff, as well as learn about lab rotations and other program events. Full information and a schedule are sent each summer to all new students.

## Advising & Mentoring

Advising relationships are a central part of academia, important to both the experience and development of students and faculty members alike.

The Graduate School's definition of an advisor can be found here:

[policy.wisc.edu/library/UW-1232](http://policy.wisc.edu/library/UW-1232). Your advisor has two main roles: 1) To assist you in acquiring the highest possible level of knowledge and competence in the field, and 2) to chair the committee that will determine whether you have performed at an acceptable level in each of your degree milestones (see "Degree Requirements" section below for further information on building your committee) and note exception about the chair for the preliminary exam meeting only. Other roles of your advisor may include tracking your progress in completing your degree (note: this may include use of the Graduate Student Tracking System at [gsts.grad.wisc.edu](http://gsts.grad.wisc.edu)), assisting with course selection and planning your academic path, and helping you identify possible research mentors, committee members, and research opportunities.

Both the student and advisor are responsible for making their expectations clear to each other. Be sure to discuss this with your advisor. See here for further information about a tool you may wish to use to formalize advising expectations:

<https://kb.wisc.edu/grad/page.php?id=35489>

## Finding & Selecting an Advisor

Although an initial faculty advisor is assigned to each student upon entry in to the MCP program, students should seek permanent advisors through their lab choice by the end of the first semester of graduate study. Your advisor should be a faculty member in the program whose expertise and project/research interests match closely with those that you intend to acquire. To learn more about the faculty in your program, consider consulting the following sources:

- First semester rotations
- Courses and seminars you attend
- Our program website: <https://molpharm.wisc.edu/>

- Publications
- Students currently in a prospective advisor's group/lab
- Advisor policy from the Graduate School:  
<https://grad.wisc.edu/documents/advisor/>

Additionally, you may wish to have a discussion with a prospective advisor. Below are some questions to consider asking in this discussion, though it is not a complete list. You should spend some time identifying what is most important to you in your graduate training and ask questions accordingly. Please see here for additional resources for selection of the mentoring relationship: <https://ictr.wisc.edu/mentoring/>

### **Questions for Students to Ask of Prospective Advisors**

- What thesis projects would be available to me if I were to join your group?
- Would these projects expose me to a variety of different approaches?
- In general, how available will you be to answer questions I might have?
- What is your philosophy regarding the amount of guidance the advisor should provide to a student during preparation of the thesis proposal, literature seminars, thesis writing, etc.?
- What are your expectations for time I should spend each day/week in your group/lab?
- What regularly scheduled activities (e.g., group meetings, joint group meetings, research clubs) does your group participate in that provide an opportunity to get outside input on my research project and to hear about the work of other students and postdocs?
- Do you encourage your students to attend seminars and journal clubs, including those that may be outside of their narrow field of interest/research?
- Do students in your group/lab have the opportunity to attend professional meetings where they can interact with colleagues/researchers from other institutions?
- Do you include your graduate students in professional activities that will familiarize them with their field of interest/research, such as reviewing manuscripts and meeting with visiting speakers?
- How long do you think it should take me to get my degree?
- What are your former graduate students (if any) doing now?
- What is your general philosophy of graduate training and what goals do you have for your graduate students?
- Tell me more opportunities for professional development, workshops, internships, and learning new techniques?

No faculty member is obligated to accept a student's request to serve as advisor, though invitations are often accepted unless the faculty member judges that a different advisor would serve your needs better.

Laboratory rotations for entering students are essential components of training. Rotations provide both the student and faculty trainers with a critical opportunity for mutual evaluation for the important decision of choosing a laboratory for Ph.D. research work. Equally important, rotations provide the student with the opportunity to increase the breadth of training background by experiencing several research areas and a range of research styles, approaches, and techniques. Due to the importance of the rotations to both the student and the MCP Program, we ask our students and faculty to take rotation selection seriously. Students will select three faculty labs to rotate in during the fall semester, each for about 4 weeks. Once the semester is finished, the program will ask students and faculty to rank their choices for placement, and this information will be used to coordinate final thesis lab placements.

## Changing Your Advisor

As the advisor-student relationship is one of mutual agreement, it may be terminated by either party. If you decide that you would prefer working with a different advisor, discuss this with your prospective advisor to seek the change. If you change your advisor, you must notify your Graduate Program Staff and follow any related procedures. It is advisable to seek guidance sooner rather than later if this issue comes up.

Every graduate student must have an advisor or else they may be suspended from graduate study at UW-Madison by the Graduate School. Be sure to follow procedures to re-select a new advisor (described above) prior to finalizing the termination of your current advising relationship. You can confirm that the name of your advisor has been updated in the official record by looking in your Student Center on MyUW ([my.wisc.edu](http://my.wisc.edu)) under "Academic Progress" and then "Advisors."

## A Graduate Student Guide to Working with Faculty Advisors

Through [this interactive, self-paced micro-course](#), graduate students learn about the characteristics of functional and dysfunctional relationships with faculty advisors, strategies for communicating effectively and aligning expectations, as well as program grievance processes and Hostile and Intimidating Behavior resources. Completion of the micro-course takes about 20 minutes and is optional but encouraged for all graduate students.

## Advising Compact

Clearly defined expectations for both the student and advisor are a crucial starting point for a strong relationship. Laboratory/Research Groups are strongly encouraged to maintain a practice of producing “Advising Compacts” or “Lab Compacts” or “Mentoring Compacts” that clarify and document mutually agreed upon expectations for both the student and advisor. MCP faculty are required to submit a copy of their Lab Compact in order to become affiliated with the program. Please see these [Mentoring Compact/Contract examples](#), [AAMC resources](#), and [more general resources on mentoring](#).

## Mentoring Networks

In addition to a formal advisor, you are encouraged to develop a broad network of individuals who can provide academic and professional mentorship during and beyond your time as a graduate student.

## Giving & Receiving Feedback

### Annual Progress Report

All MCP students are required to have a Thesis Committee meeting on a yearly basis. The "Annual Progress Form" is available here: <https://molpharm.wisc.edu/molecular-and-cellular-pharmacology-forms/> and must be completed, signed, and emailed to the Graduate Program Staff each year by August 31.

## Degree Requirements

### Doctoral Degree

All students in the Molecular and Cellular Pharmacology Program are responsible for keeping aware of the following requirements to complete the degree.

### Requirements

For all current requirements to complete your degree (e.g., credits, courses, milestones, and learning outcomes/goals) see your program’s page in the *Graduate Guide*. Navigate to [guide.wisc.edu/graduate](http://guide.wisc.edu/graduate), then select “Degrees/Majors,” your program’s name, and then “Requirements” from the navigation bar on the right side. You will be taken to a subsection of the [MCP program’s Guide page](#) that contains all official requirements for your degree. Similarly, see “Policies” from the navigation bar of your program’s page to learn about policies affecting these requirements (e.g., prior coursework, probation, credits per term allowed, time constraints, grievances, and

appeals, etc.). Note that when you look at the *Guide* to learn about program requirements, you will be viewing the current year's version. To find past versions of program requirements, see the [Guide Archive](#) and search for your program and the year you would like to reference.

### **MCP Student Seminar (1 credit required every fall and spring semester)**

The Molecular and Cellular Pharmacology Seminar Series (Pharmacology 901) is a critical component of the MCP training program. All MCP students are required to participate in this seminar series that is designed to train the students in the art of effective speaking. The secondary goal is to familiarize students with their peers' research expertise to promote collaborations. Students are required to give an annual Student Seminar presentation starting in their second year. Trainees in their fourth year and beyond will present their research in a formal ~50 minute seminar. Second and third year trainees will typically present a seminar of ~20 minutes; each Monday at 12:30pm. This course permits trainees to improve their speaking skills, broaden their knowledge in molecular pharmacology, and familiarize themselves with the work of their peers. It also provides a mechanism for evaluation by the faculty, and builds a framework for encouraging interactions between MCP trainees and trainers. Trainees are graded based on attendance and the quality of their presentation. Students are also graded on class participation and are strongly encouraged to ask questions. The course instructor will monitor participation during the discussions and call on students to engage. Two unexcused absences result in a drop of one letter grade. Students should fill in the evaluation forms to provide feedback on the presentations. Please submit your evaluations online by 11:55pm on the day the presentations are conducted. Evaluations will then be shared anonymously with the speakers.

### Sample Course Schedule

Please click here to view required courses and a sample course schedule:  
<https://molpharm.wisc.edu/molecular-and-cellular-pharmacology-curriculum/>

### Recommendations

**OB/Gyn 956:** Advanced Responsible Conduct of Research for Biomedical Graduate Students (1 credit. Required for NIH trainees after the third year and strongly recommended for all MCP students.)

### Committee

Doctoral committees advise and evaluate satisfactory progress, administer preliminary and final oral examinations, evaluate a thesis or dissertation, and sign a degree warrant. For general guidance from The Graduate School on the role and composition of committees as well as an online tool to determine if your committee meets minimum requirements, see this policy page: [policy.wisc.edu/library/UW-1201](http://policy.wisc.edu/library/UW-1201). The MCP program follows the minimum requirements set by the Graduate School policy. Additionally, all students must determine their Thesis Committee Members by June 1 of the first year and email the MCP Program the names of the committee members. Your advisor chairs your committee (except during the preliminary exam) and provides individualized guidance on how to select committee members. If the membership of the student's Thesis Committee changes, inform the MCP Program. After forming a Thesis Committee, first year students must hold a meeting with their thesis committee. This meeting must be scheduled by June 1 and completed by August 31 of the student's first year. Follow these steps:

- Prior to this meeting: Inform MCP Office of meeting date and complete the "Annual Progress to Degree" form available here: <https://molpharm.wisc.edu/molecular-and-cellular-pharmacology-forms/>
- During meeting, the student discusses their research area and chooses appropriate coursework to take towards completion of their PhD Courses.
- Bring "Annual Progress to Degree" form
- Bring a copy of resume/cv and unofficial transcripts (available at MyUW)
- Note that you have completed a draft of your IDP.
- Acquire signatures (including all members and student, electronic preferred)
- Submit forms to MCP Program office (electronic preferred).

## Preliminary Exam

### **Overview**

The Preliminary Exam is taken within two years after entering the MCP Program, following successful completion of the MCP course requirements. It is important to view this exam not so much as a hurdle, but more as an important educational exercise. The Preliminary Exam must be scheduled by May 1 and completed by August 31 of the second year. Failure to do so will result in a hold being placed on the student's registration. If you change advisors during the first two years of study or experience unusual circumstances beyond your control that substantially delay normal progress, such as an extended illness, you may petition the Steering Committee for an extension to complete the Preliminary Examination without sanctions.



At least one month before the day of your Preliminary Examination, email the MCP Program Manager indicating your intention to take the Preliminary Exam. The Program Manager will submit a request to the Graduate School for your warrant.

The Preliminary Warrant is signed electronically by your Thesis Committee and the Program Director ("Department Major Chairperson) after you have successfully completed the Examination. Please have the committee sign the warrant using the online eSignatures, available via the student GradPortal. Once signed, the Program Manager will electronically submit the warrant to the Graduate School for further processing. The MCP Prelim Exam Form should also be filled out at this time (available here: <https://molpharm.wisc.edu/molecular-and-cellular-pharmacology-forms/>). Please submit the completed Prelim Exam Form to the MCP Program Manager following your examination.

Shortly after submitting the signed Preliminary Exam warrant, students should expect to receive an email from the Graduate School confirming dissertator status for the following semester and admission to candidacy for the PhD degree. Dissertator status is a university fee status in which the student has completed all necessary PhD requirements, except the dissertation. To reach dissertator status, a student must complete all MCP course requirements and pass the Preliminary Exam. For more information on dissertator status, see the Graduate School Academic Policies and Procedures website (<https://grad.wisc.edu/academic-policies/>).

### **Goals of the Preliminary Exam**

To determine if the student can do the following:

- Think independently through a research proposal
- Identify a realistic experiment for the PhD dissertation
- See possible pitfalls in the long-term planning of a research proposal
- Develop a logical attack on a specific problem (i.e., which experiment comes first, second, etc.)
- Present the proposal with clarity in written form, using the F31 format listed in the Preliminary Exam Research Plan (see below), scaled to the candidate's dissertation time frame
- Present the proposal successfully
- Defend the proposal and think on their feet

### **Preliminary Exam Research Plan**

Proposal Content:

- Students must consult with others, including their Thesis Advisor when writing the proposal
- Subject matter must coincide with the student's anticipated thesis research

- Extensive preliminary data is NOT necessary for the exam
- Prepare the proposal in a format of an NIH F31 predoctoral grant application. See <https://grants.nih.gov/grants/how-to-apply-application-guide/format-and-write/page-limits.htm> for more information.

The proposal will consist of the following:

- Title
- Project Summary/Abstract (30 lines of text)
- Project Narrative (3 sentences in “lay person’s” terms)
- Specific Aims (1 page)
- Research Strategy (6 pages) (single-spaced, half-inch margins)
- Addendum (Maximum of 6 additional pages, optional) (single-spaced, half-inch margins)

Some guidelines for each section are as follows:

- **Specific Aims** should be one page that includes a concise introduction to the project (background/rationale, specific hypotheses, and approaches to be taken) and state the specific research aims.
- **Background** should explain the basic concepts and rationale underpinning the overarching hypothesis for the proposed research. It should NOT be a mere review of the literature but instead be a targeted survey of the most important and relevant information from the literature.
- **Significance and innovation** should emphasize why the proposed research is important and novel. This can relate to anticipated advances in our understanding of basic mechanisms of a disease or pathogenesis; how the research findings might be applied to disease intervention, treatment and/or drug development; and what new technologies may result from the project.
- **Preliminary Data** should provide the student’s own results that support or provide basis for the proposed specific aims.
- **Experimental Designs** should include rationale for each experiment proposed, the hypothesis(es) tested, expected results, interpretation of the results, and alternative approaches should the results deviate from those expected. There should be enough details presented so that the reader can follow what will be measured, how it will be measured and what type of results can be expected. Make sure to consider appropriate controls for each experiment, and to describe how you will ensure rigor and reproducibility (e.g., number and nature of experimental replicates, type of statistical tests, etc.). Detailed materials and methods are not needed, to ensure brevity. If research involves human subjects or animals, approval of the appropriate campus compliance committee should be obtained prior

to the exam. Please include a timeline at the end of this section describing completion of the research aims over a 3-year time period.

- **Addendum** is an optional section where, for the exam, students are allowed to include up to 6 pages of additional supporting figures, data description, or methods, should they find it useful to do so. Please note that this is not a feature of an actual NIH F31 application, that is limited to a 6-page research strategy.
- **Literature Cited** should have each citation include the title, names of all authors, book or journal, volume number, page numbers, and year of publication (does not count toward page limit). Refer to [https://www.nlm.nih.gov/bsd/policy/cit\\_format.html](https://www.nlm.nih.gov/bsd/policy/cit_format.html) for the NIH preferred format.
- For more information about research policy, compliance, and integrity activities, visit <https://grad.wisc.edu/documents/responsible-conduct-of-research/>

## Evaluation

The student will be provided a grade (Excellent, Satisfactory, Unsatisfactory) and a written summary for EACH of the specific areas. The written evaluation may be filled in by each of the committee members (minus the mentor) and then discussed by the committee to generate a consensus in each area for the Chair to make a final recommendation at the end of the exam. For the preliminary examination meeting only, the chair cannot be the student's PI. The evaluation will consist of two major parts:

- Evaluation of the written document:
  - Background and Significance (Excellent, Satisfactory, or Unsatisfactory): Was the document clearly written and well organized? Were the hypotheses and the significance of the proposed work clearly stated? Was there sufficient amount of background information provided?
  - Experimental Designs (Excellent, Satisfactory, or Unsatisfactory): Does the grant provide strong rationale and preliminary data for the proposed experiments? Was the grant written in sufficient detail? Were alternatives considered? Is the proposed work feasible (technically and time wise) for a graduate student in a 3-year time frame?
- Evaluation of the oral defense:
  - General knowledge (Excellent, Satisfactory, or Unsatisfactory): Did the student demonstrate a sufficient breadth of knowledge during the oral examination? An emphasis will be placed on understanding basic procedures, principles, and experimental approaches relevant to molecular, cellular and pharmacology related fields.

- Specific knowledge (Excellent, Satisfactory, or Unsatisfactory): Did the student demonstrate expertise in their field or command of the relevant scientific literature? Did the student clearly understand the conceptual framework and specific experimental procedures of the proposed study?
- Defense of Experimental Design (Excellent, Satisfactory, or Unsatisfactory): Did the student provide a coherent, logical, and rational defense of the proposed experiments? Does the student have an appreciation of potential limitations of the proposed experiments and considered appropriate alternatives?
- Overall recommendation (Pass, Conditional Pass, or Fail):
  - An overall recommendation to address major strengths and weaknesses identified during the prelim exam accompanies this evaluation. In addition, a recommendation for future actions in cases of Conditional Pass or Fail can be described.
- Future actions:
  - Pass: When the student received a Pass grade, they will be formally advanced to candidacy to PhD degree. The written evaluation prepared during the Prelim Exam will serve as a guideline to recognize the student's strengths and areas of deficiencies and weaknesses to be addressed in subsequent yearly thesis meetings to further evaluate the student's progress in those areas.
  - Conditional Pass: A Conditional Pass may reflect receiving an Unsatisfactory grade in one (or more) of the specific areas. The thesis committee may recommend a specific action for the student to take (within a limited amount of time) to receive a satisfactory grade in that area. For example, if a specific area of the written document was found to be unsatisfactory, the student may have to rewrite the proposal to address such a deficiency. If the student was unsatisfactory in the Specific Knowledge section of the oral defense, the student may have to write an in-depth report (e.g., a review) to demonstrate the depth of their knowledge.
  - Fail: If the student's performance was deemed unsatisfactory by the thesis committee, then a course of action will be determined by the thesis committee and thesis advisor in conjunction with the Steering Committee. The action may include, but not limited to, a terminal master's degree with no option to advance to PhD candidacy in the MCP Program.

These evaluation/recommendation items will be discussed with the student after the thesis committee's private session, which will then represent the conclusion of the Prelim Exam.

The Chair's handwritten or typed report will be submitted to the MCP Program Manager and maintained as an official Prelim Exam record.

### **Requirements to Complete**

Prior to the Preliminary Exam:

- Complete the MCP Course Requirements
- Schedule Preliminary Exam with committee members
- Send an email notification with the scheduled exam date to the MCP Program at least three weeks prior to the date to obtain the Preliminary warrant
- The MCP Program will request a warrant from the Graduate School and notify the student when it is ready
- It is recommended that the written proposal draft be submitted to the Thesis Advisor
- It is recommended that the Thesis Advisor read it and provide feedback such that the student has time to make revisions before going out to the rest of the committee
- Circulate the final proposal to the Thesis Committee at least two working weeks prior to the exam
- Complete a "Prelim Exam form," available on the forms section of the MCP website

At the Preliminary Exam:

- Establish the Chair of the meeting (see the Thesis Committee section of the MCP Handbook). For the prelim exam meeting only, the Chair **cannot** be the student's PI.
- The student presents a brief oral presentation describing their research proposal (approximately 20 minutes)
- After the presentation, the student responds to questions by the Thesis Committee, which correspond to the proposal itself and any related material
- Obtain decision and signatures of all Thesis Committee members on the Prelim Exam form and Warrant
- The exam is usually completed within two hours

Submission will be based on the Thesis Committee's decision of the outcome of the Preliminary Exam. The four decisions are as follows:

Pass

- Submit the electronically signed Warrant in the GradPortal, and submit the signed Prelim Exam form, and a copy of the final research proposal to the MCP Program Office.

#### Written Revisions

- Submit the signed Prelim Exam form to the MCP Office
- Complete recommended written revisions of Preliminary proposal as suggested by the Thesis Committee
- Obtain signatures of Thesis Committee members on the warrant after written revisions have been completed
- Submit the signed Warrant, and submit the signed Prelim Exam form, and a copy of the revised research proposal to the MCP Office.

#### Written Revisions and Repeat of Oral Defense

- Submit the Prelim Exam form to the MCP Office
- Complete recommended written revisions and reschedule to repeat the Preliminary Exam
- Obtain a new decision and signatures of all Thesis Committee members on the new Preliminary Exam form
- Submit the signed Warrant, and submit the signed Prelim Exam form, and a copy of the revised research proposal to the MCP Office.

#### Fail

- Discuss results and recommendations with the Thesis Advisor and Thesis Committee
- Submit the Prelim Exam form, unsigned Warrant, and a copy of the research proposal to the MCP Office and inform them of the committee's recommendations

#### **Extension Request**

Under special circumstances, the MCP Program will consider a 6-month extension for the Preliminary Exam. The student and the Thesis Advisor must justify the reasons for an extension in writing to the MCP Office. The MCP Program Director will review the request for consideration. If the Preliminary Exam is not completed by the end of the 6-month extension, the student's academic standing in the MCP Program may be jeopardized.

#### **Dissertator Status**

The student attains dissertator status after having completed the following:

- Passed the Preliminary Examination,
- Satisfied the residence requirement, and
- Completed major requirements, except the dissertation.

The student must then be continuously registered until the PhD thesis is filed through ProQuest. To maintain continuous registration, the student must register for at least three credits at the dissertator rate during the fall and spring semesters, and during any summers in which he or she is using University facilities. Students who are registered for three credits at the dissertator rate are considered full-time and thus may continue to hold research assistantships, traineeships, and fellowships.

All requirements must be met before the first day of classes, to be a dissertator for any given semester. Fees are due by the end of the first week of classes. If paperwork is not processed by then, students MUST pay regular graduate fees. To achieve this status requires four semesters of graduate study at UW-Madison. To be eligible for dissertator status, the Graduate School requires that the student:

- Complete 32 UW–Madison graduate level credits (300 or above courses);
- Clear all incompletes or P grades in non-research classes.

Students may contact the Graduate School regarding their dissertator status. For more information please visit: <https://grad.wisc.edu/documents/dissertator-status/>

## Dissertation & Final Oral Exam/Defense

- The Thesis Defense is an oral presentation of the student’s independent research topic, an overview of the experiments completed, and a summary of the analyzed data and results. Most students can complete their PhD within five to six years after entering the MCP Program. The Thesis Defense must be completed within five years after completion of the Preliminary Exam. For more information on this policy, see the Graduate School Academic Policies and Procedures website.
- First-Author Publication: Students should have at least one first author or co-first author research paper describing their work that has been or will be submitted to or published in a peer-reviewed journal. In exceptional cases, a student may proceed with their thesis defense without a first author publication, but only by approval from the program director and the student’s thesis committee. Such circumstances might include co-authorship on a multi-disciplinary, very high-profile publication.

## Before You Begin Writing Your Dissertation

- Meet with your Thesis Committee to determine you are ready to move on to the Thesis Defense a few months prior to the defense (“6 month meeting”). This meeting is recommended but not required. It can also be included in the last regular annual progress meeting if desired. Prior to this meeting, students should prepare and distribute an outline of the planned dissertation to the committee one

week in advance, together with a copy of their most recent Annual Progress Report. For this meeting, students should prepare a ~20 minute presentation that summarizes the planned dissertation, discusses any remaining research or professional development goals, and presents a timeline for writing, scheduling the thesis defense, and depositing the dissertation with the Graduate School.

- Please read through the requirements listed by the Graduate School: (<https://grad.wisc.edu/current-students/doctoral-guide/>) before you begin writing.
- Take note of the Degree Deadlines on the website.
- Find and review examples of prior thesis dissertations on ProQuest: <https://www.library.wisc.edu/find/dissertations/>

### **At Least Three Weeks Prior to the Thesis Defense**

- Schedule the Thesis Defense with the Thesis Committee
- Send an email notification with the scheduled date, defense location, defense time, thesis title, listing of thesis committee members (including names of 3 designated readers), and contact/job information following graduation to the MCP Program Office. We expect all faculty to read and be involved. Three of the members will need to be officially designated as Readers on the warrant.
- The MCP Program Office will then request a warrant from the Graduate School and upon approval, the Graduate School will issue the electronic warrant
- The MCP Program Office will let the student know the warrant is ready in the GradPortal
- If changes in the Thesis Committee are made after a warrant has been requested, then a new request must be made to the Graduate School for approval and issuance of a new warrant

### **At Least Two Weeks Prior to the Thesis Defense**

- Submit a copy of the Thesis Defense to all members of the Thesis Committee
- The MCP Program Office will create a Thesis Defense flyer and distribute this announcement to the current MCP faculty and student email lists
- Notify your department Payroll and Human Resources staff of the date you are expecting to defend and deposit your thesis

### **At the Thesis Defense**

- All committee members listed on the warrant must be present
- Give an oral presentation about the research
- Defend and answer questions asked by the Thesis Committee



- Obtain signatures of all Thesis Committee members on the Thesis Defense warrant (Initiate an email request on MyGradPortal for Esignatures)

### **Following the Thesis Defense**

- Submit Thesis Defense electronically. For detailed instructions, please see steps on the Graduate School website.
- Contact the Graduate School to schedule an appointment for the final review
- All corrections and revisions of the Thesis Defense must be made before submitting your Thesis Defense

### **Submit to the Graduate School**

- Follow all steps listed on the Graduate School website:  
<https://grad.wisc.edu/current-students/doctoral-guide/#defend-and-deposit-your-dissertation>

### **Terminal Master of Science Degree**

If a student chooses to leave the program without completing a PhD, a terminal Master of Science Degree can be granted. Those seeking a Master of Science Degree are required to have a minimum of the first three semesters of experimental research and completed core courses. See details of requirements here:

<https://guide.wisc.edu/graduate/medicine-public-health-school-wide/molecular-cellular-pharmacology-ms/#requirementstext>. Students should have taken the Preliminary Examination and passed, and the student must write a research thesis and defend it before their mentor and two other MCP faculty. An exception may be granted in extraordinary situations by the Director of Graduate Studies. The average thesis should be 20–25 pages long with a background, research, conclusion, and any other requirements listed here: <https://grad.wisc.edu/currentstudents/mastersthesis/>. It is also required for students to deposit their final thesis in Memorial Library.

## **Enrollment Requirements**

You are responsible for following Graduate School policies related to course enrollment requirements and limitations:

### **Adding / Dropping Courses**

[grad.wisc.edu/documents/add-drop](https://grad.wisc.edu/documents/add-drop)

### **Auditing Courses**

[policy.wisc.edu/library/UW-1224](https://policy.wisc.edu/library/UW-1224)

## **Canceling Enrollment**

[grad.wisc.edu/documents/canceling-enrollment](http://grad.wisc.edu/documents/canceling-enrollment)

## **Continuous Enrollment Requirement for Dissertators**

[policy.wisc.edu/library/UW-1204](http://policy.wisc.edu/library/UW-1204)

## **Enrollment Accountability**

[grad.wisc.edu/documents/enrollment-accountability](http://grad.wisc.edu/documents/enrollment-accountability)

## **Minimum Enrollment Requirements**

[policy.wisc.edu/library/UW-1208](http://policy.wisc.edu/library/UW-1208)

# **Academic Exception Petitions**

Academic exceptions are considered on an individual case by case basis and should not be considered a precedent. Deviations from normal progress are highly discouraged, but the program recognizes that in some cases there are extenuating academic and personal circumstances. Petitions for course exceptions/substitutions or exceptions to the Satisfactory Progress Expectations (academic or conduct) shall be directed to the Director of Graduate Studies. The following procedures apply to all petitions:

1. The specific requirement/rule/expectation pertinent to the petition must be identified.
2. The student's academic advisor must provide written support for the petition.
3. All course work substitutions and equivalencies will be decided by appropriate area-group faculty or curriculum chair.

More generally, the Director of Graduate Studies, in consultation with the student's advisor, may grant extensions to normal progress requirements for students who face circumstances (similar to tenure extensions) as noted in university regulations, this includes childbirth, adoption, significant responsibilities with respect to elder or dependent care obligations, disability or chronic illness, or circumstances beyond one's personal control. Where warranted, the petition should provide good evidence of plans and ability to return to conformance with the standard and to acceptably complete the program. The normal extension will be one semester; anything beyond this will be granted only in the event of highly extraordinary circumstances. Extensions will be granted formally with a note of explanation to be placed in the student's file.

## **Satisfactory Academic Progress**

Your continuation as a graduate student at UW-Madison is at the discretion of your program, the Graduate School, and your faculty advisor. Any student may be placed on probation or dismissed from the Graduate School for not maintaining satisfactory academic progress, and this can impact your academic standing (detailed below), financial aid (see this policy page: [policy.wisc.edu/library/UW-1040](http://policy.wisc.edu/library/UW-1040)), or funding (consult your sources of funding, as applicable). Our program has its own definition of satisfactory academic progress and related procedures that supplement Graduate School policy, as described in this section.

### **Definition**

Information about how the Graduate School determines satisfactory academic progress can be found at this policy page: [policy.wisc.edu/library/UW-1218](http://policy.wisc.edu/library/UW-1218). In addition to the Graduate School's monitoring of satisfactory academic progress, this program regularly reviews the satisfactory academic progress of its students.

### **Not Meeting Academic Expectations**

Student progress will be reviewed through coursework, lab performance, and at required Annual Progress Meetings. If the advisor and Steering Committee find at the Annual Meeting or at any other time that a student has failed to achieve satisfactory progress in the academic expectations set in this handbook, the student will be notified and given an opportunity to submit a response within a set time period (typically 2 weeks). The advisor and steering committee will review the response within 2 weeks and determine if further action is needed. Students may be dismissed from the program. Students may, alternatively, be placed on probation for one semester and then reviewed by the Steering Committee following the probationary semester. Students placed on probation may be dismissed or allowed to continue based upon review of progress during the probationary semester. If a student wishes to appeal any decision stemming from this review process, they can do so within 2 weeks of the date of the decision letter through submitting a letter to the Director of Graduate Studies and requesting a new hearing with the addition of a faculty member external to the original Steering Committee.

## **Personal Conduct Expectations**

### **Professional Conduct**

The Office of Student Conduct and Community Standards maintains detailed guidance on student rights and responsibilities related to learning in a community that is safe and fosters integrity and accountability. You are responsible for keeping aware of their policies and procedures, found at the following page: [conduct.students.wisc.edu](https://conduct.students.wisc.edu)

## Academic Misconduct

Academic misconduct is governed by state law, UW System Administration Code Chapter 14. For further information on this law, what constitutes academic misconduct, and procedures related to academic misconduct, see:

### The Graduate School

**Academic Policies & Procedures: Misconduct, Academic**  
[grad.wisc.edu/documents/misconduct-academic](https://grad.wisc.edu/documents/misconduct-academic)

### Office of Student Conduct and Community Standards

**Academic Misconduct Website**  
[conduct.students.wisc.edu/academic-misconduct](https://conduct.students.wisc.edu/academic-misconduct)

**Academic Misconduct Flowchart**  
[conduct.students.wisc.edu/documents/academic-misconduct-flow-chart](https://conduct.students.wisc.edu/documents/academic-misconduct-flow-chart)

## Non-Academic Misconduct

Non-academic misconduct is governed by state law, UW System Administration Code Chapters 17 and 18. For further information on these laws, what constitutes non-academic misconduct, and procedures related to non-academic misconduct, see:

### The Graduate School

**Academic Policies & Procedures: Misconduct, Non-Academic**  
[grad.wisc.edu/documents/misconduct-nonacademic](https://grad.wisc.edu/documents/misconduct-nonacademic)

### Office for Student Conduct and Community Standards

**Non-Academic Misconduct Website**  
[conduct.students.wisc.edu/nonacademic-misconduct](https://conduct.students.wisc.edu/nonacademic-misconduct)

## University of Wisconsin System (UWS)

### Chapter 17: Student Non-Academic Disciplinary Procedures

[docs.legis.wisconsin.gov/code/admin\\_code/uws/17](https://docs.legis.wisconsin.gov/code/admin_code/uws/17)

### Chapter 18: Conduct on University Lands

[docs.legis.wisconsin.gov/code/admin\\_code/uws/18](https://docs.legis.wisconsin.gov/code/admin_code/uws/18)

## Research Misconduct

Trust in the accuracy and veracity of the scholarly record are fundamental to science. When that record is tainted, whole fields of study can be set back or questioned. Moreover, when scientists have been found to engage in misconduct, partners and the public lose faith in the ability of all scientists to address society's grand challenges.

Per the [UW-Madison policy](#), “*research misconduct is defined as fabrication, falsification, or plagiarism in proposing, performing, or reviewing research, or in reporting research results.*” The policy applies to all those involved in the research process including graduate students.

For more information, please visit the [Office of the Vice Chancellor for Research research misconduct page](#).

If you have questions or concerns about research misconduct or integrity, this can be discussed confidentially with the Research Integrity Officer ([rio@research.wisc.edu](mailto:rio@research.wisc.edu)).

## Hostile and Intimidating Behavior (Bullying)

Hostile and intimidating behavior (HIB), sometimes referred to as “bullying,” is prohibited by university policy applicable to faculty, academic staff, and university staff. For further definition, policy, and procedures related to HIB see: [hr.wisc.edu/hib](http://hr.wisc.edu/hib). Students who feel they have been subject to HIB are encouraged to review the informal and formal options on the “Addressing HIB” tab of this website.

## Grievance Process

Each college or program on campus has a grievance process that students can use to address other concerns regarding their experience in the program. MCP follows the Grievance Policy for Graduate Programs in the School of Medicine and Public Health

and is detailed at the following link in Guide:

<https://guide.wisc.edu/graduate/medicine-public-health-school-wide/molecular-cellular-pharmacology-phd/#policiestext>

[Dr. Vaishali Bakshi](#), PhD is the MCP Program's official grievance advisor described in the policy.

## Process and Sanctions for Violations of Conduct Standards

The Steering Committee administers the regulations established by the faculty. It makes sure students are meeting the program expectations and imposes sanctions when appropriate. Faculty and faculty committees determine whether the quality of a student's work and conduct are satisfactory, while the Steering Committee determines whether the student is satisfying the academic requirements in a timely fashion and meeting program conduct expectations. Students who are falling behind academically or not meeting conduct expectations are first warned, then put on probation, and then dropped from the program if they cannot complete the requirements or remedy their conduct. Within boundaries set by the faculty, the Steering Committee is authorized to take account of individual circumstances and problems, and to grant extensions of deadlines and waivers of requirements.

In addition to the program's disciplinary actions, the Office of Student Assistance and Support (OSAS) may also have grounds to issue one or more of the following:

- Reprimand
- Probation
- Suspension
- Expulsion
- Restitution
- A zero or failing grade on an assignment/exam
- A lower grade or failure in the course
- Removal from course
- Enrollment restrictions in a course/program
- Conditions/terms of continuing as a student

## **Incident Reporting (Hate, Bias, Sexual Assault, Hazing, Students of Concern, Bullying)**

The Office of Student Assistance and Support (OSAS) maintains a portal to report incidents of hate, bias, sexual assault, hazing, dating/domestic violence, stalking, missing students, and students displaying other concerning behaviors at UW-Madison:

### **Office of Student Assistance and Support (OSAS) Incident Reporting**

[osas.wisc.edu/report-an-issue/](https://osas.wisc.edu/report-an-issue/)

As noted above in “Personal Conduct Expectations,” students who feel they have been subject to hostile and/or intimidating behavior (i.e., bullying) are encouraged to review the informal and formal options for addressing this behavior (including filing complaints when desired) at: [hr.wisc.edu/hib](https://hr.wisc.edu/hib)

## **Funding, Employment, and Finances**

“Funding” is a term used to describe university employment or support to cover some or all your costs of graduate education. It varies in kind, amount, and level of guarantee.

The Graduate School maintains policies related to graduate student funding/employment:

### **Maximum Levels of Appointments**

[grad.wisc.edu/documents/maximum-levels-of-appointments](https://grad.wisc.edu/documents/maximum-levels-of-appointments)

### **Concurrent Appointments for Fellows/Trainees**

[grad.wisc.edu/documents/concurrent-appointments](https://grad.wisc.edu/documents/concurrent-appointments)

### **Enrollment Requirements for Graduate Assistants**

[policy.wisc.edu/library/UW-1208](https://policy.wisc.edu/library/UW-1208)

### **Eligibility for Summer RA, TA, PA, and LSA Appointments**

[policy.wisc.edu/library/UW-5089](https://policy.wisc.edu/library/UW-5089)

## **Guaranteed Funding**

All MCP students will receive a yearly stipend and UW Graduate Student health insurance benefits. The stipend rate is set each year in July for the upcoming year. Any student receiving a fellowship or training grant less than the current MCP stipend rate is required to be supplemented to reach the current MCP annual stipend rate.

## Finding Other Funding

### Campus-Wide and External Sources

To help you find resources to pay for costs related to graduate education, the Graduate School provides a comprehensive overview of the funding process on campus as well as descriptions of the types of funding available, sources of funding, minimum stipend rates and benefits, and links to applicable human resources policies (e.g., GAPP) at:

#### **Graduate School: Funding and Financial Aid**

[grad.wisc.edu/funding](http://grad.wisc.edu/funding)

#### **External Fellowship Database**

<https://grad.wisc.edu/funding/external-fellowship-database/>

#### **UW-Madison Libraries Grants Information Collection**

[library.wisc.edu/memorial/collections/grants-information-collection](http://library.wisc.edu/memorial/collections/grants-information-collection)

The MCP Program encourages students and faculty to seek outside fellowships when appropriate. Some examples of fellowships that have been awarded to Molecular and Cellular Pharmacology students in recent years are the ones offered by the [National Science Foundation](#), the [American Heart Association](#), [PhRMA](#), [Howard Hughes Medical Institute](#) and [Individual Predoctoral Fellowships \(NRSA\)](#).

#### **MCP Training Program Training Grant**

These traineeships come from a training grant awarded to the Program by the National Institute of General Medical Sciences (NIGMS). These traineeships pay tuition, fees, and a 12-month stipend. Slots are awarded by the Fellowship/Training Grant Committee with approval by the Steering Committee on the basis of a competitive application submitted by the student and faculty mentor. See more here:

<https://molpharm.wisc.edu/what-makes-us-different-from-other-programs/>

#### **Leave of Absence**

Please review full policy and information from the Graduate School:

<https://grad.wisc.edu/documents/leave-of-absence/>

For students who are RA/TA/PA, please also see the Graduate Assistant Policies and Procedures (GAPP): <https://hr.wisc.edu/policies/gapp/>

#### **Vacation Policy**



Each student is expected to notify their PI and the Program, if they plan to take an extended vacation (more than 1 week), at least 30 days prior to the trip. This notification will serve to inform the Program that the student will be away from campus. The program will assume the student has discussed the trip with the PI and was given permission by the PI to be away from lab. If a student is enrolled in classes, it is inadvisable to schedule a vacation during the semester. Please see the official campus vacation and sick leave policy linked below in GAPP.

### **Parental Leave Policy**

All NIH Kirschstein-NRSA trainees and fellows may receive stipends for up to 60 calendar days (equivalent to 8 work weeks) of parental leave per year for the adoption or the birth of each child. Either parent is eligible for parental leave. Kirschstein-NRSA trainees and fellows must provide advanced notification to the grantee institution prior to taking parental leave. Notification of supervisors and others about plans to use leave must be consistent with the organization's policy and must be consistently applied regardless of the source of funds. Policy: <https://grants.nih.gov/grants/guide/notice-files/not-od-16-105.html>

For more information on child care and family resources and a list of campus lactation rooms, please visit **The Office of Child Care and Family Resources**: <https://occf.wisc.edu/>

## **Additional Policies & Resources**

### **Graduate School Policy: Residence for Tuition Purposes**

[grad.wisc.edu/documents/residence-for-tuition-purposes](http://grad.wisc.edu/documents/residence-for-tuition-purposes)

### **Employee Disability Resources**

[employeedisabilities.wisc.edu](http://employeedisabilities.wisc.edu)

### **Graduate Assistantship Policies and Procedures (GAPP)**

[hr.wisc.edu/policies/gapp](http://hr.wisc.edu/policies/gapp)

## **Professional Development and Career Planning**

When you participate in professional development, you build skills needed to succeed academically and thrive in your career. The following are professional development

activities that we recommend for your consideration. Required professional development will be detailed in “Degree Requirements” above.

## On Campus

The Graduate School develops and curates a wide variety of resources for professional development, including a tool to assess your skills, set goals, and create a plan with recommended activities on campus (e.g., the popular “Individual Development Plan” or IDP) as well as programming to help you explore careers, prepare for a job search, build your network, and learn from alumni, manage projects, communicate about your research, and much more.

DiscoverPD helps master’s and doctoral students at UW-Madison advance their academic and professional goals with customized recommendations based on a skills self-assessment. The 400+ professional development recommendations available in the database are available in a range of formats to best meet your diverse needs, including in-person, virtual, asynchronous, and synchronous opportunities. All of this can be found at:

### **Professional Development from the Graduate School**

[grad.wisc.edu/professional-development](http://grad.wisc.edu/professional-development)

The Graduate School communicates professional development opportunities through an e-newsletter, *GradConnections*, that all graduate students receive at their wisc.edu email. Graduate students in traditional graduate degree programs receive the newsletter weekly during the academic year and every other week in the summer. Graduate students in online degree programs receive the newsletter every other week during the academic year and monthly during the summer.

## In Our Program

Professional development and career planning should be on the students’ minds from the start of their studies. Please do not wait until graduation time to start thinking about these topics. The MCP Program communicates professional development and other opportunities through an e-newsletter every 2 weeks. Additional news and award updates about MCP students and faculty is shared on our website. View our “In the News” page: <https://molpharm.wisc.edu/news/>

UW–Madison offers a wealth of resources intended to enrich your graduate studies and enhance your professional skills. It is expected that you will take full advantage of the resources that best fit your needs and support your career goals. Since our alumni

thrive not only in academia but also in industry, corporate, government, and non-profit arenas, we strive to be holistic and innovative in our approach to meeting the diverse professional development needs of our students. Please visit the [Career Development page](#) on the MCP Website and view our [MCP Alumni](#).

### **Individual Development Plan (IDP)**

The Graduate School webpage <https://grad.wisc.edu/professional-development/individual-development-plan/> offers a collection of IDP resources to support graduate students, postdoctoral researchers, mentors, PIs, grants administrators, and graduate program staff. The university recommends the use of IDPs for all postdoctoral researchers and graduate students and requires their use for all postdoctoral researchers and graduate students supported by National Institutes of Health (NIH) funding. The MCP Program requires all students have an IDP and update it at least annually.

As you begin your Graduate School career, an Individual Development Plan (IDP) is an essential tool to help you:

- 1) Assess your current skills and strengths
- 2) Make a plan for developing skills that will help you meet your academic and professional goals
- 3) Communicate with your advisors and mentors about your evolving goals and related skills.

The IDP you create is a document you will want to revisit again and again, to update and refine as your goals change and/or come into focus, and to record your progress and accomplishments. It also serves to start – and maintain – the conversation with your faculty advisor about your career goals and professional development needs. The onus to engage in the IDP process is on you, although your mentor, PI, or others may encourage and support you in doing so. The IDP itself remains private to you, and you choose which parts to share with which mentors. Through the IDP process, you may decide to identify various mentors to whom you can go for expertise and advice. We recommend using one of the following two IDP tools, or a more specific IDP tool that your program or training grant has developed. Each tool will include a self-assessment of skills, interests, and values; goal-setting guidelines; and reference to skill building and career exploration resources.

#### **IDP tool for all graduate students and postdocs**

UW-Madison IDP template, which includes instructions and examples, is flexible and appropriate for all disciplines. <https://grad.wisc.edu/professional-development/individual-development-plan/>

#### **IDP tool for sciences and engineering**

For graduate students in the natural sciences and engineering, the American Association for the Advancement of Science (AAAS) online tool “myIDP” provides a

comprehensive set of materials and exercises that will guide you through the process of self-assessment, career exploration, goal setting, and implementation of your plan. Set up a free account and create and monitor your IDP at [myidp.sciencecareers.org](http://myidp.sciencecareers.org).

**Summer Internship in Private Industry:** An optional Pharmaceutical Industry Internship Program allows MCP students to have the opportunity to participate in a summer internship at a pharmaceutical or biotechnology company, typically in the 4<sup>th</sup> year or later. This opportunity significantly adds to student training depth and breadth. There are over 100 cooperating corporations that can sponsor students. Students that elect to do a summer internship should discuss their interests with their mentor, Graduate Program Staff, and Program Director. Together, you will select a cooperating company, and the Director and Program staff will help facilitate the internship. This initiative offers you a unique and important training experience.

### **Internship Process and Details:**

If a student pursues an internship, the student may need to consider a leave of absence. Below are some guidelines for navigating the HR process that comes with doing an internship.

Internship while on a Fellowship:

- You must verify that performing the internship while on your particular fellowship is not in violation of fellowship guidelines. If your funding agency will not allow you to remain on fellowship during your internship, you will need to take a short work break/unpaid leave of absence. See guidance below.
- If your funding agency allows you to remain on fellowship, then the funding agency will continue to pay your salary through UW payroll. Any benefits through UW continue. You do need to register for research credit as if you were on campus to maintain continuous enrollment.

Internship while on PI funding:

- You cannot be supported by a PI's sponsored research project if you are not actively working on that project. You will need to take a short work break/unpaid leave of absence without UW pay (unless your source of support allows otherwise) and pre-pay benefits if you would like them to continue while you are away from campus ("May multiples"). See guidance below.

Guidance for taking a short work break/unpaid leave of absence:

- Communicate your internship plans with your PI's HR Business Partner and Payroll professional as early as possible – at least three months ahead of your internship start date.
- Due to the graduate school continuous enrollment policy (<https://grad.wisc.edu/documents/continuous-enrollment-requirement/>), we strongly recommend that internships are completed during the summer.

- HR details: the student would be taking an unpaid leave of absence over the summer semester. Ideally, the student would make the decision in February, so the prepaids for summer benefits can be taken out of the March, April, and May paychecks. Alternatively, there is a tool the payroll person can connect you with that allows you to pay for benefits directly to campus; however, this takes away any pretax benefits you may receive.
- Students will not register for credits during that summer in which they are doing the internship.
- See the Grad School Leave of Absence Policy (<https://policy.wisc.edu/library/UW-1227>)
- International students should consult ISS to determine if a leave of absence will affect their visa status.

## In Our Discipline

**ASPET Membership (American Society for Pharmacology and Experimental Therapeutics)** All students should become annual graduate student members. The fee is covered by the MCP Program. See more here:

<https://www.aspet.org/aspnet/membership-community/aspnet-membership/apply-for-membership>

Students must be sponsored by an ASPET member, their mentor, or their department chair. Please have MCP Program Director send a brief email indicating their support for your membership to [membership@aspnet.org](mailto:membership@aspnet.org). They will need to provide the following information:

- their relationship to the student
- the research the student is engaged in
- the year the student is in their research
- indication that the student is in good standing

Once completed, please contact the MCP Program Manager to pay for the membership directly with ASPET.

## MCP Faculty Roles, Policies, and Procedures

### Criteria for Re-evaluation of Molecular and Cellular Pharmacology Faculty

At least every 5 years, a trainer will re-apply and be assessed for re-appointment by the MCP Steering Committee based upon evidence for strength in each of the following:

- The following three criteria are vigorously maintained:
  1. Research focus broadly related to molecular and cellular pharmacology

2. Strong training record, or for junior faculty, an interest in training graduate students with a focus in molecular and cellular pharmacology
  3. Active and funded research program
- The trainer has mentored an MCP student during the prior 10 years
  - The trainer has actively participated in the Program in graduate student recruitment, student seminars, MCP committee work, student advisory committees, training grant renewal application, and/or teaching in the core curriculum
  - The trainer has submitted a copy of their Lab Compact along with their application and NIH Biosketch. A lab compact (also known as “Advising Compacts” or “Mentoring Compacts”) clarifies and documents mutually agreed upon expectations for both the student and advisor. Please see these [Mentoring Compact/Contract examples](#) and [more general resources on mentoring](#).

### **Participation**

Faculty are expected to be actively involved in the Program:

- Participate on MCP Committees
- Serve on students’ Thesis Committees
- Attend Student Seminars (Pharmacology 901) held on Mondays at 12:30 pm
- Attend MCP Annual Symposium

### **Recruitment of Prospective Graduate Students**

- Recruit new students in the spring semester of each year
- Meet with visiting prospective students who have expressed an interest in your research areas
- Participate in recruitment social activities
- The MCP Program has recruiting visits for invited applicants. To stay in good standing, every faculty member must participate in a recruiting dinner or poster session.

### **Orientation Talks and Fall Rotations**

- If accepting a student in their lab, it is expected the faculty member will present their research during orientation week
- The presentation implies that the professor has funding and space to accept a student, unless specified at the beginning of the talk
- Rotating students will make appointments with faculty to talk regarding a possible rotation in the faculty’s lab.
- Summer rotations are only allowed if paid for by the faculty member (including RA stipend and tuition remission). The student must be admitted and enrolled for

the summer 8-week term before June 1 if they will be paid as an RA and must register for 990 research credits.

### **Updating Faculty Web Pages**

Every year, faculty are asked to update their individual page on the MCP website (<http://molpharm.wisc.edu>).

### **Responsibility to the Graduate Student**

#### **Advising**

The Thesis advisor will monitor and guide the student's progress toward the PhD degree. The Thesis Committee must be formed by June of the first year.

#### **Preliminary Exam**

Must be completed by August 31 of the second year.

#### **Annual Progress Report**

All students are required to have a Thesis Committee meeting on a yearly basis and submit a signed copy of the "Annual Progress Form" to the MCP Program Office.

#### **Inadequate Progress in the Lab**

If a student is not making satisfactory progress in the lab or their behavior is not conducive to lab research, the following steps are recommended.

1. Communicate the concerns to the student

- Request changes within a specified period of time
- Note concerns on the "Annual Progress Form"

2. If by the specified time, changes have not been made

- Follow up with a letter to the student identifying your concerns
- Send a copy of the letter to the MCP Program Office
- Give the student one more chance, with a specified time period that changes are expected

3. If the matter is still not resolved satisfactorily:

- Seek the recommendation of the student's Thesis Committee
- Document the results of the meeting

- Send a copy to the MCP Program Office

4. If problems persist, contact the Program Director for the appropriate course of action

5. If performance does not improve the student maybe as asked to seek another lab or leave the Program.

- If the student leaves the Program after 2 years, a terminal Master's Degree may be granted
- If the student seeks another lab, "bridging" support may be required (1–2 months) from the faculty member to allow the student time to find another lab